

INSPECTION REPORT

**BERWICK UPON TWEED COMMUNITY HIGH
SCHOOL**

Berwick upon Tweed

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122361

Head teacher: Stephen Quinlan

Reporting inspector: Graeme Clarke
1547

Dates of inspection: 8 – 12 October 2001

Inspection number: 218836

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	13 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Wyndham RogersColtman
Date of previous inspection:	November 1999

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11041	Marvyn Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How high are the standards? Students' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19043	David Lewis	<i>Sixth Form co-ordinator</i>	Physics; Chemistry.	
25071	Colin Short	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	Literacy.
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19152	Richard Merryfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
24887	Yvonne Salmons	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Berwick upon Tweed Community High School is situated on the south side of the River Tweed, and serves the town of Berwick and the rural communities in the locality. There are 787 students aged 13 to 18 years, 396 boys and 391 girls, which is about the same as at the last inspection; there are 160 students in the Sixth Form. The school is virtually the sole provider for Sixth Form students in the region and offers a good range of AS and A Levels subjects, but a small range of vocational qualifications at present. About ten per cent of students have special educational needs (SEN), of which three per cent have a statement. Although 11.4 per cent of students are entitled to free school meals which is below average, the area the school serves is mixed, with some significant social deprivation. Almost half the staff are new since the last inspection, including the head teacher. The school has a significant budget deficit, which is not being reduced this year because student numbers in the Sixth Form are lower than expected. Students' attainments when they join the school in Year 9, part way through Key Stage 3, are average to below average. The chair of governors and the head teacher share a very clear vision for the future of schooling in the Berwick area. It centres on all the schools playing a vital part in addressing the culture of low aspirations and underachievement in the area. The school is forward looking. It has Investors in People status, and there are several new initiatives, including a study centre for SEN and new information and communications technology (ICT) facilities, to support students' learning.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Berwick Community High School is an improving school although some of the improvements have only begun recently. Through determined and purposeful educational leadership and management the school is now effectively promoting good behaviour and positive attitudes and relationships. However, it has yet to see the benefits of the new approaches to improving students' attainment reflected in examinations and test results. It is now providing an overall satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Although the school has given poor value for money overall up to the end of the last school year, the budget is carefully managed to ensure that funds are allocated fairly between the main school and the Sixth Form.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Provides an effective inclusive education for all students.
- Develops good attitudes, behaviour and relationships.
- Has a greatly improved Sixth Form ethos and support for Sixth Form students.
- Has implemented effectively new arrangements for developing students' ICT skills.
- Governors, head teacher and senior management team show clear vision and leadership.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Parents' and the public's views of the school.
- The budget deficit situation.
- Attainment in English and mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4, of boys, and in the Sixth Form.
- The quality of teaching in Year 9.
- The use of ICT to support students' learning in mathematics, art, geography, history and PE, and the assessment of students' ICT skills more widely.
- The courses offered in the Sixth Form, so that they reflect the needs of the community, and offer standards of the highest quality.
- The consistency of leadership and management of the schools.
- Consistent implementation of policies and procedures, e.g. use of assessments, target setting and monitoring, spiritual development in the curriculum, provision for gifted and talented children.
- Arrangements for providing good quality information to parents on students' progress.
- Statutory obligations for collective worship, and for RE in the Sixth Form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION: November 1999

The governors and senior management have very successfully fostered a climate of working together. The new corporate approach to school development planning is a clear advance that deserves success, and the school development plan is successfully contributing to school improvement. Standards are now higher in Years 10 and 11. The average points score in the GCSE examinations has improved faster than the national trend, and the proportion of candidates gaining five or more A* grades rose significantly in 2000 and was maintained in 2001. New ICT facilities and courses for Years 9 and 10 have already raised standards, but this has not yet occurred in Year 11. The quality of teaching is now better, but greater improvement is needed, especially in Year 9. Inter personal relationships, students' personal development and attitudes to school are now all good. The attendance rate is now consistently better than 90 per cent as a result of a concerted approach to contacting and working with parents. Students' cultural development has improved. Targets for students' attainment are set and helpfully reviewed with them at suitable times. The school's health and safety policy is being implemented carefully. There are some areas where progress has not been made. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory because of missed opportunities in lessons. Plans are not yet in place to identify higher attaining students and to monitor their progress. There is no statutory Religious Education in the Sixth Form, and the arrangements for collective worship remain inconsistent.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11, and by 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	2000
GCSE examinations	E	D	N/A*	D
A-Levels/AS-Levels	D	E	N/A**	

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

* Information to make comparisons using 2001 data not available at time of publication

** New arrangements for examination at AS Level were implemented nationally in 2001

Students' English results in the statutory Year 9 tests improved significantly this year, but the proportion achieving the expected Level 5 was still well below national and similar school averages. Results in mathematics remained about the same as last year, but numbers reaching Level 5 fell to below national averages, and to well below similar school averages. The science results are somewhat better. They are in line with the national average, but are below those of similar schools. Mathematics and science results at the higher Level 6 are in line with national and similar schools' averages, but are well below both in English. Girls attain more highly than boys in all three subjects and the gap is slowly widening year on year. This year the GCSE results show clear improvements at A* C in German, geography, history, ICT, PE and systems and control, but a fall in business studies, English, graphics, resistant materials, mathematics and music. Results in other subject areas were similar to last year. Girls continue to attain better results in the GCSE than boys, particularly at the higher levels. This year the average points scores rose again, more rapidly than the national trend, and the school met its target. The challenging targets for 2002 are distinctly lower than for this year, but have been based upon the LEA's analysis of students' prior attainments. In lessons and in work time, students are now making satisfactory or good progress in Year 9. Standards are below expectations in history and ICT, but are improving. Students in Years 10 and 11 are making satisfactory progress in business studies and good progress in other subjects where they are now achieving well. Year 11 ICT work lacks depth, and students do not have the important skills expected at this age. Students with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress throughout Years 9 to 11.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students are enthusiastic about school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in lessons and in the common areas of the school is good.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The school pastoral system ensures that all staff know their students well, and as a result their progress is enhanced.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance throughout is now closely monitored and action is quickly taken for improvement when necessary.

Students show mature attitudes in lessons and about the school. They work collaboratively and well together. There is a lack of oppressive behaviour, sexism and racism. Isolated instances of bullying or challenging behaviour are rapidly identified and dealt with by staff. The school encourages students to take responsibility, for example in the library, for classrooms displays, and as members of the School Councils.

Arrangements for Sixth Formers to mentor younger students enhance their perception of Sixth Form life.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Year 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is better than in the previous inspection as a result of recent work undertaken to raise its quality, and more students now make satisfactory progress. In Years 9- 11, over nine out of ten lessons are satisfactory or better. However, just over one in ten is unsatisfactory in Year 9, and this needs attention. The weakest subject teaching is in ICT. English teaching is always satisfactory or better and learning matches the quality of the teaching. In mathematics the teaching has improved and is now good overall. Science teaching in Year 9 is satisfactory and it is good in Years 10 11. The whole school approach to developing literacy is commendable, and as a result standards are well within expectations. Provision for numeracy in the school is satisfactory, although teaching does not consistently promote number skills. Factors of good teaching that foster learning include: good subject knowledge; effective behaviour management; good relationships; an effective range of methods; skilful questioning to challenge thinking; and good use of discussion. Carefully planned lessons have clear objectives and include different activities and levels of work that are well matched to all students' abilities in the class. Students with SEN are effectively helped to learn well by good use of support staff and attention to their individual education plans. Some aspects of teaching require further attention in order to improve. There are missed opportunities to inform students of how to raise their standard of work. When the range of strategies is too narrow they do not learn effectively. Gifted and talented students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve higher standards. Learning is not always securely consolidated. Occasionally a small minority of students acts boisterously or shows disruptive behaviour, which is not effectively confronted by the teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Statutory requirements met except for a daily act of collective worship and RE in the Sixth Form.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Especially in terms of the quality of support provided by support staff.
Provision for students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. There is a well organised personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory because of a lack of consistently planned approaches. Moral and social development are good. Cultural development is satisfactory and improving.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. Students are valued and good relationships are fostered. Guidance for students is good, with appropriate counselling advice. Assessment and monitoring of performance is satisfactory overall, but the use of progress targets in lesson planning and teaching is not consistent in all subjects. Gifted and talented students are not formally identified in the system.

Students in Years 9 to 11 follow the National Curriculum. The quality of provision is enhanced with a second language (Spanish or German) offered, but this reduces time available elsewhere. The introduction of GNVQ in ICT this year for all Year 10 students is a most important change, aimed at heightening students' motivation. There is good provision for students with SEN. A successful PSHE programme includes careers education and the work related curriculum, which local employers value. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities for students to experience and to enable them to enjoy new challenges. There are close and useful links with the Berwick Youth Association Scheme. Students' involvement in a residential course, and in a very strong Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme, all enhance their social development. Procedures for child protection, and attention to health and safety, are satisfactory. Although parents views of the school are poor, the school is strengthening its partnership with them. The quality of information provided is improving, for example in a termly newsletter and a well produced school brochure. However, the timing and structure of parents meetings are not sufficiently useful, and need to be revised.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. The new head teacher leads the school very effectively with commitment and determination. The senior team is successfully making improvements to recover the present budget deficit. There is a clear potential for further improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a high level of commitment to promoting the school's interests, but do not satisfactorily meet obligations for collective worship, and RE in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Governors and senior management are directly and actively involved in monitoring the school's work. All aspects are evaluated to plan future action.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Governors ensure their spending decisions are well taken. Specific grants are being used very appropriately and well. <i>Best value</i> principles are now being effectively applied to academic success and spending.

Governors have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Improvement and development planning identifies key priorities. However, the broad leadership and management skills needed to manage groups of subjects are too narrowly focused in social and cultural studies to be effective. There are sufficient suitably qualified teaching and support staff to meet the curriculum, including providing for students with SEN. Resources for learning are generally satisfactory. Refurbished accommodation for the Sixth Form, ICT and a new SEN study centre has very usefully enhanced its quality. Alterations have been made that allow wheelchair access to all parts of the school to enable students' participation in all curriculum areas. The library is a strength in the school and is used well by students. The school's aims and values give a renewed sense of purpose, leading to a positive ethos and supportive climate for learning which is yet to be valued by parents and the local community. The school faces difficult decisions in reducing spending to meet the budget deficit; vandalism at the back of the open site is a drain on resources. A new budget recovery plan requires a more secure foundation than the present one, that was thwarted this year.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that their child is making good progress. • Feeling comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • That the school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how their child is getting on. • The school working more closely with parents. • The quality of teaching • Students' behaviour

The inspection findings confirm some of these views. Information provided about the school has improved markedly, partnerships are being built, and the range of opportunities for students outside the normal curriculum has widened. Teaching quality has improved, although there are pockets where greater improvements are needed; students' attitudes and behaviour have also improved. However, the way information about students' progress is given reflects why many parents feel a lack of confidence in the school. Parents have also rightly expressed concerns about the low level of AS results in 2001, and about the quality of chemistry teaching in the Sixth Form. Concerns about the value of the homework diary have a mixed foundation; some tutors do not exploit them as a way of sharing information— but neither do a majority of parents sign them to show they have been seen. The issue of cleanliness and hygiene in toilets is being addressed. Continuity with middle schools, particularly with regard to literacy and numeracy, is now clearly improving, and will be fostered through the partnership of Berwick schools in the local RAIS project.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

In the Sixth Form 160 students are enrolled, nearly two thirds of whom are in the lower sixth. Currently there are more boys than girls in Year 12, but this is reversed in Year 13. Most students are enrolled on AS or A Level courses, and some are taking a course leading to an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in health & social care. Others are working towards intermediate General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in media studies, business studies or health & social care. The school has links with the community centre in Berwick upon Tweed, where students can study a range of subjects not offered in school, usually in the evenings. There is no other post 16 provision in the locality, and about half of Year 11 stay on to undertake further study in the Sixth Form. Although the current lower sixth is slightly smaller than had been predicted this year, Sixth Form numbers have been broadly constant over the last few years. Very few students leave the school other than when they complete the courses they are taking.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Provision of education in the Sixth Form is satisfactory overall, and the Sixth Form provides satisfactory value for money. Nearly all the teaching in the Sixth Form is satisfactory or better and almost 20 per cent is very good or excellent. Teaching is particularly good in physics. A new and dynamic head of Sixth Form has recently been appointed and there is now a very good system for monitoring progress and for supporting students in their academic and personal development. Good use is made of a consultant from outside the school in supporting students when they are preparing their applications to university. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the Sixth Form are

STRENGTHS

- Students' attitudes to school and the improvement in the Sixth Form ethos.
- The support and guidance for Sixth Form students.
- The quality of teaching in physics.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards of attainment in most subjects.
- The range of courses available, to reflect the needs of the community.
- The provision for religious education.

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. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach their students well, leading to good quality learning. Results in public examinations are close to the national average, but better than expected in relation to prior attainment. The range of courses on offer is good. Provision for numeracy is satisfactory.
Chemistry	Unsatisfactory. Results in public examinations are well below the national average. Teaching does not do enough to develop understanding of the subject to help students to apply their skills in unfamiliar situations. Monitoring and support for students is insufficiently developed.
Physics	Good. Very good or excellent teaching leads to very good learning in which students' understanding and skills improve quickly. Results in public examinations are generally in line with prior attainment though they were disappointing in 2001.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Teaching is good and leads to good working relationships and quality of learning. Students make satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at the GCSE. Accommodation and resources are good and there is good access to ICT facilities.
Business Studies	Satisfactory. The work of students on the GNVQ and AS Level courses is satisfactory, and they show a good understanding of concepts used in the course. At A Level, standards of work are below expectation. Teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good, leading to good learning. Improved monitoring and support should help to reduce the number of students failing to gain a pass grade.
ICT	Unsatisfactory. Although topics are appropriate to the course, current teaching fails to challenge students sufficiently to develop their own research skills, manage time and develop individual plans. There is insufficient emphasis on moral and ethical issues where appropriate. The use of ICT to inform the wider curriculum in the school is good in some areas, but needs to be extended to other subjects.
Sports Studies	Good. Good teaching and positive attitudes on the part of students lead to good progress in these demanding courses. Students have a growing confidence in undertaking research and presenting their findings. Discussion is detailed, well considered, and based on understanding.
Health & Social Care	Good. Students make good progress, enthusiastically producing work that demonstrates a strong commitment to the subject. Teaching is good. Carefully planned assignments and good teaching ensure that students reach the grades that they are capable of achieving.
Geography	Good. Particular strengths stem from the good subject expertise and enthusiasm of the staff. These result in well structured teaching and enthusiastic students who work hard. More opportunities should be provided for students to improve their abilities in structured academic discourse.
English	Satisfactory. AS and A-Level results in English language and English literature in 2001 indicate that GCE attainment fell below that described in the previous OFSTED report. Observations of students' present learning indicates that standards and value added are improving.

The quality of teaching in biology is good overall and the excellent relationships between teachers and students support good quality learning. Although there are some weaknesses in students' practical skills, overall levels of attainment are above average. Teaching in home economics is good. Students' levels of understanding are better in Year 12, but all find the technical, scientific and mathematical elements of the course difficult. Teaching in art is good with well thought out approaches; students' concentration is good and learning is positively taking place. There is good provision for music with very good teaching leading to improved standards of attainment. Provision in history is good and students are making good progress in their learning. In French and German, standards are good overall, and achievement is very good. Students have very good attitudes to language learning, and teaching is very good. The value of ICT to support learning is mixed; for example it is well used to support learning in languages, but no facilities are available in art.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	A new head of Sixth Form has been appointed at the beginning of the current academic year. Guidance and support are now good, with a very good system for monitoring student academic progress; this alerts tutors of any difficulties experienced, and informs regular mentoring. Support for those seeking university entrance is good, as is careers guidance. Students speak very highly of the progress made in the few weeks since the new systems came into use.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	The head of Sixth Form has a clear vision in relation to the need to raise both morale and attainment in the Sixth Form and has already implemented good systems for guidance and support of students. The school has gained funding for a major programme of professional development in teaching Post 16 and this process is scheduled to start almost immediately. Teachers of Sixth Form groups acknowledge the progress made, and have a common vision for the future, although implementation at classroom level is variable. Most of the developments are too new to have had a tangible effect on examination results, but lesson observations during the week of inspection bode well for the future.

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"> • The support and guidance given to students in their academic studies and personal development. • The information provided when students are choosing courses of study in the Sixth Form. • The quality of teaching in most subjects. • The relationships they have with teachers, who treat them as young adults and help them to do their best in most subjects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment of their progress in their courses of study. • The information they are given about how well they are doing in their studies. • The advice given to students about the suitability of their courses.

The inspectors broadly agree with the views expressed by students, though in a school Sixth Form which is developing rapidly there will inevitably be conflicting views expressed by different students. The new systems for supporting students are a strength of the Sixth Form, and it is understandable that students in Year 12 were much more positive about this aspect than their colleagues in Year 13. Across a range of subjects much of the teaching is good, but there are still areas in which further professional development is needed. Although the school now has good systems for assessing students' work, feeding back to them and providing support and guidance where necessary, some areas of the curriculum have taken them up more fully than other. It is therefore inevitable that students' perceptions about this recent development will vary.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. When students join the school at the beginning of Year 9, information from the partner middle schools indicates their attainments are about average to below. Students take the statutory Year 9 tests after only two terms in the school. The results for English and science in 2000 were very low compared to the national picture, and in line with the average in mathematics. This year English results have improved significantly. However, initial national comparative data now available indicates that the proportion of students achieving the expected Level 5 is still well below national and similar school averages. Results in mathematics have remained about the same as last year, but numbers reaching Level 5 have fallen to below national and well below similar school averages. The science results are somewhat better. At Level 5 they are in line with the national average, but below those of similar schools. Results for mathematics and science at the higher Level 6 are in line with national and similar schools' averages, but below both in English. English results diverged away from the national trend last year and have not recovered this year. Results in mathematics and science are following the line of the national trends. There is a noticeable difference between the higher attainments of girls compared to boys in all three subjects. In each subject the gap is slowly widening year on year. The school is taking part, together with the middle schools, in the Berwick RAS project which aims for a concerted drive for improvement. These results at the end of Year 9 indicate the need to derive maximum benefit from involvement.

2. The proportion of students that gained five or more A-C grades in 2000 was below national averages but was in line with the average of a group of schools where the candidates all had similar results in the Year 9 tests in 1998. The proportion gaining at least one A-G grade was above the national average and well above the results of similar schools. This year the results show clear improvements at A-C in German, geography, history, ICT, PE and systems and control, but a fall in business studies, English, design technology (graphics and residual materials), mathematics and music. Results in other subject areas were similar to last year.

3. Although the proportion of students gaining five or more A-C grades has fallen slightly in 2001, their average points score has risen. This indicates an improvement that has been much more rapid than the national trend since the last inspection in 1999. The table shows the targets and achievements for 2000/2002.

	2000		2001		2002
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target
5+ A*-C %	39	38.9	38	38	36
1+ A*-G %	97	97	97	98	98
Average points score	33	33.2	34	34	32

4. The school met its target for the average points score that students attained in 2000 and 2001. The targets for 2002 are distinctly lower than for this year. They have been based upon the LEA's analysis and expectations of the present Year 11 students' attainments when they were in the middle schools and are believed to present a clear challenge.

5. There are some noticeable differences between boys' and girls' results in the GCSE, particularly between the higher levels of attainment. The difference widened in 2000 and is about the same as the national position. In particular, girls achieved 5.4 points more than boys on average. The diverging trend is an issue that the school should address. There were differences too, for example in the average results obtained in some subjects compared to others. Results in science, geography, history, ICT, French and German were all below national averages, but English, mathematics, art, design technology and PE were all above. When making comparisons between results in different subjects within the school, students obtained above average results in English, art, design technology, and PE particularly. They were below average in mathematics, science, geography, ICT, French and in history and German particularly. Information to make similar comparisons for 2001 is not yet available.

Standards seen during the inspection

6. By the end of Year 9, standards in English, mathematics and science are all at about the level of national expectations. Standards in English and science remain so by the end of Year 11, but the standards in mathematics have fallen below expectations. In relation to their prior attainment, students are achieving as expected in both key stages.

7. Students in Year 9 show good language development in English. Their grasp of dialogue and use of figures of speech in written work encourages imagination. Higher attaining students' work reflects creativity and greater fluency. Year 10 students develop negotiating and decision making skills through discussion and collaborative learning. For example, their work with *Romeo and Juliet* is meeting national standards according to their ability. Evidence of speaking, reading, writing and listening indicates that most students achieve their potential in both language and literature. However, work of older students in Year 11 is often insufficient to meet the criteria for higher grade passes in GCSE. It requires further attention to consistent language use, more extended writing, and development of analytical skills, stylistic comparisons and the fluency of expression.

8. In mathematics, Year 9 students work confidently and are secure in aspects of arithmetic, algebra and geometry, for example calculating squares and square roots of numbers, manipulating equations, and understanding the relationships of right angled and other triangles. Standards of investigative work completed by the end of Year 10 vary considerably. Some include reasoned accounts, supported by good use of algebra, but often others are too brief. Year 11 students' work shows examples of understanding graphical work, algebraic equations, angle properties, basic statistics and percentages. Standards in Years 10- 11 range from below to broadly in line with national expectations. Although all students are making progress, there has not been appropriately challenging work for more able students at a sufficiently early stage.

9. Student's work in science is in line with expected standards in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Achievement overall is satisfactory, with some students now achieving highly in both Years 9 and 10. Students of all abilities demonstrate competent laboratory skills as a result of teaching which places appropriate emphasis on practical work. For example, students in Year 9 improve their understanding of electricity from their investigations into cells. Similarly in Year 10 students accrue a sound grasp of regulatory processes in their work on kidney and sweating physiology. They gain a secure knowledge in all aspects of science from first hand experimentation, and other investigative components of lessons such as directed library research, use of text books and information from ICT resources.

10. In lessons of other subjects, and in work seen, students are now making satisfactory or good progress in Year 9. They are achieving better than expected standards in PE where, for example, boys demonstrate consistently good levels of technical skills and the

majority of girls control movement effectively too. Students' are achieving as expected in art, where work on display already shows a high standard of achievement compared with assessments of work in Year 8. In design technology, they respond creatively to design briefs and make good progress in improving practical and organisational skills in textiles, and to some extent in food technology. In geography, Year 9 students can relate their own knowledge to new situations and relate concepts such as national product in studies of economic development. French standards are about average. Although standards in Spanish and German are well below average because students are at the early stages in Year 9, their achievement is excellent. Most students attain in line with the national average in music, but many start from a low level of musical competence when they enter the school. They make up ground in one year and have well developed analysis skills when appraising music. The standard of work in RE is in line with national expectations, and students of all abilities make good progress. Students have a sound understanding of the importance of symbolism and the major beliefs and practices of the religions they have covered, including the major festivals and teaching of Christianity. Standards are below expectation in history, but not as low as internally assessed. Attainment and progress in ICT shown by last year's Year 9 students was low, with low order skills displayed. Students on the new Year 9 ICT course demonstrate increasing confidence in handling software and evaluating their work, and are making progress to higher attainment. Students with SEN make good progress.

11. In Key Stage 4, students in Years 10 and 11 are making satisfactory to good progress in most subjects where they are now achieving well. For example in art, students become more accomplished as they experiment with the overall shape of their work. They are well informed of the work of other artists through critical studies, and they evaluate knowledgeably their performance in terms of composition and the quality of line. In design technology Year 10 students develop a satisfactory understanding of computer aided manufacturing. Higher achieving students in Year 11 are able to compile comprehensive design folders but preparatory work in Year 10 is not pushing students towards quality individual work and skills of a higher order necessary for mature work at GCSE Level in resistant materials. Geography students produce interesting and informative assignment reports drawing on written, picture, map and statistical information, but only the most able students, who are in a minority, express themselves clearly and extensively, orally or in writing. Students make good progress in Year 10 history, for example in selecting and deploying information from a range of sources in reaching conclusions. However, they have relative weaknesses in evaluating the reliability of sources, also apparent to a lesser extent in Year 11. Listening skills in modern foreign languages are generally good and develop well, speaking is below average in French where pronunciation is particularly poor but writing standards in French are above average. Year 10 music students understand the difference between major and minor chords, and between different types of scales, leading to a good working knowledge of harmony used in composition by Year 11. Their powers of stylistic and listening analyses are both well developed. Students' practical attainment in music is satisfactory by Year 11. In PE, standards of attainment are above national expectations. Year 10 students consolidate skills and techniques, using their knowledge in playing and officiating at games. Those studying for GCSE are on course to achieve above national expectations. In RE, students continue to maintain progress, use a variety of research skills to investigate religion and present their results and opinions in a thoughtful and sensitive manner. Business studies standards are below average although achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining students have sound evaluation skills but their recall of relevant terminology and concepts is a weaker area in their attainment. The new Year 10 ICT course, as in Year 9, is helping students make progress to higher attainment, but Year 11 work lacks depth, and students do not choose software based on the needs of the task, which is a skill expected of students of this age.

12. There is a commendable whole school approach to developing literacy, with work in English being seen as models for others. There are key words on display in most

departments. Activities to promote literacy include the use of word banks, (such as appropriate technical terms in science, design technology and music), writing frames in history, and extended writing in geography projects. Students' literacy skills are strongly supported in modern foreign languages where communication is well developed through careful listening, accurate speaking and phrasing language with care and attention to awareness of how grammar works in language. There are occasional examples, seen in students' work, of words that were incorrectly spelled and not corrected. As a result of school-wide attention to literacy development, standards are well within expectations.

13. Provision for numeracy in the school is satisfactory. Many subjects make use of mathematical skills but teaching does not consistently promote students' development of number skills. Good examples of numeracy development include for example, graph and tabular work in science, geography and history, measurement in design technology and science, and the use of currency in modern foreign languages. The development of an overall school policy is planned within the current year and will need careful monitoring to ensure full implementation.

14. Students with special educational needs in Years 9 to 11 make good progress in subjects such as mathematics, art, ICT, modern languages, PE and RE. Students make good progress in science in Years 10 and 11. Elsewhere they make satisfactory progress. Progress made by the gifted and talented students in all key stages is satisfactory overall. In mathematics, students in a higher attaining group in Year 9 are working at a good tempo. In art and music there are also areas of good progress, but in ICT and modern foreign languages progress is poor. In art and design, the recent Year 9 optional SAT results clearly show enormous potential, and this is being supported through a well differentiated programme of study in both Key Stages 3 and 4.

Sixth Form

15. Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes in the system for assessing attainment of students in the Sixth Form. Performance in the current Years 12 and 13 is not, therefore, directly comparable with that of Year 13 in 2000 or 2001.

16. When they enter the Sixth Form, students have a wide range of grades in the GCSE examination. This is a particular problem in mathematics, where some students have gained high grades on the upper tier of entry whilst others have gained a grade C in the intermediate tier. However, teachers in nearly all subjects have to plan their courses to match the needs of students with a wide range of abilities.

17. Overall, the results gained by students in A Level subjects have been close to or slightly below the national average since the last inspection, though results in individual subjects have varied significantly from year to year and between boys and girls, partly as a result of small group sizes. Results at A Level in 2001 were lower than in the recent past, and well below national figures, in nearly all subjects. Many students failed to gain the lowest grade of pass in one or more subjects. For the most able students, results were also poor, and several subjects failed to gain any passes at the higher grades, A or B. Particularly disappointing were results in the sciences and mathematics.

18. In the summer of 2001, most students took a range of examinations at AS Level, following courses examined for the first time in 2001. It is intended that students should take a broader range of subjects at AS Level than they have traditionally done in the Sixth Form, and in most subjects group sizes were reasonably large. In history, English, and sports studies they gained results which covered a good range of grades, including the highest grades A and B; but in most subjects few higher grades were achieved and some students failed to gain the lowest grade of pass.

19. These results in Years 12 and 13 are below national averages in nearly all subjects and there is some cause for concern in all subjects except sports studies, history and modern foreign language.

20. The school is naturally concerned that these results represent a considerable dip in performance from 2000, and has taken vigorous steps to ensure that students reach their potential in 2002. Very good systems are now in place for monitoring performance, for mentoring students, and for ensuring that those who experience difficulties do not fall too far behind. There is a comprehensive scheme for raising the quality of teaching across all subjects.

21. As a result of these developments, Year 12 students have made a good start to their courses and their achievement in lessons is close to what would be expected at this

22. In Year 13 lessons, levels of attainment are now much closer to expectation than is indicated by the results at AS Level in 2001. Students show that their understanding is in line with expectation in the many good discussions in which they take part and in their responses to questioning by the teacher. Written work is also as expected in most areas, and students show that they are developing their independent learning skills well. However, both teachers and students will need to focus their attention carefully on the skills needed to answer examination questions written for the new specifications if the results in the summer of 2002 are to do justice to candidates' capabilities.

23. In Post 16 music a number of boys are showing excellent progress in the playing of the guitar, drums and flute. One of these boys currently assists the teaching in music lower down the school.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

24. Students' attitudes to the school are good in Year 9-11 classes and very good in post-sixteen classes. Students display enthusiasm for school, and, in the main, enjoy lessons and the activities that the school provides. They demonstrate good behaviour in lessons, are able to work well together, display mature attitudes and collaborate well. For example in a Year 9 Personal Health & Social Education lesson observed during the inspection week, students worked very well together in groups to roleplay a scenario of drug awareness. Relationships in the school are good. The school pastoral system ensures that all the staff knows students well, and, as a result, students' progress is enhanced. Students relate well to peer groups, and the system whereby Sixth Formers work with and mentor students in the lower school ensures that students' perception of Sixth Form life is enhanced.

25. The school has a lack of oppressive behaviour, sexism and racism; isolated instances of bullying or challenging behaviour are rapidly identified and dealt with by staff.

26. Students have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others, and have a healthy respect for other's feelings, values and beliefs.

27. The policy of the school to encourage students to take responsibility and display initiative has a positive effect on their progress and development. Students are given ample opportunities to develop initiative and personal responsibility. They assist in various aspects of school life; these include taking responsibility for certain areas of the library and displays in classrooms, membership of their year and School Council, and arranging sports and quiz teams and charity events. Senior students contact prospective employers

arrange their own initial interviews for work experience. The Head Boy and Head Girl chair the Student Council and students assist staff with some of their tasks. In a Year 12 and 13 debate observed during the inspection week, students debated current issues of violence and crime in a sensible and mature manner.

Sixth Form

28. In the Sixth Form, students' attitudes are very good or excellent in almost half of all lessons, and the great majority of the remainder are good. They come to lessons expecting to work hard and to learn well. They take part in discussions in a very adult and mature manner, they are not afraid to answer questions from the teacher and as a result of their interaction with the teacher and fellow students they make good progress. They are very keen to derive the maximum benefit from what the teacher has to give them and ask questions when they do not understand.

29. They have a responsible attitude to note taking, and homework is, for the most part, done conscientiously. It is well presented and of a standard which is in line with national standards. Some is of a high standard. In coursework, they have a mature attitude to independent learning and use their skills well to research the topic and to select and evaluate information for their final presentation.

30. Outside lessons, students have good opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school. The Head Boy and Head Girl chair the Student Council and make a contribution to the development of the school. Other students help staff with some of their tasks, for example in assisting in the teaching of music lower down the school. In discussion, students have a very mature attitude to their education and to what the school offers them. They are keenly aware of what is good about the school and about what could be improved. They freely acknowledge the improvements which have been made over the last few months, and articulate well the ways in which the school could improve further. They are very loyal to the school and its staff, though they feel keenly those inadequacies which have a negative impact on their education.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. Teaching is better now than in the previous inspection as a result of recent work undertaken to raise its quality. Inspectors observed 145 lessons in Years 9, 10, and the Sixth Form. There were long standing arrangements for all Year 11 students to be on work experience placements during the inspection. Overall, 93 per cent of lessons throughout the school are satisfactory or better, and 60 per cent are good or better, including 19 per cent that are very good or excellent. In the main school (Key Stages 3 and 4), 91 per cent of lessons are satisfactory or better. In Key Stage 3, 24 per cent of lessons in Year 9 are of a very good standard or excellent but 12 per cent are unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 4, 15 per cent of Year 10 lessons are very good or excellent and 41 per cent good, but 7 per cent are unsatisfactory. There is scope for further improvement, particularly in Year 9. Although there are some examples of very good teaching in science, as at the time of the previous inspection there are some clear weaknesses too. The weakest subject teaching is in ICT.

32. Although there is little difference in the extent of Year 9 and 10 students' learning, more students are making satisfactory or better progress than at the time of the last inspection. Fifty nine per cent of students in Year 9 and 67 per cent in Year 10 make good, very good or excellent progress, whereas twelve and nine per cent make unsatisfactory progress respectively.

33. Since the last inspection, there has been an increased emphasis on improving the effectiveness of teaching. Heads of department and teachers have worked together to set and meet quality standards which are now used to judge their work. The school is working in partnership with other schools in the town to raise aspirations. These improvements are now making a clear contribution to students' progress and achievement in lessons.

34. There are many features of the better lessons that contribute to good teaching. Where teachers use their good subject knowledge and expertise in managing activities and students' behaviour effectively, there is a positive working atmosphere in most lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are good and they respond with good behaviour. For example, in RE there is an atmosphere of trust and respect skillfully created, and in a Year 10 food technology lesson good relationships enabled all students to achieve a satisfactory outcome to their work.

35. Lessons are carefully planned, with clear objectives which are fully explained to students, so they know what they have to do and why they are doing it. Planning builds in different activities and levels of work which are well matched to students' abilities in the class. For example, the best lessons in Year 9 English make effective use of worksheets for students of different abilities as well as sensitively grouping students for collaborative discussion. In consequence there is better learning for all. Different worksheets are used in French, which, together with clear instructions and a good brisk pace, help keep students, especially boys, concentrating on their tasks. More highly attaining students are set appropriate additional tasks to challenge them in business studies. Setting arrangements in mathematics and science lead to effective teaching methods. Teaching provides a good balance between practical and contextual elements in artwork. History lessons make effective use of video, simulations, discussion, and paired and group work to enhance learning. Geography teachers make lessons much more relevant by drawing on their local knowledge and students' own experience, for example to widen their understanding of economic development in Brazil. Skilful questioning is used to challenge students' thinking. For example, students in PE are led to expanding their ideas into more detailed extended answers. Good use is made of discussion in plenary sessions, for example in geography and PE, to review and sum up the lesson effectively and to plan future work.

36. Students with SEN are effectively helped by attention to their individual education plans and by good use of support staff, and in turn they learn well. For example, support assistants successfully help those in Year 9 to develop oral, reading and writing skills in modern foreign languages and English. They also help by making good use of ICT to improve students' pronunciation and spelling. Individual help in technology helps to improve practical skill, such as in food technology where a student preparing vegetables was helped to learn to work safely with sharp tools. Teaching in the new study centre is well matched to students' needs and in consequence provides challenges to help them make progress. However, classroom resources are not always appropriate; they are good in RE and modern foreign languages, but much less suitable in music and geography.

37. There are some aspects of teaching that require further attention; the situation is diverse. There are missed opportunities to inform students of how to raise their standards of work; for example, information that is gathered about their performance is recorded carefully, but is not analysed and used with enough rigour to set appropriate and challenging targets. Although marking is diligent and constructive comments are given in RE, ICT, geography, art, comments lack focus in business studies, lack clarity in history and English, are not shared in PE, are inconsistent in science and technology, and are only given orally in mathematics. Teaching sometimes misses opportunities for students to learn more effectively when there is a narrow range of strategies; the good resources are not fully used, and gifted and talented students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve higher standards. In GCSE English, there is scope for further improvement by extending

the work requiring analytical skills and fluency of expression. There are occasions where teaching did not provide activities that were sufficiently interesting, for example in design technology; in history, expectations were not high enough to challenge and inspire students. Not all one-hour lessons are suitably broken up with a change of activity or an intervention by the teacher with the whole class. Learning in lessons is not always securely consolidated, as in mathematics, where on occasions, inadequate time management leaves insufficient time at the end of the lesson to reinforce understanding. On few occasions too, learning and attainment is unsatisfactory because students display poor attitudes. For example in English, history and music, a minority of students act boisterously or show disruptive behaviour, which is not effectively confronted by teachers.

38. There are now excellent facilities for ICT, and teaching in the new Year 9 and 10 courses help students develop a range of appropriate skills. However, some teaching in Year 10 does not inspire and extend students at all well. Some subjects make good use of ICT to improve learning, for example design technology, modern foreign languages, music and RE; ICT is used effectively to support students with SEN. There are limited examples of the use of ICT in science and in English, but arrangements to support learning in Key Stages 3 and 4 mathematics, art, geography, history, and PE are inadequate. Literacy across the curriculum is being implemented; key words are clearly displayed in many areas. There are many opportunities now being taken of enhancing students' skills. For example, in history the use of writing frames, reading aloud and displays of subject specific terminology support literacy, although these practices could usefully be extended. Numeracy is being developed satisfactorily. Students are taught effectively to represent and interpret numerical information in tables and graphs, and to measure and record in several subject areas; these include physics and chemistry (but less so biology), design technology, ICT, geography and history. They are also taught effectively to use numbers and currency in modern foreign languages.

Sixth Form

39. At the time of the last inspection teaching was stated to be satisfactory overall with very few unsatisfactory lessons in the Sixth Form. The report refers to the good subject knowledge of teachers, the excellent rapport between them and their students and the appropriate methods used to support learning.

40. Overall, teaching in the Sixth Form is now good. It is at least satisfactory in the vast majority of lessons and is very good or excellent in about one fifth of all Sixth Form lessons. Inspectors support the view of students and teachers that relationships are at least good and often very good. Students come to lessons expecting to learn, and the atmosphere in nearly all lessons is conducive to good learning. In English, sports studies and physics the overall quality of teaching is particularly good. In most lessons, the quality of learning is in line with the quality of teaching.

41. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, which they use well to enthuse their students across a wide variety of areas of the curriculum. This is a particular feature in mathematics, physics, DT and geography. Teachers' good grasp of the subject content enables them to design lessons that have a good variety of activities, and to lead good discussions which improve students' literacy skills. They are able to respond well to emerging issues during a lesson, leading to good quality learning.

42. Teachers plan their lessons well in nearly all subjects. Where planning is good, it takes account of students' progress during earlier lessons within the topic; for example, in choosing design and technology projects which present students with an appropriate challenge whilst leaving a realistic chance of success. It also enables teachers to present

a developing topic in a measured and logical way, so that students are fully engaged throughout. This leads to good understanding and the development of evaluation skills. For example, in a physics lesson on Newtons' laws, the student quickly moved on from the routine to solving problems of a more complex nature. In a lesson on health and social care, the teacher had prepared an excellent information pack on factors that affect health. Where planning is less good, for example in chemistry, the teacher pays insufficient attention to how students learn, presenting them with information which, whilst leading to the immediate goal, does not do enough to develop a deeper understanding. Lessons such as these do not do nearly enough to support good understanding, or the skills needed to solve problems, and learning is unsatisfactory. In geography, monitoring of progress is very good, and it is also good in DT. In business studies, students comment on the value of regular constructive feedback. In these lessons learning is satisfactory, but could be better.

43. In some subjects, planning does not include sufficient provision for assessment and monitoring; for example, in mathematics where teachers do not adequately monitor students' note taking or in sports studies where there is insufficient diagnostic feedback on students' written work. This is an area that is in need of further coordinated development across the school so that students feel confident that they have an accurate picture of their own progress, a topic of some concern in the returns of the student questionnaires. Although students make satisfactory or good progress in lessons, in the longer term their learning is satisfactory.

44. In nearly all subjects the methods used by teachers are appropriate. Particular strengths were in sports studies where a brainstorming approach was used to introduce a new topic and physics where the use of a good variety of demonstrations helped students to understand the concepts of interference and diffraction as applied to ripple tanks and electromagnetic waves. In the most successful lessons in English, students are encouraged to think for themselves by the creation of an appetiter learning in which teachers bring out what students know as well as instilling new knowledge. In addition, the teachers' own skills with words coupled with a healthy sense of humour spur students on to improve the power of their own writing. These principles might profitably be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects.

45. Levels of challenge for most students are good, though teachers have to cope with students of widely varying abilities. They usually manage well, but providing enough challenge for the most able is a common difficulty which is not always well solved. The most common approach is through questioning which is well focused to the needs of the individual, and this approach is often successful, but this is an area which teachers need to address further across all subjects. Where students are well challenged, they make really good progress, and teachers need to plan more carefully to ensure that even the most able in the class leave the lesson having experienced a need to think to the limit of their capacity.

46. Discussions led by the teacher are features of lessons in many subjects, where they serve to challenge students' understanding, develop literacy skills and provide a vehicle for feeding new material into the learning process as students become ready for it. Particularly good discussions were seen in lessons in business studies and physics; however, these were very limited in chemistry. In geography, teachers need to ensure that lower attaining students are drawn into the discussion instead of leaving all the work to their peers. In most subjects, however, discussions make a major contribution to students' learning.

47. Nearly all subjects use a variety of activities to enthuse their students; for example, in geography, well chosen text and video resource materials as well as fieldwork are used to capture students' imagination. Use of ICT resources is an area of development. Students

make use of internet facilities in the library in most subjects, but more of use of ICT is most common in English, DT, Science, Modern Languages and RE. Development of independent learning skills is a feature of work in the Sixth Form, often through use of the Internet, but this is an area which needs further attention.

48. Comment has already been made on the good use of discussion to develop students confidence and communication skills in most subjects, but in most areas of the curriculum the opportunity is missed to deal with moral, ethical and spiritual issues in the same way. This is an area for development.

49. Overall, teaching has all the features needed to provide a stimulating and inspiring education for students in the Sixth Form. Nearly every subject has something to offer in terms of good practice which would be of benefit across the curriculum. But many lessons that are satisfactory or good, could be very good or excellent if the best practice seen in the school were to be applied everywhere. Particular areas for development should be:

- ensuring that the most able students are given a challenge which enables them to reach their potential;
- engaging all students in stimulating discussions;
- developing students evaluation skills further to improve their capacity for independent learning.

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

50. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory, and with the exception of a daily act of collective worship, statutory requirements are fulfilled in Years 9 to 11. As a consequence of the school having moved to a two week timetable with five holiday lessons daily, some subjects have had their curriculum time reduced at GCSE Level which is having some effect on standards. In Year 9 the school follows a fairly conventional curriculum pattern. There are issues over the continuity of the curriculum in a number of subjects, although in some, such as design and technology and history, there are links with local middle schools to try to ensure that students build on their previous learning. A strength at this level is modern foreign languages, in which all students are offered a second language after initial taster courses in Spanish and German. However, this reduces the time available for a range of other subjects including art, science, history and geography.

51. Responsibility for overseeing the curriculum rests with an assistant head teacher, who has been increasingly involved in this area over the last three to four years and has been instrumental in securing a revision of the Years 10 11 curriculum. Important objectives have been to heighten motivation and engage students as fully as possible in their learning. A significant number of students are disapplying from the National Curriculum requirement to study a modern foreign language, and some of these follow courses providing additional support in English, mathematics, leisure oriented physical education and key skills. The most important change has been the introduction of a GNVQ in information and communications technology in September 2001 for all Year 10 students, reflecting the school's commitment to tackling the major weakness in this area highlighted by the previous report. Concern over the amount of time available for religious education in Years 10 and 11, which was raised then, still remains an issue. There are curricular strengths in art, and design and technology. GCSE drama has not been offered this year due to the lack of a specialist teacher, but fourteen students have taken up a philosophy and ethics option at GCSE Level.

52. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities for students to experience new activities, consolidate skills and enjoy new challenges. Despite geographical isolation, the school offers a range of interschool competitive opportunities. Sport is used effectively in Year 9 as a means of integrating students into their new school and participation is good. Art trips, the Italian club, visits such as to the National Food Show, all contribute to students' wider learning. Computer rooms and the library are open at lunchtimes and after school for catch up work, additional study and help with homework. Mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music offer extra classes at the end of the school day for extra revision or practice. In design and technology, the *techno-scrap* group has achieved notable success in national competitions for building robots. Music is very strong, with the ceilidh band performing regularly at local venues and events, such as at a local hypermarket, at a light switching on ceremony, and at Berwick schools millennium celebrations. Examination students took part in *Music Live 2000* at Birmingham. The school participates in the *Waterstones Good Reading* scheme and the debating society gives opportunities for students to express views and opinions. Students are encouraged to participate in the many additional activities that are available through the school's close links with the Berwick Youth Association. A significant proportion of school students access the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme organised by the school. The extent of commitment to this scheme makes a significant contribution to students' development, and is much valued in the community.

Work Related Curriculum

53. The work related curriculum is well supported by a firmly established and successful programme within PSHE. This element of the curriculum builds upon careers education in Years 9 and 10, and is especially designed to support Year 11 students' understanding of the world of work and the two weeks they spend on work placement. All Year 11 students take part in this programme and the success rate is high. On return to school, all students are debriefed and the vast majority report having had an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. Those students who might need extra support are identified prior to the placement, and additional support is given both prior to and during the visit. This programme is so well established that all staff are involved in monitoring students' progress. They both speak to the employers and visit students on site.

54. The employers themselves report good relationships with the school and the agency that places the students. They feel that students turn up knowing what to expect after having been well briefed by their teachers. Employers appreciate the staff's monitoring of students, and feel that both the students and they gain from this arrangement. One employer commented on the structure of the programme, comparing it favourably with another scheme within the locality. Another employer was keen to offer a student a permanent post on completion of the school year.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

55. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, but there are significant weaknesses in some areas. The school conducted a review of its provision of this aspect in 1999 and as a result drew up a policy that encouraged all subjects to address this area. However, there is still a lack of consistency between departments. A few have carefully analysed their subject area to see how they can effectively promote this aspect of development, but others have not. As a result there are a significant number of missed opportunities. For example, during an excellent lesson in religious education, students were provided with a careful structure which encouraged them to explore their own responses to poetry and music. However, opportunities for similar experiences are missed in subjects such as English and history, and geography

has failed to identify those areas of the curriculum where students can be encouraged to reflect upon the world around them. This lack of consistency is also reflected in spiritual provision. School assemblies vary considerably. During the inspection, one assembly included an act of worship whilst another did not. The use of the *theme for the week* in tutor time, also varied considerably. Some tutors used it well in tutor time, whilst others failed to use it at all. The failure of the school to meet statutory obligations for a daily collective act of worship, and the lack of a carefully planned approach throughout the school, leads to the provision for spiritual development being unsatisfactory.

56. The provision for moral development is good. The school endeavours to create a positive environment, which seeks to reward rather than punish. A carefully managed system of awards is used to celebrate achievement, providing students with positive reinforcement for good behaviour. Teachers provide good role models, constantly encouraging students to consider their own responses to moral challenges. A well organised PSHE programme provides students with many opportunities to examine moral dilemmas. This is reinforced in other subject areas such as history where students consider the moral implications of historical events such as the holocaust.

57. The provision for the social development of students is also good. Good relationships are based upon a positive approach to social development. Students are encouraged to work together both in the classroom and in the organisation of such things as charity events. An active school council provides an opportunity for students to become involved in developing their own community. This sense of social responsibility is encouraged in design and technology, where care is taken to ensure that tasks are firmly rooted in social and culture issues, for example designing devices to assist the elderly. Students are encouraged to take part in a residential course in Year 9, and their involvement in a very strong *Duke of Edinburgh's Award* programme encourages their social development.

58. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Many subjects focus strongly on our own cultural traditions. In English, students frequently address literature that reflects our own culture such as the recent involvement of students in the national poetry week. Both music and art deal with subjects that reflect the cultural traditions of our society; for example a ceilidh band frequently visits the school. There is limited exposure to the wide diversity of cultures and life styles that are now found in our society, but some subjects do include aspects of other cultures. European culture can be found in history, but the teaching of modern foreign languages is not fully embedded in the everyday life and culture of the language being studied. However, there is a programme of enhancement that provides opportunities for students to visit places of interest. There are trips to France and Germany as well as visit to cultural events in this country. In food technology, students are encouraged to explore the foods that are found in religious festivals around the world, and in textiles clothing and styles from various cultures are explored. The life styles and beliefs of other religious groups are dealt with in religious education, but there is only limited coverage of the celebrations and festivals of other religions in school assemblies.

Sixth Form

59. In the Sixth Form statutory requirements are not met as there is no religious education. The school offers a good range of AS and A2 courses, enhanced by the availability of intermediate GNVQs in health, business and media, and an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in health and social care. The school is the sole provider of courses at this level in the locality, which explains the continuation of some courses which have a low uptake, such as home economics with five students at A2 Level and only two at AS. The breadth of the Sixth Form is enhanced by community

provision based at the school, which offers a range of courses, including certificated ones such as A Level sociology and law. A notable weakness is the complete absence of any opportunity for recreational physical education within the school day. The timetable operates over a two week cycle and this generally works well, though students speak of occasional difficulties when lessons are timetabled with gaps of several days between them.

60. The range of courses is well matched to the needs of the students in the school. The quality of curricular provision is good in English, design and technology, and health and social care. In other subjects it is satisfactory, and serves the needs of most students well. However, the detailed structure of the curriculum often fails to do enough to develop explicitly the skills required for the higher grades in AS and A2 examinations. This is an area which the school needs to address carefully across all courses, both by identifying and challenging the most able students in lessons, and also in longer term planning.

61. Computer rooms and the library are open at lunch times and after school for catch up work, additional study and help with homework. There is a good range of extra curricular activities available, including interschool competitive opportunities, strong extra curricular music, the debating society, and close links with the Berwick Youth Association. A programme of visits, such as to art exhibitions and the National Food Show contribute to students' wider learning.

62. A significant proportion of the senior students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme organised by the school. The extent and commitment of this scheme makes a significant contribution to students' development and is much valued in the community.

63. Teachers are good role models for the students in the Sixth Form. They have very good relationships and by their example show students the advantages of an orderly community based on high moral standards. They need to do more, however, to develop the spiritual aspects of the courses by giving students opportunities for reflection, for example in literature or the arts, or about the wonder of the natural world. In a physics lesson, for example, the attention of students was drawn to the genius of scientists of an earlier age who were able, using only relatively simple apparatus, to measure the extremely short wavelength of light. Teachers draw students' attention to cultural aspects where these are relevant in lessons, but this aspect is underdeveloped and more explicit reference could be made to the rich cultural heritage of the society we live in.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Procedures for child protection and ensuring students welfare

64. Procedures for child protection and students' welfare are good.

65. The Child Protection Officer is known to staff and liaises well with the appropriate agencies, but would benefit from training to maintain up-to-date knowledge of practice and procedures. The child protection policy is comprehensive and is known and understood by all staff. They receive induction training by the Child Protection Officer on appointment to the school.

66. Individual subject departments have their own procedures for risk assessment and control of hazardous substances. Although the Health and Safety policy is in draft form only, and has yet to be approved by the governing body, an annual Health and Safety Audit has very recently been carried out by the school in accordance with it. The school has an adequate number of first aiders, all of whom have received up-to-date training.

Records of first aid treatment, fire alarm testing, lift maintenance and fire practice, are up to date and meet statutory requirements.

67. The support for students' educational development and personal guidance is good. The school has a wellstructured pastoral system where form tutors stay with students throughout their school life. All students have opportunities for individual counselling sessions with their form tutors on a structured basis, and additional sessions are available if required. Students who are identified as being in need of additional help are now offered a place in the recently opened Study Centre funded by inclusion monies. Regular meetings are held with form tutors, subject leaders and head of year, and any academic or pastoral

problems that students have are identified and students are professionally counselled and advised. The school's very effective review system supports students well in their progress, giving good opportunities for all students to discuss and revise targets for improvement regularly with their tutors.

68. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. Registers are accurate, up to date and fully comply with legislation. Registration is effected by the SIMS system and the school has recently appointed a school attendance officer to record and monitor attendance, and to check on first day absences. This has successfully resulted in an improvement in attendance in the last month from 89 to 93 per cent. Two education welfare officers are available to the school for home visits, and liaison between them and the Attendance Officer is very good.

69. The school has recently introduced a policy to promote and monitor good behaviour, and to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour. This policy is in its early stages of development, but is firmly applied by staff and understood by students. Poor behaviour is addressed and categorised by five stages of sanctions, with the ultimate sanction being permanent exclusion. There are no permanent exclusions at this time. Good behaviour is promoted by the award of certificates, stickers in planners, praise and prizes.

70. The school has a very well developed PSHE programme that is taught by a single member of staff responsible for the subject. This programme has a very detailed scheme of work, and comprises modules on drug awareness, citizenship, sex education, planning for adult life and self-awareness. Although it is only timetabled for half an hour per week, and is not delivered to Years 12 and 13, the programme is already having a positive impact on students' behaviour.

71. Improvements to attendance have been maintained. The school has also made considerable progress in the introduction of behaviour policy and personal development of students. This is worthy of note since the last inspection.

72. Assessment and monitoring of students' performance is satisfactory overall at Key Stages 3 and 4. There are satisfactory systems for storing and analysing data on students' test and examination results. These successfully identify trends in school performance overall and in the performance of boys and girls, ability groups and students with special educational needs. Currently, gifted and talented students, the highest attainers, are not formally identified in the system. A school policy on gifted and talented students will be implemented in January 2002. Challenging targets for students' progress are initially set by senior management; however, these are not focused on individual learning needs and departments are not consistent across the school in the way they use the information in their planning and in their monitoring of students' progress. For example, in Years 9, 10, and 11, many departments, including art, science, religious education and special educational needs, support students well with regular assessment and feedback and by setting appropriate targets for improvement. However, there are weaknesses in English and in ICT where the use of assessment is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Consequently there is no information which can identify to what extent the national requirements for ICT are being met. Marking of students' routine work is satisfactory overall.

73. There is a strong whole school policy on improving students' achievement, which forms the basis for departmental improvement plans. This applies especially to the addressing of the needs of some groups, for example, boys. Some departments successfully identify weaknesses and plan for improvement. For example in science, the poor performance of boys has been partially remedied by fewer teacher changes. On the

other hand, in modern languages, the learning needs of abler students have not been fully addressed.

Sixth Form

74. In the Sixth Form, assessment and monitoring of students' performance and progress is good overall. There are efficient procedures for tracking students' improvement in relation to their GCSE grades, and previous A Level and AS level results are stored and analysed centrally, and compared to national examination data. Departments generally use this information well.

75. In most subjects, students are kept well informed of their targets for improvement and their progress is well monitored, for example in physics, design and technology, modern languages, health studies and music. However, monitoring and target setting is poor in a significant minority of subjects. In chemistry, and in both English and mathematics in Year 12, monitoring and target setting for students' improvement is weak and provision for assessment generally in ICT is unsatisfactory. Marking of assignments and routine work is good overall. The school review system operates very well in the Sixth Form. Students generally receive very good personal and academic support from their tutors. There are good opportunities for students with study or personal difficulties to receive additional mentoring, for example in the case of one Year 12 student who was helped by her tutor to overcome initial learning problems in two subjects.

76. The systems now in place for monitoring students' work have been developing over some time and differences between subject areas may reflect the developing situation. However, assessment and monitoring and the good use of the resulting data are fundamental to raising the attainment of students. The school has made a good start, and now needs to consolidate what has been achieved in some subjects across the whole curriculum. In particular, tracking the progress of each student through from Key Stages 2 and 3, and GCSE to the Sixth Form will give subject teachers a good basis on which to build the skills and understanding that are needed to raise attainment in the Sixth Form.

Advice, support and guidance

77. Students in the Sixth Form are well supported by subject teachers, class tutors and their personal mentors. They speak highly of new procedures that have been implemented over the last few months. They regard the advice they received on entry to the Sixth Form as supporting well their choice of courses. The school supports students well in decisions relating to university entrance and has engaged the services of an experienced outside consultant to assist students with their applications to university. Students greatly appreciate the help they are given in this respect.

78. The school also gives good support to those who choose not to apply to university, with good careers guidance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

79. Parents expressed poor views about some aspects of the school, both in their questionnaires and in their meeting.

80. The majority of parents thought that the school does not work closely with them, that they were not kept well informed about their child's progress, and that the school does not provide a sufficiently interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection findings do not entirely confirm these views. Information about the school has improved

markedly, partnerships are being built and the range of opportunities for students outside the normal curriculum has widened. However, the way information about students' progress is given, other than in individual particular situations, reflects why many parents feel a lack of confidence in the school.

81. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory as a result of the school working hard to improve it. Since the beginning of the calendar year, parents receive a termly newsletter which gives a variety of information about activities and events in the school. The school brochure is a well-produced document and gives valuable information about the curriculum, school procedures and all statutory information. Parents feel encouraged by the tone of recent correspondence and see that it leads to useful dialogue. Relatively few parents help in school and there is no clear invitation in the brochure or newsletter for parents to do so. Where parents do come in to help, for example in accompanying staff and students on school outings, their work is much appreciated. The Parent Teachers Association is a small group which holds regular functions and raises valuable funds for the school.

82. Reports on students' achievement and progress are given to parents annually for all year groups. However, some subjects do not indicate clearly details of target setting and standards reached, or give an explanation of grades achieved. Parents do not like written reports that are generated from statement bank by word processor, nor those where comments are cursory. The school organises a number of review evenings throughout the year to discuss students' progress, but there are aspects which some parents find unhelpful. Appointments with teachers are not well timetabled, leading to delays. Parents do not like this inefficiency. With the exception of Year 11, meetings are held before reports are issued, so information can come as a surprise. Parents do not have the opportunity to discuss predicted grades at that time. The school properly contacts parents if it has any concerns about students' work or behaviour, and teachers are always available to meet individual parents who have concerns at other times. Parents feel that the school is now much more approachable, that issues are carefully investigated, and that their children also feel more confident about asking for support. Although parents welcome these developments, many feel that the information they receive is often too late for them to help support their children. In particular, parents feel let down when the first they hear about attainment is examinations grades that are lower than anticipated. The inspection findings concur with their views.

83. The school makes good arrangements for the transition of students from primary school to Year 9, and two induction meetings and a special assembly are held prior to students commencing at the school. Parents are given ample opportunity to visit the school prior to selection to make an informed choice.

84. Parents of students with SEN are invited to all review meetings and to participate in setting appropriate targets.

85. Students have homework diaries and planners which help them organise their work and which provide an avenue of communication between form tutors and parents. Although opportunities are provided for parents to comment on planners and reports, relatively few parents take the opportunity to do so, or to sign them to indicate that they have been seen.

86. The school has arranged a number of courses for parents to enable them to contribute to their children's learning. These have been well attended, very successful and are much appreciated.

87. The school also arranges a wide variety of after school activities including a youth theatre, trampoline club, youth dance, tennis, calligraphy, roleplay club, computer club,

boys and girls soccer, badminton and Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Students state that they appreciate the wide range of opportunities to participate in these activities.

88. Since the beginning of the current school year the school has put in place a good system for supporting students in their Sixth Form studies. One feature of these arrangements is the facility for parents to attend a progress interview between each student and the appropriate mentor. Although these procedures are very new, students recognise and welcome what is being done for them.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

89. The recently appointed head teacher leads the school very effectively. His clear sense of purpose, commitment and determination are significant factors in building a successful senior team which has a good team spirit. Senior managers are now working hard together to address the improvement agenda and to recover the present budget deficit. There is a clear potential and capability for further improvement.

90. The governors have a high level of commitment to promoting the interests of the school and are directly and actively involved in monitoring its work. The committee structure is well defined with appropriately clear terms of reference. Governors have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, which is gained primarily through active contributions to a programme of visits and meetings. Financial control procedures are good and effective. All spending is sufficiently monitored and regular financial statements are available for governors.

91. The school has a useful and detailed improvement plan that clearly and directly informs related development plans for each department. There are also school-wide issues which are embraced fully in separate development plans such as for ICT, student support, staff professional development, and Post 16 development. There are two areas already showing clear signs of success. In the first place, the school has identified improving teaching as a major priority in raising examination grades, and has an effectively co-ordinated programme of professional development and in-service training for staff. Secondly, student support is targeted at all levels from Year 9 to the Sixth Form, including specific help for students with SEN, and is contributing to students' learning and raising standards.

92. The mini-school organisation is a framework for managing and administering groups of subjects. Its effectiveness is vitally dependent upon responsible staff employing well developed leadership and management skills. In some areas, particularly social and cultural studies, they are too narrowly focused on one area to support a widening group of subjects.

93. The governors and senior management have responded in detail to the last inspection in November 1999. Governors and the new senior management have very successfully fostered a climate of working together, and the new corporate approach to school development planning is a clear advance that deserves success. The school development plan is successfully used by subject departments to set their priorities, and clearly is contributing to school improvement. Standards are now higher in Years 10 & 11. For example, the average points score in GCSE improved faster than the national trend and the proportion of candidates gaining five or more A-C grades rose significantly in 2000 and was maintained in 2001. New ICT facilities and courses for Years 9 and 10 have already raised standards, but not yet in Year 11. The quality of teaching is now better, but greater improvement is needed, particularly in Year 9. Interpersonal relationships between staff and students, and between students, personal development and attitudes to school are all good. Attendance is now consistently better than 90 per cent as a result of a concerted approach to contacting and working with parents. Students' cultural development has been improved. Targets for students' attainment are based on a detailed analysis of assessment information, and are reviewed with them at

suitable times. The school's health and safety policy is being implemented carefully. There are regular procedures to audit conditions schoolwide, and risk assessments and appropriate actions are taken. There are some areas indicated where progress has not been made. Missed opportunities still cause spiritual development to be unsatisfactory. Plans to ensure higher attaining students are formally identified and progress monitored are not yet in place. The school does not at present fulfil all its statutory obligations, as there is no statutory Sixth Form religious education and the arrangements for collective worship remain inconsistent.

94. Specific grants, especially those relating to capital building work, ICT improvement and the professional development of staff are being used very appropriately and well. However, the school faces difficult decisions in striking a balance between the need to use resources to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching, further with the need to reduce spending in order to meet the budget deficit. The LEA is working closely with the school to address the budget issue, and has prepared a recovery plan designed to redress the position within three years. However, it is ~~ev~~-dependent upon a forecast of students taking up Sixth Form courses that does not have a secure foundation. Several factors all now need to be taken into account if accurate forecasts for the budget are to be made and recovery from the deficit ensured. They include demographic trends, perceptions of the school held by the local community, standards attained in examinations and the promotion of a suitable range of opportunities and pathways to Sixth Form qualifications.

95. Best value principles are being ~~ffectively~~ applied in relation to academic success and spending on services and resources. For example, valuable new approaches to support students academically and personally in the Sixth Form, the effective use of IEPs and the development of the study ~~entre~~ for students with SEN emanate from self review and desire for improvement within the school.

96. Teachers' qualifications and expertise are satisfactorily matched to their teaching timetables, particularly so for the support given to students with SEN. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teaching and support staff to meet the curriculum. The support for newly qualified teachers, for those recently appointed, and for those working temporarily is a strength of the school. Further training forms ~~part~~ of a wider pattern of professional and personal support. The agenda of training meetings are responsive to the wishes of new staff as well as meeting whole school priorities. Accordingly, they help teachers quickly to become attuned to the aims and ~~practices~~ of the school. The professional development programme for teaching and support staff involves key personnel and is well received and highly valued.

97. Resources for learning such as equipment and textbooks are generally satisfactory throughout the school, although some are limited by the restraints of the school's budget. They have been improved in some subjects since the last inspection, for example in art, geography, history and RE

98. Several improvements since the last inspection have resulted in good accommodation for the majority of teaching areas. The refurbishment of the ~~6~~th form area, ICT rooms, and the provision of a new study centre to support students with SEN have very usefully enhanced the quality and convenience of provision. The buildings have been fitted with ramps and a lift and no student using a wheelchair is denied access to any part of the curriculum. Conveniently grouped rooms dedicated to single subjects have reduced the need for the movement of teachers and equipment. ~~ps~~ocialist provision is generally good with the majority of rooms being of adequate size. However, some science laboratories are too small for numbers in classes. The school will be using grants for building work to improve the standard of PE changing ~~rooms~~ and the sports hall. The open nature of site has led to instances of vandalism, such as broken windows, which is a drain on resources. Standards of caretaking and cleanliness are high. The site is well

maintained and a good working relationship with the County Building Surveyor ensures that repairs are carried out to a good standard.

99. The library is professionally run and is a strength in the school. Subject teachers, for example in science, arts subjects, English and religious education are provided with a wide selection of useful resources for use in class or for individual study and research. Students were observed to make very good use of the library during breaks and lunch hours. There are attractive displays of books. Clear information on setting suitable titles is available. Students are given step-by-step guidance in identifying relevant and up-to-date knowledge available in print or on line; separate work booklets clearly demonstrating these procedures are provided for main school and P6-16 students. Attractively produced book lists, in sizes suitable for use as bookmarks, recommend selections of authors and genres of books to suit various tastes. There is a choice of good quality magazines covering a variety of interests; the selection of novels contains titles attractive to both boys and girls; rates of borrowing are increasing. The library hosts lunchtime activities - poetry reading was an enjoyable activity arranged for national poetry day. The school's students participate in selecting titles for the North East Book Award. The librarian trains her student librarians from each year group boys as well as girls - to take responsibility for various sections; older students supervise the issue of books. The group of helpers are keen and industrious in their duties. One former student librarian returns to give further assistance during the week. The librarian has created an area which is most conducive to study, and which is playing an increasingly central role in fostering students' wider cultural development.

100. The school's aims and values give a renewed sense of purpose to its work. The very effective manner in which these principles are practised is the result of careful planning, purposeful leadership and commitment amongst staff. The school is developing a positive ethos and supportive climate for learning that is yet to be valued by parents and the local community. The sense of shared objectives amongst senior management is a strength of the school. The high commitment of the staff and the support they give to the school's provision in its curriculum and extra-curricular work, allied to robust, but new, management systems provide a very secure basis of sustaining improvement in future.

101. Through determined and purposeful educational leadership and management, given the constraints of financial resources available, the school now provides an overall satisfactory quality of education. The school is now effectively promoting good behaviour and positive attitudes and relationships, and has maintained levels of attainment in the GCSE. It has yet to see the benefits of the new structures, and approaches to improve students' attainment, reflected in examinations and test results.

102. Although levels of attainment in the GCSE examinations in summer 2001 have been maintained since 2000, there was a notable decline in the new AS results attained last summer by first year Sixth Form students. In turn, the proportion of students returning to the Sixth Form has fallen significantly this year. Although the school is very careful to ensure that funds are allocated equitably between the Sixth Form and the rest of the school, this has further increased the high cost of educating students in small groups, and has frustrated the recovery of the budget deficit which had been on track over the past two years. Accordingly, over this recent period, the school has given poor value for money.

Sixth Form

103. The head of Sixth Form, who took up her post only three weeks before the week of inspection, has already made significant steps to raising the profile of the Sixth Form. She has a clear vision for the Sixth Form based on raising attainment, making the learning

process in the Sixth Form a satisfying one for all students, and helping each one of them to progress into the world of work or further study. Under her leadership, morale of students and most staff is good, and both within lessons and outside them the Sixth Form provides a good learning environment.

104. The approach to the improving Sixth Form centres around identifying weaknesses and removing them, whilst providing for positive development. The school has been granted specific funds for raising attainment in the Sixth Form, and these have resulted in personal professional development for each Sixth Form teacher. The assessment and monitoring system has been greatly strengthened and personal support for students is now good. There are good arrangements for supporting students in applications for higher education or for jobs. There is an air of optimism within the Sixth Form, and students speak of the considerable improvement since the last inspection.

105. The finances of the school are well managed and the finance officer is careful to ensure that the Sixth Form, which includes some very small classes, is not a drain on the finances of the rest of the school. However, A Level and AS examination results in the 2001 examinations were poor and, as a result, the Sixth Form has provided poor value for money.

106. Nevertheless, the senior management team of the school and head of Sixth Form have identified many reasons for the poor achievement of last year's Sixth Form candidates, and are taking vigorous steps to ensure that there is a considerable improvement in 2002.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

107. In order to build the confidence of parents and the public, and the esteem in which they hold the school, the school should:

- Work closely with the local education authority to implement a feasible plan that recovers the budget deficit in the foreseeable future;
(Paragraphs 89, 94, 98, 102, 105)
- Raise attainment at the higher levels, especially in English and mathematics, and of boys more widely, throughout Years 9 to 11;
(Paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 17, 18, 73, 112, 113, 114, 115, 129, 132, 142, 144, 145, 175, 176, 179, 194, 195, 196, 197, 203, 204, 206, 213, 216, 219)
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Year 9;
(Paragraphs 31, 32, 37, 148, 208)
- Develop the use of ICT to support students' learning throughout, but particularly in mathematics, art, geography, history and PE, and improve the quality of assessing students' ICT skills throughout the curriculum;
(Paragraphs 38, 135, 169, 210, 221, 248, 263)
- Improve consistency in the leadership and management of the schools;
(Paragraph 92)
- Ensure consistency between subject departments in the implementation of school policies and procedures for:
(Paragraphs 37, 55, 72, 73, 76, 93, 114, 121, 133, 144, 145, 180, 190, 201, 218, 231, 246)
 - * assessment;
 - * the links between monitoring and target setting;
 - * taking opportunities for promoting students' spiritual development;
 - * making suitable provision for gifted and talented children;
- Make arrangements for reporting to parents upon students' progress that are timely and give good quality information;
(Paragraphs 80, 82, 85)
- Meet statutory obligations for collective worship.
(Paragraphs 55, 93)

For the Sixth form,

108 The school should:

- Ensure that the courses offered in the sixth form:
(Paragraphs 22, 60, 94, 102, 105, 272, 277)
 - * reflect the needs of the community,
 - * encourage and maintain participation,
 - * are of the highest quality;
- meet statutory obligations for RE in the sixth form;
(Paragraphs 59, 93, 255)
- develop students' awareness of moral, ethical and spiritual issues ~~across~~ the curriculum;
(Paragraphs 48, 63)
- devise strategies to develop students' independent learning skills;
(Paragraphs 47, 49, 271, 287, 299)
- ensure that assessments are planned and implemented so that students have an accurate picture of their own ~~progr~~ progress;
(Paragraphs 20, 43, 76)
- address shortcomings in planning in chemistry.
(Paragraphs 267, 268, 271, 272, 274)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

KEY STAGE 4

109. The school has aimed to heighten motivation and engage students as fully as possible in their learning. A significant number of students are disapplying from the National Curriculum requirement to study a modern foreign language. In turn, they follow courses providing additional support in English, mathematics, leisure oriented physical education and key skills. GCSE drama has not been offered this year but fourteen students have been able to follow a philosophy and ethics option at GCSE. The opportunities are accessible to all learners.

110. Students in Years 10- 11 benefit from an enhanced National Curriculum that includes a most important change introduced this year a GNVQ course in information and communications technology for all Year 10 students. The GCSE Business Studies course is now well established and offers satisfactory quality of ~~provis~~ provision. GCSE results in 2000 were below average for grades ~~AC~~ and average for grades A*-G. Results in 2001 were similar to 2000, but with smaller proportions of students achieving ~~AC~~ and A*-G grades. Standards are below average in work seen, although ~~achievem~~ achievement is satisfactory. Students describe techniques used to market different products with higher attainers showing sound evaluation skills. They identify the advantages of different forms of business organisation but recall of relevant terminology, such as 'unlimited liability', is a weaker area in their attainment. The teaching is satisfactory. Students are challenged students to learn new concepts relevant to course requirements, and higher attainers are given appropriate

additional tasks. Teaching methods lack variety leading to variable interest and motivation. Assessment methods are not sufficiently focused on individuals and their learning needs. However, this is being addressed in departmental development planning. The need to strengthen outside links is also being addressed.

111. The work related curriculum, which includes a two weeks work placement, is primarily for Year 11 students. It builds upon their earlier careers education programme and successfully increases their understanding of the world of work. The well established programme involves all staff in both speaking to the employers and visiting students on site. Nearly all students comment positively upon its value. Employers report good relationships with the school, appreciate the staff's monitoring of students and feel that both the students and they gain from this arrangement.

112. As a result of improved teaching in Years 10 & 11, students are making satisfactory to good progress in most subjects where they are now achieving well. More than half the lessons are good, very good or excellent. The new Year 10 ICT course is helping students make progress to higher attainment, but Year 11 work lacks depth, and students do not choose software based on the needs of the task, which is a skill expected of students of this age.

113. The expectations teachers have of higher attaining students are often inadequate to meet the criteria for higher grade passes in GCSE. For example in English, mathematics, and in aspects of design technology students are making progress, but there has not been enough appropriately challenging work from the beginning. In consequence students have not developed the necessary skills in sufficient depth.

114. The improved quality of teaching also promotes very positive attitudes and motivation in almost six out of ten lessons. Effective measures are in place for reviewing students' progress. Projected grades are measured during their course, and are used to identify any underachievement and to target support. However, there are weaknesses in English, and in ICT. Each student has opportunities for individual counselling sessions with their form tutor on a structured basis, and additional sessions are available if required. Students who are identified as being in need of additional help are now offered a place in the recently opened Study Centre. The school's very effective review system supports students well in their progress, giving good opportunities for all students to regularly discuss and revise targets for improvement with their tutors.

115. The proportion of students that gained five or more A-C grades in 2000 was in line with the average of a group of schools where the candidates all had similar results in the Year 9 tests in 1998, but was below national averages. The proportion gaining at least one A*-G grade was above the national average and well above the results of similar schools. The average points score rose again in 2001, continuing an improvement that has been much more rapid than the national trend since the last inspection in 1999. However, girls are continuing to attain more highly than boys, at a level close to the national picture. The trend is an issue that the school should address.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

What sort of school is it?

116. Ten per cent of students are on the special needs register and three per cent have statements. The proportion of students on the register is well below the national average and the proportion with statements is above the national average.

How high are standards?

117. Students with special needs make satisfactory progress. Students at different stages of the Code of Practice make good progress in Years 9 to 11 in mathematics, religious education, ICT and in modern languages. They make good progress Years 9 to 13 in art and physical education. Students make good progress in science in Years 10 and 11. Post 16 students make good progress in health and social care and in history. Students in Years 9 to 11 make satisfactory progress in English, geography, history, business studies, music and design technology. Students in Year 9 make satisfactory progress in science. Post 16 students make satisfactory progress in media studies and in business studies.

118. Relationships between students and support staff are good and they work productively together.

How well are students taught?

119. Students' learning is good. Individual education plans are well used; for example in a mathematics lesson planning notes included references to key points from students' individual education plans. In religious education and in modern languages, resources and methods are well matched to needs, with good awareness of individuals and good use of support staff. In work with individual students, the specialist staff makes good use of ICT to enable students to develop, for example pronunciation and spelling skills. Support staff are well used and effective, for example in enabling Year 9 students to make good progress in modern languages in developing their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. They are used well in mathematics. In one example, two support staff maintained a good rapport with students, and this motivated them to achieve a greater understanding of the properties of quadrilaterals. In one English lesson, the support assistant was fully involved in reading the text of a play, together with the students; the teacher sustained a high level of challenge during class discussion, so that students gained a good understanding of both characters and plot. In an ICT lesson, a student worked productively in creating a spreadsheet, with support provided at each stage of the process. In history, a post 16 student made good progress, particularly in oral work, but resources for younger students were not always well matched to needs. Similarly, in one geography lesson seen a Year 10 student completed a task, but resources that were not matched to his needs limited his understanding. In one music lesson, students' learning was unsatisfactory because of ineffective classroom management. Teaching in the study centre is challenging and well matched to students' needs.

How good are curricular opportunities?

120. Provision for students with special needs is good, especially in terms of the quality of support provided by support staff. Although the proportion of students with special needs is below average, the school has an above average proportion of students with statements; the level and quality of support provided for statemented students is good and has a positive impact on the learning of students at lower stages of the Code of Practice. Provision in religious education, modern languages, health and social care, and in art are particularly effective in terms of planning for special needs. Additional support for reading is effective, with the creation of smaller teaching groups in Years 9 and 10. The study centre provides a high quality learning environment with a very good student to staff ratio. The small amount of withdrawal support is well planned to develop basic skills and to support students' needs for different areas of the curriculum, for example in completing GCSE coursework.

How well does the school care for its students?

121. Links with feeder schools are good. Full use is made of information received, together with testing on entry, to identify the needs of students when they join the school. There are appropriate arrangements in place for further diagnostic testing to be used when necessary. There are regular reviews of progress of all students at stages 2 to 5 on the special needs register. The procedures for annual reviews of students with statements are thorough. Individual education plans are mostly well constructed, with targets that are well matched to individual needs. In a small minority of cases, targets are too generalised to be useful in planning.

How good are links with parents?

122. Links with parents are good. Parents of students at the higher stages of the Code of Practice in feeder schools receive personal invitations to visit the school prior to students' entry. Parents are invited to all reviews of individual education plans, and they receive copies of plans following reviews.

How well is the school led and managed?

123. There is a very good whole school approach to special needs. A range of staff at different levels of the school's organisational structure meet frequently to identify needs. Key staff who have good knowledge of students are responsible for regularly reviewing their progress, with reviews taking place twice yearly and more frequently if needs arise. The governing body is appropriately involved; there is a designated governor who maintains links with the special needs coordinator, and the governors' annual report includes appropriate references to the implementation of the school's policy. The coordinator attends regular meetings with key pastoral and academic staff, including senior staff. Links with departments are good, and staff are kept fully informed about students' special needs. Individual education plans are informative with the great majority containing clear targets. Planning is good and the school is well prepared for the revised Code of Practice. Good use is made of external services and funding is appropriately deployed. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, with all students with special needs now making at least satisfactory progress.

THE STUDY CENTRE

124. The school is allocated funding for a 23 place designated unit for students with moderate learning difficulties. In pursuing an effective inclusion policy, all students with moderate learning difficulties are fully integrated into mainstream lessons with appropriate support. The designated unit does not exist as a separate part of the school's provision for students with special needs.

125. A study centre has recently opened to further enhance further inclusive aims and values. It will cater for students with a very wide range of needs and will provide very good opportunities for students who otherwise would find difficulty in remaining within the school environment. Provision is being carefully planned with individual programmes devised. The school has established good procedures within its management systems to identify individuals who may benefit from this provision. There is already evidence of the full involvement of parents to inform the identification process. There will be a very good student to staff ratio, with a maximum of 6 students working in the centre at any one time alongside a teacher and support assistant. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to support both learning and behavioural needs.

126. The absence of Year 11 students on work experience during the inspection meant that observations of the work of the centre were limited. One Year 11 student, who had returned from a considerable period of absence from school, was observed working in the centre alongside his home tutor. He made good progress in mathematics; the work seen included calculations of areas of rooms in a house, calculation of the cost of tiling particular rooms, and estimating the number of litres of oil required to fill a central heating oil tank. The work of a second Year 11 student was seen with further evidence of a challenging learning environment provided; the wide range of work included classifying different types of trees in a science topic, extended writing about the way of life of Native Americans, completion of job application forms, and creative writing. A local employer reported the good progress made by one student on a work experience placement as part of his individual programme, with good initiative shown in the workplace.

127. Students display positive attitudes in the work seen. Leadership in terms of planning is effective, and is an integral part of the very good whole school approach to special needs provision.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 - 11	89
	Sixth Form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 9-11							
Number	3	14	32	32	7	1	0
Percentage	3	16	36	36	8	1	0
Sixth Form							
Number	3	8	27	16	1	1	0
Percentage	5	14	48	29	2	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	627	160
Number of fulltime pupils known to be eligible for free school meal	97	-

Special educational needs	Y9 - Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	81	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
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
		2000	110	110

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	24	61	51
	Girls	51	75	59
	Total	75	136	110
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	34(63)	62(56)	50(49)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	13(34)	35(37)	19(16)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	44	74	49
	Girls	69	81	64
	Total	113	155	113
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	52(60)	71(69)	52(50)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	20(27)	43(47)	20(15)
	National	31(31)	39(37)	29(28)

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
		2000	90	95

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	31	82	89
	Girls	41	85	91
	Total	72	167	180
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39(28)	90(85)	97(94)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	33.2 (29.2)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

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	27	18	45

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	10.2	14.9	12.2	2.3	4	2.8
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.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	43	7
	National		73.2

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/a
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	785
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	32	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:

Y9-13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	51.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.4

Education support staff:

Y9-13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	286

Deployment of teachers:

Y9-13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.9
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Average teaching group size:

Y9-11

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	21.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2537841.00
Total expenditure	2496351.00
Expenditure per pupil	3171.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-118838.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-77348.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers
Students aged 13-16 years
Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
 Number of questionnaires returned

627
319

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	19	57	17	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	15	61	14	3	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	13	41	21	12	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	61	20	5	3
The teaching is good.	6	49	21	10	13
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	7	40	29	10	13
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	21	56	10	7	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	29	57	8	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	10	37	30	9	14
The school is well led and managed.	11	44	18	5	22
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	13	55	17	5	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	12	43	19	7	18

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Sixth Form

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

160

Number of questionnaires returned

67

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	56	14	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	18	60	18	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	38	29	8	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	62	14	9	2
The teaching is good.	6	58	22	12	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	7	37	39	15	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	24	46	24	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	30	58	9	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	5	38	43	12	2
The school is well led and managed.	8	49	28	5	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	14	61	20	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	8	45	26	8	14

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting were concerned about:

- The fall in AS results in 2001.
- Chemistry in the Sixth Form.
- Lack of continuity with middle schools, particularly with regard to literacy and numeracy.
- The value of the homework diary.
- Not hearing about their child's problems sufficiently early.
- Making Berwick a special case for funding provision as a sole provider.
- Hygiene in the toilets.

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

ENGLISH

128. The overall quality of provision is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Planning the structure of work throughout both key stages contributes to satisfactory learning.
- Commitment to improve the performance of students particularly in literature.
- Constructive marking practices.
- Work with those students who have special needs particularly in Year 10.

Areas for improvement:

- Enhance the assessment procedures to include consistent practices of individual target setting and analyse performance of students and teachers by using management information systems.
- Identify and carry out further strategies to raise achievement of all, especially boys.
- Improve the performance of able students and increase number of A* grades.
- Improve skills of teachers to seek to inspire student performance.
- Increase the amount of differentiated work to help to develop individual needs of all students in Key Stage 3.

Standards in relation to national standards

129. Year 9 results in 2000 deteriorated from the previous year quite dramatically. Faults in the marking are given as a reason for a drop from 64 per cent at Level 5 or better in 1999 to 33 per cent in 2000. There has been a notable improvement in 2001 to 49 per cent gaining Level 5 or better, but only a slight improvement at Level 6 or better. For the year 2000, the results are below national standards and well below in relation to similar schools. The Year 11 results in 2000 were better than the previous year, both in the A-C grades and average points score attained. Boys continue to underachieve in comparison to girls. The GCSE results are still below national standards, whilst trends over time are parallel to those nationally. The results in 2001 are disappointing. There was a marginal deterioration, and no A* grades; these results should have been much better.

Standards of work seen

130. The best lessons seen in Year 9 are those that lead to better learning for all abilities within the class. For example, when worksheets are used they are written for students of different ability within the class, and where care is taken to group students based on knowledge of their abilities. Scrutiny of the work reveals that students of average ability are making progress and are already beginning to show some understanding of dialogue, of language development and of the value of figures of speech in exercising the reader's imagination. Those with above average ability produce work that reveals creativity and fluency of language. The best work seen is extended writing that had been written using a word processor.

Is achievement in line with potential?

131. The good and very good lessons in Year 10 produce some good and very good standards of work in comparison to national expectations. This particularly true of the

classes set by ability in Years 10- 11 where some high attaining students, working in groups, prepared for a group presentation about their interpretation of Act 1 Scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*. The collaborative learning, the high level of discourse in connection with the text, and the negotiating skills displayed in deciding the direction of the action and costume confirm the value of the class organisation. The work presented for scrutiny from students with average or above average ability is currently meeting national standards according to their ability. The 'express' (most able students from each half of the timetable) groups already show significant progress. Marking is consistent and encouraging and reveals teachers have high expectations.

132. Analysis of the standards of work in Year 11 is based on the scrutiny of three full sets of work. The course work files from one express group were often unsatisfactory, with insufficient work to meet the criteria for GCSE entry. The work in general, with a few exceptions, is inadequate in depth and breadth, showing lack of consistency in the use of language with too little extended writing. Much of the work of more able students lacks analytical skills, stylistic comparisons and the fluency of expression required for higher grade passes.

133. There is no methodical analysis of baseline assessments and therefore uncertainty about students' individual potential. Evidence of speaking, reading, writing and listening seen during the inspection contributes strongly to the feeling that most students do achieve their potential in both language and literature. However, there is information available from the school's assessment database that should be used by teachers on a systematic basis to measure achievement and progress. It would also be helpful to make it available to students and parents to invoke a shared responsibility for improvement.

Particular strengths and weaknesses re attainment

134. The work of those responsible for SEN provision is a strength, and the support given to students with special needs reaps rewards, particularly in Years 10-11. The work in literature is a strength throughout the department and is largely used to deliver aspects of the language programmes of study. Students are given many opportunities to read aloud, with teachers offering sensitive correction of pronunciation, although some opportunities to help students improve are missed.

135. Most students in the current Year 10 are attaining in line with expectations. Some are achieving very well, with hopes of the number obtaining A* grades being increased in 2003. However, the lack of consistent target setting for every student limits the match of work to individual students' abilities, and in consequence the raising of their achievement. There is limited use of ICT to improve attainment; it is used in the library, and work that has been word-processed is displayed on some classroom walls.

How good is the teaching?

136. The teaching is all satisfactory or better: one lesson was very good, four were good and the others satisfactory. The extent of students' learning matched the quality of the teaching. The most effective learning is by students in those lessons where the teaching is of a high standard. There are some lessons where the learning and attainment are unsatisfactory and this is because of a minority of students who are boisterous in response to class activity and a very small number who are disruptive.

How good is management?

137. The English department is managed temporarily by an assistant headteacher, because of the promotion of the previous postholder. The documentation for English is very good, and the work of the teachers indicates consistency in marking, showing that the guidelines are seen to be valuable. Those teaching in Year 9 also value the Key Stage 3 handbook. There are regular meetings of English teachers, and a feeling that support from senior management is readily available. There are useful opportunities for the exchange of views and experiences within the department. With the appointment of a new director of studies for English, the school's management is looking forward to further developments.

Literacy

138. The English staff are models of good practice for the rest of the staff. All the classrooms have good displays of key words pertinent to English. There are displays of work of students of all abilities, which are celebrated within lessons.

139. There is evidence of good literacy skills being displayed in other subjects. Key words are displayed in many subjects. In RE there are good examples of extended writing, marked and corrected, with good standards of presentation. In science, the objectives for lessons include words to learn and know, together with spelling tests. Mathematics, design technology and music stress the use of technical vocabulary. Modern languages teaching supports literacy by developing communication skills. It develops careful listening and accurate copying and phrasing of language, with an awareness of how grammar works in language. Throughout the school there are celebratory displays, many of which contain written elements. *What's in the News?* in the foyer of the science department is a good example, and there are many others throughout the buildings. The implementation of literacy across the curriculum is well established, even though officially policy is not due to come into force until 2002.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- All teaching is at least satisfactory with over 60 per cent of it good or very good.
- The students' response to teaching is good so that relationships between teachers and students are good.

Areas for improvement:

- Opportunities for students to apply ICT are very limited.
- Assessment of students' work by the use of National Curriculum Levels and grades in GCSE examinations is not carried out on a regular basis to inform both students and their parents.

Standards in relation to national standards

141. Standards in mathematics of students on entry to the school over the last three years are in line with national averages. At the end of Year 9, standards have fluctuated during the period 1997 to 2000 around the national average, and in 1999 they were well

below the national average. Attainment for boys and girls was comparable during this period, and standards in mathematics were in line with standards in English and science.

Attainment in the higher levels of national tests was in line with national tests for all schools, but below that for similar schools. In 2001, the proportion of students obtaining Level 6 rose considerably above the average of the previous three years, and at Level 5 there was a smaller rise above average.

142. Standards in the GCSE in Year 11 have fluctuated during the period 1998 to 2000, with a trend slightly below the national average for all schools and well below that for similar schools. Attainment in 2001 was slightly below the average for the previous three years. The attainment for boys was below that for girls throughout this period. Attainment in mathematics was below that for English and above that for science.

Standards of work seen

143. In Year 9, higher attaining students worked confidently in relating the lengths of sides of right-angled triangles, rearranging equations and calculating squares and square roots of numbers. Students of average attainment worked well, using number skills to find the values of unknown angles in triangles and intersecting lines. The lesson observed concluded with an introduction to presenting results using simple algebraic equations. A similar lesson with lower attaining students was successful because the teacher related the tasks to the needs of the students.

144. By the end of Year 10, all students have carried out an investigation into the number of borders in a pattern of tiles. Standards vary considerably from neatly presented and reasoned accounts, supported by good use of algebra, to others which have a brief statement of observations. The wide range of exercise books from Year 11 students indicate that all had access to a common course; they indicate a wide range of skills and tidiness across the year, with some good examples of graphical work, algebraic equations, angle properties, basic statistics and percentages. Weaknesses in work by lower attaining students showed in a lack of organisation of written work with some of the work incomplete. A Year 10 class of lower attaining students was observed over a period of two lessons to make good progress in the use of fractions to express probabilities of various events happening. Three other classes in Year 10 studied geometrical shapes to determine whether or not they were symmetrical and to calculate angles in triangles and four sided figures. Although all students made progress during their lessons, more able students could have been challenged with more difficult examples at an earlier stage of the lesson.

Is achievement in line with potential?

145. Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school due to effective support in class and the provision of problems with a range of difficulty appropriate to their needs. Higher attaining students in Year 9 made good progress during a lesson due to good planning by the teacher and an expectation that they should work at a brisk pace. A Year 10 group of higher attaining students was not sufficiently challenged in a similar way.

Particular strengths and weaknesses re attainment.

146. Students' speaking and listening skills are good. They have confidence to discuss their problems with teachers. Those students requiring support with reading receive it. Opportunities for writing skills are limited to completing sentences apart from investigations in Years 10 and 11. Some of the reports on the investigations are word processed to give neat diagrams, graphs, tables of results and written accounts of the investigations.

Number skills are improving in Year 9 because of close links with partner middle schools and with changes in teaching linked with the national numeracy strategy. The inspection did not support the view of some parents that there are poor links with the middle schools. At present, arrangements for information and communications technology are unsatisfactory, there being few opportunities for students to use it to enhance mathematics in this way. The mathematics department is aware that it must provide opportunities for data handling in course work during the coming year.

147. Students' behaviour in classes is good. Poor behaviour by students of average attainment in the upper part of the school was noted in the last inspection report. This is not the case in this inspection; students remained on task during one hour lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Teachers' questions were answered in a proper manner and the answers were listened to by other students. Most exercise books are kept in a tidy manner but some books were very untidy. Good examples of students' work that recognise their achievement are displayed in classrooms and along the main school corridor to offer models for improvement.

How good is the teaching?

148. Teaching is good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection. During this inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons, with over 60 per cent of it good and in some lessons very good. Teachers have good knowledge of mathematics, they plan their lessons well, have good expectations and class management, and are keen that students succeed. There were occasional lapses in time management. For example, there was insufficient time left at the end of some lessons to reinforce understanding, and not all one hour lessons were suitably broken up with a change of activity or an intervention by the teacher with the whole class. Homework, which is relevant to the lesson, is set on a regular basis. Teachers take a pride in the appearance of their classrooms.

How good is management?

149. Schemes of work are in place for Years 10 and 11 and the scheme for Year 9 is being revised to take into account the national numeracy strategy. The content of the programme of mathematics, and the activities for students, meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The department has a useful policy booklet on approach to number and graphical work. However, whilst good examples were observed of the support for lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11, schemes of work do not indicate how higher attaining students can have opportunities to make faster progress.

150. The department makes good use of information from middle schools, and checks on the progress of individual students so that they can be placed in groups according to attainment. Students' work is marked carefully. Teachers tell students their National Curriculum Levels and predicted GCSE grades prior to national tests in Year 9 and Year 11. However, it would help both students and their parents if these grades, and what is needed for improvement, were written on students' work on a regular basis, so that they know the standard of work achieved throughout the year.

151. The new head of department has clear and appropriate aims for mathematics, and all teachers work as a team to promote higher standards. Scarce resources are used carefully and individual students and the department have appropriate targets for improvement.

Numeracy

152. Provision for numeracy in the school is satisfactory. Many subjects make use of mathematical skills, but few subjects promote the teaching of number skills which would enhance both the subject and strengthen the understanding of mathematics. This is because there is no overall school policy for numeracy at the present time. -service training to improve awareness of the whole staff is planned for the spring term 2002, after which a whole school policy will be developed and implemented.

153. Students in both geography and history tabulate information and represent changes graphically. In geography, census data and a wide range of climatic data are presented graphically. In history changes in population are presented graphically. In design technology, measurements are taken and recorded, temperature readings are taken with an electronic probe and percentages of quantities are represented in pie charts. In modern language lessons, French and German transactions in a market or shop, and the ordering of fast food in a café, along with currency conversions, make good use of number. Calculations involving physical quantities and the balancing of chemical equations make considerable demands on number skills in science. Number work is less well applied in biology. In ICT students constructed spread sheets, but without understanding their decimal bases.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- The relationships that exist amongst the students, and between students and staff.
- The feeling of optimism within the staff regarding the job to be done. The administration and organisation of the department.
- The good accommodation and facilities of the department.
- The good technical back up for the teaching staff.

Areas for improvement:

- The recognition of students' talents in Science, and the nurturing of this talent.
- Improving the contribution of assessment to students' attainment and progress.

Standards in relation to national standards

155. Standards of achievement at Year 9 are below the national average. Achievement on entry to the school is difficult to assess as students are being admitted in Year 9. However, Key Stage 2 results for these students are below the national average. Over the two year period since the last inspection, the results in Year 9 are below the national standard, and below the average for similar schools. However, they represent a considerable improvement when compared to the two year period prior to the last inspection. Importantly, 65 per cent reached Level 5 plus in the statutory test results for Year 9 in 2001, which is in line with the national average.

156. In the GCSE, the proportion of students gaining AC grades has risen by 14 percentage points since 1999. Attainment at the highest grades of A* is still well below national averages. The results show no significant difference in the achievement between boys and girls.

Standards of work seen

157. Standards of work seen during the inspection were satisfactory in Year 9, and good in Years 10-11. Year 9 students were able to measure the voltage in various electrical circuits, and were familiar with the terms 'transfer' and 'transformation of energy'. In Year 9 biology, top set students were able to relate the structure of the leaf to the photosynthetic process. They understood the merits of *fair test*. They were familiar with input/output analysis, and could complete a word equation for photosynthesis. Year 10 students in a practical lesson demonstrated their ability to use dilution ratios to calculate the rate of reaction between hydrochloric acid and magnesium ribbon. A good number of the students were able to relate the concentration of the acid to the speed of the reaction, through the number of particle collisions. A Year 10 lower set studying heat loss of the skin through evaporation of sweat used a computer program, wet and dry bulb thermometers, and the sense of touch to determine that wet skin cooled more quickly than dry. A top set in Year 10 tackled the thermoregulation of the skin, by devising a technique using cobalt thiocyanate paper to determine the distribution of sweat glands on the body. They demonstrated their ability to relate the stimulus to the recognised response, and were seen to be working at Level 5-6. Students at both key stages and of all abilities demonstrated their practical skills. The majority of lessons observed had a practical component, which reflected the department's policy in placing emphasis on the experimental and investigative components of Key Stage 3 and 4. From the students' work reviewed, there was evidence through a series of keywords, which linked definitions to teaching objectives, that a positive literacy programme was being implemented. Evidence included definitions, descriptions in their own words and spelling. There was little evidence of numeracy programmes.

Is achievement in line with potential?

158. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory. This reflects the considerable emphasis and effort placed by staff on a wide variety of learning aids. These include, *hands-on* experience in the laboratory, directed library research, use of textbooks and directed learning, together with an increasing use of ICT throughout Key Stages 3 and 4.

Particular strengths and weaknesses re attainment.

159. In both key stages, student's work in the top sets was well presented and demonstrated good organisational skills. Students were keen to talk about their work and were familiar with the standards at which they were working. Within the middle and lower sets, work was not as well presented. The students were, however, as enthusiastic and as equally keen to talk about their work. The work of students with special needs was in line with national standards in Years 10-11. Class books were well organised, and the level of work was consistent with their particular needs.

How good is the teaching?

160. The quality of teaching at Year 9 was satisfactory. The quality of teaching seen in Year 10 during the week was good. For example, in the good lessons, teachers used their subject knowledge well. Lessons were well managed, with a good sequencing of activities. Lesson objectives were clearly and precisely set, with the use of object boards and key words displayed, to help students learn effectively. Organisation of students' practical work is a strong feature of the department. A pleasant cooperative relationship exists amongst students and between students and staff. This enables there to be good use of the facilities available in the department, and in the school's excellent

library. Project boxes relating to student research are compiled, and these, together with a range of provision in computer technology, are in current use by students. Teachers use methods that are effectively matched to the ability groups of students created by the setting arrangements in Key Stage 3 and 4. This expertise, together with specialist support for the SEN students in Years 10- 11, meets the needs of students across the whole ability range. Overall the work and progress recorded reflected the expertise of the teaching staff, and the care and concern of the teaching assistants involved.

How good is management?

161. Administration and organisation of the department is good. Both key stages have a full complement of lesson plans. Laboratory facilities and resources are good. The staff receive good quality support from the technical staff, the senior member of which sits on the school governing body. There is a close working relationship between the science staff and the librarian, which works for the benefit of the students. Assessment policies and a tracking system of students' achievements are in place. The resulting support and guidance systems have been implemented. Most of the students in Key Stages 3 and 4 were aware of their current grades, and understood the system of grading. The effort put into preparation and organisation is not fully reflected in terms of gains in students' skills and developments in their learning. This is due in part to the lack of consistent marking of students' work. Marking sometimes lacks vigour and constructive analysis. This results in students being unaware of the quality of their work, and what they have to do in order to make progress. Teachers' assessments at Year 9 in 2001 were significantly different from the test results, and did not successfully identify talented students in Year 9.

162. There is a pleasant working relationship within the department, and it is committed to the education of its students. The department needs to implement fully its marking policy to ensure that teachers' marking identifies students' specific achievements and the actions needed for improvement. Students should receive effective feedback and judgements about their progress. The policy should be both effective and manageable. In addition, the department needs to develop its system of internal testing, enabling the identification of talent, and the resulting nurturing of this talent.

163. There is a positive commitment by staff to raise the achievement of their students. Within the department there is the ability and capacity to succeed.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- The relationship between the practical elements of the curriculum and references to other artists and their work is good and generally well balanced.
- The department now has a good scheme of work that has clear differentiation of tasks, learning objectives and a homework scheme built into all activities.
- All lessons start with a good introduction to the topic that helps students to focus their ideas and engage with the work in a meaningful way.
- There is a determination to have a very effective department that delivers high standards of teaching and levels of achievement.

Areas for improvement:

- Attainment in GCSE
- Schemes of work do not have a curriculum map that demonstrates coverage of content within a year or key stage.
- Teacher presentations/demonstrations are not helped by the lack of appropriate equipment.
- Good examples are not always shown to help students understand what the task is about.
- There are no ICT facilities within the department.

Standards in relation to national standards

165. In Year 9, students perform very well, with a significant majority achieving Levels 6 and 7 in the optional SATs. This is reflected in the GCSE results from 1999 2000 where results at A* - C compare very favourably with all other subjects in the school. A significant drop in performance in the GCSE results for 2001 is a concern, but might be the result of an unsettled department due to changes in staffing.

Standards of work seen

166. There are some very good examples of Year 9 work on display that clearly shows a high standard of achievement. These selected pieces of work far exceed the standards expected at this stage in the year, and reflect the grades Year 9 students achieved last year in the SATs. The work displays a very good knowledge and understanding of materials, and students are able to interpret the flow and pattern of hair on the human head and produce very interesting and controlled effects. In Year 10, students are encouraged to experiment with the overall shape of their work, and use collage approaches extensively. There is also a good balance of critical studies. Students are therefore well informed of the work of other artists and are quite critical about their own work; they are able to evaluate their performance and talk about distribution of tones, the composition of their work and the quality of line.

167. Students ask spontaneous questions and offer comments quite freely in discussion. This active involvement contributes to their ideas and understanding. They are interested and generally very well behaved. Only in one lesson, that had a significant number of students who are on the SEN register, was there the sort of response that resulted in unacceptable behaviour. This significant minority of students showed little respect for the teacher and the interesting lesson that had been prepared for them.

How good is the teaching?

168. Teaching is mainly good to satisfactory and students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are a good balance between practical and contextual elements, sound lesson introductions, good teacher knowledge and an enthusiastic and confident approach. Some good examples of students' work are used to demonstrate tonal techniques when rendering the human face. For example, specific reference was made to the shading on the nose and lips, and to how tone is used to create a sense of form; as the lesson progressed, the teacher gave a confident demonstration of how to rework an area to create this effect. As a direct result of these interventions, positive learning is taking place. Most images produced by the students are well composed, and start to show the first signs of the use of tone to mould the form of the human face. In Year 10, the work of Picasso is used as the focus for a theme based on war. The teacher talks about the origins of the work, its content and context expressing the horrors of war. Key words are written up on the board and students are asked about them at the end of the lesson.

169. Demonstrations at the beginning of the lesson are good but they can be hampered by the lack of suitable equipment to display images and facilitate teacher demonstrations. Ongoing assessment of students' progress should be used to refocus the lesson, and, although schemes of work have differentiation built within them, the main part of the lesson does not recognise the need of the most able for a greater level of challenge from the outset. Some lessons would benefit from the display of relevant visual materials as well as examples of work that result from the exercise students are engaged in.

170. During one lesson a large number of students on the special educational needs register significantly inhibited the learning for the whole class. The teacher nevertheless was not deflected from her aims, and delivered the lesson as planned.

How good is management?

171. The department has established an internal assessment and review mechanism that informs the school about student progress, as well as the students themselves and their parents. The system also allows parents to influence the targets that are set at individual student level. All schemes of work now have clear differentiation of activities that are appropriate for all ability ranges including the most able. Homework is built into these schemes for all year groups. There is a clear set of attainment targets that relate to student outcomes. This, with the department's assessment and review procedures, should form the basis for a sound monitoring process. Although the overall structure of these curriculum materials is good, they do not contain a curriculum plan that shows what is being covered over the course of a year or key stage. As a result of this, the matching of the programme to prescribed schemes of work is not obvious, and this does not allow the department to review provision easily and match it to requirements.

172. The management of the department has been affected by significant changes in staffing in the past year. There is now a clear determination on the part of the Head of Department to make improvements in both standards and the quality of provision.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching leads to good working relationships with students and a positive learning atmosphere in most lessons.
- The quality of accommodation.
- Links with middle schools.
- Improving results in textiles and resistant materials.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of work in all areas.
- Strategies for developing students' independent learning skills.
- Revision of the course content in some areas of the Year 9 curriculum.

Standards in relation to national standards

174. The attainment of students aged 14 is average. Teachers' assessments in 2001 suggest that attainment is below average, but this is not borne out by work seen during the inspection.

175. The attainment of students aged 16 is average. Progress from Year 9 is satisfactory. GCSE results are below, but approaching, the national average. Nearly 48 per cent of students gained A* to C grades in 2000 against a national average of 50 per cent. Figures for 2001 results indicate little change from this, and the overall trend for the last three years has been static. There are, however, variations in the trends for the component subjects of this area of the curriculum. Textiles and resistant materials results have improved whilst graphics results have dropped. Comparative figures show that many students achieve better results in technology than in many other examination entries.

Standards of work seen

176. Some higher attaining students in Year 9 are able to use a range of research methods, including computer sources, to support their design projects. In general, however, these skills are not well developed and students do not use them readily. Project work in textiles, and to some extent food technology, allows students the opportunity to make individual, creative and extended responses to a design brief whilst having a strong structure to support them. Students of all abilities in a Year 9 textiles lesson made good progress in improving practical skills and developing organisational skills as they worked on a fabric printing project.

177. A scrutiny of Year 11 work showed that some higher achieving students are able to compile comprehensive design folders. One student's systems and control folder, for example, contained detailed research supported by good skills of analysis. The presentation and content had been improved by good use of ICT. Students in a Year 10 systems and control group developed their understanding of computer aided manufacturing equipment during a lesson involving the making of intruder alarms. Students have good access to computers during lessons, and where they make use of these the quality of their work is improved.

Is achievement in line with potential?

178. The introductory practical task for Year 9 students in resistant materials does not provide opportunities for the development of the independent learning skills necessary for mature work at GCSE level. Students make satisfactory progress in relation to their level of ability on entry to the school. Two Year 9 students with special needs were fully absorbed in the lesson and made progress similar to the remainder of the group.

Particular strengths and weaknesses re attainment.

179. The majority of students, however, do not use design skills readily. Lower attaining students are well supported by a strong course structure in all areas of technology. In graphics, for example, students of all abilities build up design folders containing work covering all aspects of the course, but there are no examples of quality individual work which would allow higher attaining students to demonstrate skills of a higher order. In all classes seen there was no appreciable difference between the performance of boys and girls.

How good is the teaching?

180. Teaching is good. Over half of all teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good or very good; the remainder is satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons are planned with clear objectives which are fully explained to students. Teachers have developed good working relationships with students and they respond with good behaviour. Teachers' knowledge and expertise in managing resources, activities and student behaviour contribute significantly to the positive working atmosphere in most lessons. For example, the good relationship between teacher and students in a Year 10 food technology lesson enabled all students to achieve a satisfactory outcome to their individually prepared dishes involving 'high risk' foods such as chicken. The individual help given to one student with special needs enabled her to improve her practical skill in preparing vegetables and work safely with sharp tools. Where teaching was only satisfactory, it either did not ensure that students followed sound working procedures or provide activities that were sufficiently interesting. Some marking of Year 9 students' work does not always give them constructive advice for improvement, but students on GCSE courses are supported by good written and verbal comments. Technician time is inadequate to provide adequate support in the classroom.

How good is management?

181. The leadership and management of the department are now good. The recent appointment of an overall head of the curriculum area has reinforced the integrated nature of technology. The head of department is providing a clear path for development and there is a common desire to improve standards of teaching and learning. The quality of teaching is monitored through lesson observations and the results are used to develop teaching strategies. For example, recent work on key words has resulted in improved strategies for developing students' technical vocabulary. Students' attainment is monitored by effective assessment procedures and a central database is used to record information. National Curriculum Levels are used in regular assessment and information is available to students to enable them to improve. However, assessment information is not used in a sufficiently refined way to identify underachieving students. Nonetheless, targets for the subject, which Year 9 students bring with them from the middle school, are revised in the light of what teachers have come to know about them.

182. Good links with middle schools have ensured that the curriculum for Year 9 students is co-ordinated but inspection evidence suggests that the content of some projects does not ensure sufficient progression. The curriculum offers a broad range of opportunities, including systems and control technology, and is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students benefit from, for example, participation in national schemes for cooking and robot building, and visits to a national food show. Previously successful collaborations with local industry have been curtailed by a decline in local circumstances. ICT and computeraided design and manufacture are being successfully integrated into students' work, but lack of funding has prevented the purchase of a computerised sewing machine for textiles work. Funding is low, but has been managed well and targeted to areas of most need. Lack of funds has prevented the valuable work achieved at summer school for gifted and talented middle school students from being extended as the students move into the High School. Accommodation is good, but separate locations some distance apart add to administrative difficulties. The multi purpose workshop areas are well equipped with the wide range of machinery necessary to deliver National Curriculum Technology, and good displays in all areas help to stimulate students' interest.

183. Since the last inspection there have been satisfactory improvements in the management of the department and in the GCSE results for resistant materials and textiles.

GEOGRAPHY

184. The overall quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths:

- The very good subject and local knowledge of the teachers helps students build up their understanding.
- Students' enthusiasm for geography is high, and comes from interesting teachers using a range of styles and interesting material.
- Local fieldwork is well planned and carried out.
- Lower and middle attaining students make good progress.
- Students work hard throughout well paced lessons.
- Homework is set and marked regularly and this adds to the progress students make.
- There is a good balance in the wide range of topics covered.
- The developing work on thinking skills is helping students to develop greater understanding of the world and of the people and problems in it.

Areas for improvement:

- The work done in lessons is not always sufficiently challenging for higher attainers.
- Lower attaining students tend to be quiet in class discussions. Although often well supported in their written work, they sometimes need to be encouraged to express and justify their opinions.
- There is little use made of ICT. Schemes of work will need to respond to the opportunities as soon as the new facilities become available.
- Some resources are out of date and the occasional sharing of books limits the ways that teachers can plan for students who work at different rates.

Standards in relation to national standards

185. Over the last three years, the A-C grades at GCSE Level have fluctuated slightly, but the trend is generally upwards and is approaching the national average. In 2001 55

per cent of students achieved grades A-C and 90 per cent achieved grades A-E. The school

encourages lower attaining students to follow GCSE courses. These students make good progress, but do not always enter for the exams. The difference between the boys and girls fluctuates slightly each year and in 2001 more boys achieved ~~A*~~ grades than girls, although girls did better in the overall AC range.

Standards of work seen

186. Standards of students entering Year 9 are at about the national average. Standards have improved, partly as the result of closer work with the middle schools. In lessons, teachers provide opportunities to practise those skills that will be useful for the GCSE. Year 11 course work suggests that effective teaching continues throughout Year 10 and into Year 11. Well planned guidance notes and supplementary information support extended coursework. A local investigation of coastal management was supported by an information pack with a wealth of written, picture, map and statistical information. The resulting assignment was very well written so that it was both interesting to read and very informative. By the end of Year 11, the written work of girls is of a slightly higher standard than that of boys, but the quality of presentation is equally as good.

Is achievement in line with potential?

187. By the end of Year 9, teacher predictions and school assessments indicate that students have made expected progress. Evidence from course work shows that by the end of Year 9 students are well prepared to start GCSE work.

Particular strengths and weaknesses re attainment.

188. In all year groups, lower attaining students fit in well and are helped by their teachers. In most cases they are provided with work that is not too hard but still allows them to contribute to the lessons. Boys and girls do equally well in their work, although the boys tend to do more of the talking in discussions, especially in Year 9. Teachers take steps to try to correct this.

How good is the teaching?

189. Students are highly motivated by the good teaching and obviously enjoy the subject. Teachers are very well informed, providing students with carefully planned lessons which are often rich in humour. Excellent local knowledge allows teachers to draw examples from students' own experience. In a Year 9 lesson, students used their own knowledge to identify what evidence might suggest the level of economic development. Their understanding was then applied to the study of a township in Brazil. Lessons start briskly, even dramatically, as with a rôle play assault that introduced a Year 10 lesson on the causes and impacts of poor housing. Careful planning of lessons means that students know what they have to do and why they are doing it. The most effective lessons provide information, allow time for discussion, draw conclusions and move on briskly to the next challenges. The students worked equally as hard at the end of the day as at the beginning. For example, Year 9 students calculated the national income of a number of countries accurately and were able to use this information to explain links between economic and social conditions.

190. Teaching is responsive to the needs of the students. This results in good progress being made by most students. However, there is an overdependence on the use of similar tasks for all students because in some lessons students who worked fastest were

inactive for several minutes, waiting quietly while others finished their tasks. This can restrict the degree to which higher attainers are encouraged to do better. Lower attaining students tend to be quiet in class discussions. Although often well supported in their written work, they sometimes need to be encouraged to express and justify their opinions.

How good is management?

191. The subject is well led and organised and this contributes to the good teaching and learning. Teachers are committed to developing new teaching approaches including developing challenging exercises based on appreciation of thinking and learning styles. However, course materials now require careful review in order to achieve the most effective use possible. Learning support materials are under constant revision. The range and quality of resources is generally good but the quantity does not always meet the needs of this popular subject. This means that students sometimes have to share and this can slow the progress of those who work faster than their partners. Learning targets are set and students and their homework are carefully and regularly monitored. The planned student use of the new ICT facilities depends on a programme of staff training and a review of some parts of the schemes of work. There is no policy for talented and gifted students; in particular, there needs to be planned opportunities for higher attaining students in Years 10- 11 to develop theories and to check them against the evidence.

192. All the strengths identified in the last inspection report have been maintained, and further progress has been made. Work with middle schools has achieved a more effective transfer of information. There has been some improvement in resources since the last inspection, but budget difficulties have prevented the replacement of some old books.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Students' attitudes and behaviour.
- Improving attainment at GCSE.

Areas for improvement:

- The development of programmes of study to cater for differing ability levels; these should include a greater focus on source handling skills and incorporate opportunities for the use of ICT consistently across curriculum as a whole.
- Leadership and management of the subject.
- The review and evaluation of assessment procedures which effectively monitor and support academic progress.

Standards in relation to national standards

194. Students enter the school with below average standards of attainment in history. At the end of Year 9, their attainment remains below national expectations, although probably not to the extent suggested by this year's teacher assessments. These indicated that the relative attainment of boys and girls was 40 to 50 per cent lower than that of their counterparts nationally in the preceding year.

195. The attainment of students in the GCSE examinations has improved since 1999, but still remains well below national expectations. The gap between the relative attainment of boys and girls is much less than it is nationally.

Standards of work seen

196. Year 9 students are still settling into the school and classroom routines are not yet securely established. The quantity and quality of work completed by some of last year's Year 9 students deteriorated noticeably after April as a result of staffing difficulties. Most areas of the National Curriculum were adequately covered, although there was some work on First World War battles which omitted any explanation of the logic of trench warfare. Only the most able students, who are in a minority, express themselves clearly and at any length, orally or in writing.

197. In Year 10 students make good progress in investigating and analysing the contributions of the suffragists and the suffragettes in securing the right to vote for women. They are able to select and deploy information from a range of sources in reaching conclusions about the nature of women's work during the First World War, but they are relatively limited in their ability to evaluate the reliability of those sources. This weakness was also apparent, although to a lesser degree, in Year 11 coursework on the Great War. Higher attaining students submitted extended and detailed assignments in which they commented perceptively and convincingly on the effectiveness of recruitment posters, and reconciled conflicting accounts of conditions in the trenches. Many of these were well argued and were produced with the aid of ICT. Lower attaining students tended to either describe or reiterate the stimulus material, or to assert that it was reliable and useful because it was derived from primary sources. The progress of average and lower attaining students has also been hindered by the reduction in curriculum time available for the subject in Year 10.

How good is the teaching?

198. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is always good in the Sixth Form, where the teacher's enthusiasm, expertise and pace result in good learning. Good relationships and mutual respect between teacher and students also contribute significantly to progress at this level. In Year 10, teaching is at least satisfactory and almost certainly often better (judging by the improved percentage of grades-A* and coursework seen). It was not possible to see any Year 11 lessons and timetable complications meant it was only possible to see one teacher teaching Year 10. In Year 9, teaching was satisfactory, although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen; on that occasion poor attitudes and behaviour, which were not effectively confronted by the teacher, prevented sound learning. This was an exception as the majority of history lessons are characterised by good behaviour, positive relationships and a productive approach to the work in hand. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, and use a variety of methods including video, simulations, discussion and paired and group work to enhance learning. They mark work regularly, and include helpful and constructive comment although errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always corrected. Teaching is less effective in promoting sound learning when lack of detailed planning results in lesson objectives not being made sufficiently explicit or expectations sufficiently high to challenge and inspire students. Similarly when teachers select materials which are not well suited to students' differing ability levels, less effective lessons result.

199. The teaching of basic skills is good, and there is some support for literacy through the use of writing frames, reading aloud and displays of subject specific terminology, although scope exists to extend these practices. Students' numeracy and ICT skills are not yet developed consistently across the subject as a whole.

How good is management?

200. The school's arrangements for leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The current post holder is not a history specialist and has responsibilities elsewhere. Most of the procedures for the curriculum area are derived from modern foreign languages and do not always readily transfer to history. There might be conflicting interests in assessment and curriculum timing. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

201. There is scope for improvement in the procedures used to monitor and support students' academic progress. The policy, which appears in the subject handbook, does not discriminate between attainment and effort, and gives no indication of what the grades to be awarded mean. There is inconsistency in the allocation of National Curriculum Levels at the end of Year 9, and more support is required before classroom teachers are comfortable with the statistically based target setting process.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

202. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communications technology (ICT) is good.

Strengths:

- There has been an increase in the provision of resources.
- New enthusiastic head of department.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of ICT to support learning throughout the curriculum for Years 10 and 11, and particularly in mathematics, art, geography, history and physical education.
- The procedures for assessing all students' capabilities in ICT.
- The deployment of teachers in relation to students' particular ICT development needs.

Standards in relation to national standards

203. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9 is still well below the national average, with few students in the school seeming to achieve Level 5 or above. The school figures are based upon teacher estimates, as there are no actual assessments to confirm or amend the levels indicated. At the end of Year 11, students achieve grades which are below the national average. This has been the trend for a number of years, and is likely to continue unless a robust approach to promoting improvement is taken.

Standards of work seen

204. The progress shown by last year's Year 9 students is low. They display low order skills of inserting, editing and structuring data for presentation. They are not able to demonstrate how to select information for different purposes and audiences. They are unable to talk constructively about the advantages of ICT, and cannot present information in different ways.

205. However, the new Year 9 course challenges students to develop a wide range of appropriate information and communications technology skills and to explain how to manipulate software. They are now working independently, and are beginning to demonstrate increasing confidence in handling software. They work with enthusiasm, particularly on the new element of the course which requires the creation of a multimedia presentation. Students are animated about this topic, and work with energy and interest. It

requires the combining of a range of methods into one presentation, and requires students to show progress to higher attainment by demonstrating advanced skills.

206. There are two groups in Year 11 - about a third of the students are following the long course, and the rest are undertaking a short course. Students have been working on a number of mini projects, and most have attempted a number of the required tasks. However, the tasks lack depth and relevance. For example, in a database activity the use of data and formulae are limited, and queries are weak and uninspiring. In another, there was no attempt to create a userfriendly aspect when designing a room booking system for a conferencecentre. The user would have to know how to manipulate the complex piece of software without instructions being given. Students did not explore the advantages of using ICT and its impact on the world of work and leisure. One task required students to demonstrate how to send invitations to a list of people in a database, but there was little printed evidence to show how this was achieved or how successfully it had been implemented. Most students do not appropriately annotate printouts with the necessary explanations. Students are asked to identify software suitable to undertake a specific task. They tend to compare software packages without stating which features are required for the task instead of making choices based on the needs of the task. This is a skill expected of students of this age.

Is achievement in line with potential?

207. The department introduced a new GNVQ course this year for Year 10 students. The contents of the course are full and offer challenging tasks, which provide students with the opportunity to achieve standards relevant to the level for their age. Where the teaching is positive the students respond and begin to undertake tasks appropriately. They are now demonstrating a range of advanced ICT skills, taking responsibility for their own planning and evaluation of the task. They are able to explain why they have created and included formulae in a spreadsheet, as well as describing its structure and purpose. The students have progressed in their skills and understanding, by developing their knowledge and practical activities. They respond well and work independently.

How good is the teaching?

208. The majority of the teaching is satisfactory, with some being good or very good, and leading to students now making progress in their learning. However there is some very unsatisfactory teaching which neither inspires nor extends the students to achieve at the appropriate level. This is a weakness which impedes learning, though there was evidence that students themselves are making the effort to succeed. The new courses are well planned, and the work is organised in units so that students can manage and record their own progress. The majority of the teachers also comment constructively on each piece of work which ensures continuous assessment of learning. In these groups students can see how they are progressing and what they have to undertake to reach certain levels.

How good is management?

209. The department now has an enthusiastic leader and there is a wide range of resources. The main ICT teaching rooms are well equipped, and enable students to undertake both theoretical and practical work. The teachers' view of pupils is restricted by equipment in two of the rooms. Accordingly, revisions to the layout, where feasible, would be conducive to fostering classroom control. There are computers in other departments as well as in the Sixth Form area and the library, allowing students useful opportunities for

personal research. These resources are managed by a technician, who is the professional in approach and has good quality expertise.

210. The number of other departments including ICT in schemes of work and lesson plans is limited. There is some good use in design and technology, modern languages and religious education, but this is not general other subjects of the curriculum, notably mathematics, art, geography, history and physical education. The new resources should encourage other departments to develop their use of ICT, as two of the computer rooms are available for booking. Students in Years 10 and 11 should have opportunities to use ICT in all subjects to ensure that they participate in the full range of skills and experiences appropriate to their age and ability. There should be procedures for indicating where each student gains experiences, and the levels of their achievement.

211. The progress in resources is now matched by good quality courses and some motivated teaching, which is improving learning and allowing students to make progress. If this healthy approach continues, then the low attainment should improve and students will achieve at levels suited to their age and ability.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

212. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is average and is improving.

Strengths:

- Teachers' shared commitment to raising standards.
- Excellent subject knowledge of teachers.
- Very good IT-generated resources to support students' learning.
- The quality of formal assessment procedures.

Areas for improvement:

- Opportunities for students to develop speaking skills.
- Standards of attainment of able students.
- Standards of attainment generally in French.

Standards in relation to national standards

213. The foreign languages taught at the school are French, German and Spanish. In 2001, students' attainment in French at the end of Year 9, based on teacher assessments, was above national expectations. This continues an overall trend of improvement at Year 9 since 1999. The results of the boys in 2001 at Year 9 were an improvement on those of the previous year, and, against the national trend, were better on average than the results of the girls. GCSE results in French in 2001 were well below the national average, representing a trend of increasingly poor performance over the last three years. The results of the boys were very poor, being very much lower than the national average for boys. All students study either Spanish or German in Year 9 after a half term taster course in each of these two languages. In the GCSE results in German in 2001 students gained below average results, although these were a significant improvement on the results of the previous year and continue a trend of improving performance in German since 1999.

Standards of work seen

214. Current standards in modern languages are average overall at Year 9. In French, standards are in line with national expectations, and achievement is satisfactory overall.

215. Students' listening skills are generally good and develop well over Key Stages 3 and 4. This is because all the teachers have excellent subject knowledge, being either native or fluent speakers of the languages they teach, and most use the foreign language consistently in lessons. For example, in a successful Year 9 Spanish lesson, the teacher delivered the lesson in fluent Spanish, enabling students to become familiar with rapidly spoken language and to undertake listening exercises confidently. Improving standards and confidence in listening were seen in a Year 9 French lesson in which the students received praise from the teacher for their good performance in a listening test, and students were encouraged by his reference to their general progress in this skill.

216. Speaking skills at Key Stages 3 and 4 are below average in French and average in German and Spanish. At Key Stages 3 and 4, many students speak hesitantly in all three languages but in French, pronunciation is particularly poor. In the mixed ability groupings in Year 9, many able students do not perform better in the National Curriculum Levels than their peers. By Years 10- 11, many students have underdeveloped speaking skills in French, due to insufficient emphasis on developing good speaking habits and thorough preparation of spoken language whilst they were in Year 9. For example, in a Year 10 wide ability French lesson students participated enthusiastically in a very well planned class survey about home routines. However, many were unable to produce coherent sentences with a reasonable French accent because of inadequate preparation and demonstration of the correct model beforehand.

217. In both key stages, most students attain above average standards in reading skills. At Key Stages 3 and 4, many can read and understand a range of texts in French appropriate to their ability and experience, progressing from, for example, single sentences in familiar language in Year 9 to letters and short, then longer passages in Years 10 and 11. This is due to good lesson planning and well structured reading tasks. For example, in a very good Year 9 French lesson, most students worked successfully together in pairs through a range of increasingly difficult reading exercises. The range of tasks within lessons and frequent paired learning activities result in the students' good levels of motivation and behaviour.

218. At Year 9, standards of writing in French are average overall. Most students can use basic grammar confidently in structured exercises, write familiar language accurately, and have a sound topic based vocabulary. Lower attaining students in Year 9 can write accurately in French with guidance but in simpler language and shorter sentences. Able students however, do not progress rapidly in French to the higher National Curriculum Levels and are not given frequent opportunities to use their language creatively. However, in Spanish and German within a few weeks most students can already write brief sentences confidently. This was seen in a Year 9 German lesson based on personal information, in which students, after learning essential expressions based on a colourful overhead transparency, confidently reused the language by writing descriptions accurately. In Years 10- 11, writing in French is below average overall. Small numbers of students reach good standards, for example by writing in full sentences on a range of topics and often incorporating personally researched material; however, many make basic errors, and presentation is often poor. Students are not supported in their writing competence by thorough routine marking by some teachers. In Years 10/11, in German and Spanish, writing is average overall, with most students writing confidently according to their experience. In all three languages, lower attaining students achieve well and write brief sentences on a lower language level, as a result of good teacher guidance and prompt sheets.

Is achievement in line with potential?

219. Standards in Spanish and German are well below average, because students are at the early stages in Year 9; however, the achievement of students in these languages in Year 9 is excellent. This is because in Year 9 teachers deliver lessons in German and Spanish at a good pace in the limited time available. For example, in a very good Year 9 German lesson, students were well motivated by the enthusiasm of the teacher and made rapid progress through a range of speaking and writing tasks. In Years 10-11, standards in French are below average, but this represents an improvement on the well below average standards of the GCSE examination results in French in 2001. In German and Spanish in Years 10-11, standards are average overall with very good achievement in view of students' short time of studying these languages.

Particular strengths and weaknesses re attainment.

220. The boys respond well to language learning when teachers have clearly established routines, and when they enable students to work through fast moving activities within strict time limits. In a very successful Year 9 French lesson, all students and especially the boys were motivated and productive in speaking, reading and writing as a result of the teacher's brisk pace of lesson delivery and clear instructions for tasks. Students are very well supported in their learning of French, German and Spanish by excellent IT-generated resources which give a clear framework to all the language learning, and enable students to see what progress they are making. One good example was in a Year 9 French lesson in which some potentially noisy students were kept on task as they worked in groups with different worksheets according to their ability. In this lesson, all students, including those with special educational needs, made progress in speaking, reading and writing skills. Students with special educational needs achieve well in the mixed ability groups. They are well integrated into lessons as a result of teachers' awareness of their language needs, and because of very good help from the learning support assistants.

221. At Key Stages 3 and 4 there is limited provision for students' development of ICT; however, some students use word processing and graphics successfully, for example to present GCSE course work. Gifted and talented students are not formally identified, but the committed staff provides very good learning opportunities for keen linguists in lunchtime lessons in Italian and Latin.

How good is the teaching?

222. The efficient departmental assessment system supports all students well, with regular testing and target setting in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The trend of gradually improving performance of students in many areas of modern languages is the result of the shared commitment of the teachers to raising standards. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved substantially; all the lessons seen were at least satisfactory and half were very good.

How good is management?

223. Management and leadership of the department is satisfactory overall. All departmental administration, including assessment procedures, schemes of work and departmental policies, gives clear direction to teachers' work. All staff have a strong shared commitment to raising students' achievement, and their professional development is well monitored and supported. The departmental improvement plan is thorough, but requires additional features to address the learning needs of able students and boys.

and the development of students' speaking skills in all languages. The marking policy requires consistent implementation throughout the department.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- Many opportunities are offered, through extracurriculum provision, for developing students' social and cultural awareness.
- The department enjoys a favourable reputation in the community, and brings credit to the school.
- An impressive number of boys and girls are attracted to Key Stage 4 and Post 16 courses.

Areas for improvement:

- The department needs to produce specialist policies for the management of the department, and for the delivery of the curriculum to students of all ability.
- Firm codes of conduct need to be established for some Year 9 classes by reviewing teaching styles.
- Further strategies need to be sought for continuing to raise standards of attainment at Year 9.

Standards in relation to national standards

225. The last Year 9 assessments showed that most students were attaining in line with the national average. In the most recent GCSE examinations, students' attainment was below the national average. The trend, prior to that, was for them to attain above the average. By the age of 16, students have satisfactory standards of practical attainment.

Standards of work seen

226. Work seen during the inspection confirms this judgement. Satisfactory progress across Year 9 accounts for satisfactory levels of attainment. By the age of 14, many students have well developed analysis skills when listening to, and appraising music. They make accurate comments on orchestration when comparing, for example, excerpts from music by Vivaldi, Mozart and Ravel. An awareness of musical literacy is generally of a low standard, but is variable between classes. In some classes very many students do not know notes of the treble or bass clef, and have little idea about the most basic relative note values. In other classes, a significant proportion can read notes of the treble and bass clefs, understand time signatures, and consequently can perform on the keyboards in a competent way.

227. Year 10 students observed during the inspection demonstrated that they understood the difference between major and minor chords, and between different types of scales, when performing on keyboards. They recognise instrumental sounds accurately when listening to music. A scrutiny of Year 11 files revealed that by the end of the course, students have a good working knowledge of harmony up to, and including major and minor 7ths and added 6ths and 9ths. This leads to compositions, particularly by the more able, which are ambitious and often of good quality. Powers of stylistic analysis and listening analysis are both well developed

Is achievement in line with potential?

228. Standards are below the level expected nationally with a significant number of students, because many students start from a low level of musical competence when they

enter the school in Year 9, and they have much ground to make up in one year. In addition, the poor behaviour by students in some classes restricts the progress they, and other students, make. Appropriate worksheets are provided for performances, enabling students with special needs, and talented students, to be challenged, and to gain higher standards of attainment.

Particular strengths and weaknesses re attainment.

229. The quality of learning is satisfactory in Year 9, though poor behaviour by a few students can restrict the progress made by whole classes. Progress in Years 10- 11 is satisfactory. Students have satisfactory attitudes across both key stages, apart from those students who misbehave. Many do not appear to enjoy the taught part of lessons, but all enjoy using the keyboards.

230. The use of music technology in Year 9 and Years 10- 11 is effective. Keyboards enable students to acquire musical literacy at an accelerated rate. The insistence on the use of headphones aids progress. The department has acquired, and uses, appropriate software on the department computer. Sibelius, Cakewalk and Cubase packages are used well by more able students, and Mixman is successfully used for work with low achievers.

How good is the teaching?

231. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Year 9, though there are some unsatisfactory features. Teaching is good in Year 10. For year 9, the music teacher has secure subject knowledge, and a good grasp of teaching methodology. She is making a very good attempt to raise the standards of attainment across Year 9. Work is systematically assessed, though there is not enough reference to National Curriculum Levels of attainment in target setting. Tasks are appropriately challenging. Some lessons are too teacher-led, with insufficient time allowed for students to work practically, which they enjoy. Strategies to deal with poor behaviour, in some classes, are ineffective. In Year 10, lessons have clear objectives, are delivered at a fast pace, and are appropriately varied and challenging. They are well shaped, though lesson conclusions can be untidy.

How good is management?

232. The music teacher works hard to provide the able musicians in the school with a large number of extracurriculum activities, which broaden and extend their experiences. Music ensembles have successfully performed in different parts of the country. They contribute to the life of the school and community, and positively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of many students. The specialist teacher demonstrates enthusiasm for her subject, and this inspires the more able musicians. Attention needs to be given to the production of full departmental policies on a range of aspects, demonstrating how the subject is delivered.

233. There has been improvement in some areas since the last inspection. Assessment procedures operate, though they need to relate more closely to National Curriculum Levels of attainment. Resources are more plentiful, though more computers are needed. There is too little support for students having special behavioural and learning needs. Attainment is satisfactory with most, but not all, Year 9 students. There are still some teaching problems with class management, as identified in the last inspection. For the department to go forward, the areas for improvement need to be addressed. These specifically relate to

policy statements, codes of conduct with Year 9 students, and the continuation of strategies to raise standards in Year 9.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- The achievement, positive attitudes and behaviour of students.
- Quality of teaching, especially in management of students, variety of teaching methodologies and setting of homework.
- Teachers' very high expectations of their students.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessment and monitoring of students progress and performance.
- Adequacy of accommodation and resources.

Standards in relation to national standards

235. Standards of attainment are above national expectations in Year 9 and Years 10 and 11, and in the Sixth Form. By the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments indicate that the proportion of students working at or beyond age-related norms is above national averages. GCSE results in Year 11 have been consistently good in recent years. Results in 2000 indicate 48 per cent of students achieving the higher A-C grades, on a par with national averages and above those achieved in most other subjects. Results improved further in 2001 with all students gaining an A-D grade and 66 per cent gaining A-C grades. In considering the wide range of students' capabilities, results are very good.

Standards of work seen

236. Students understand the purpose of warming up in preparation for physical activity, and, when given the opportunity, can organise their own stretching independently of the teacher. Behaviour is good.

237. In Year 9, boys demonstrate consistently good levels of technical skills applied effectively. They move the ball confidently and sympathetically in rugby, taking good account of the strengths and weaknesses of others. Boys have a good understanding of basic rules and procedures for set play situations, and, the most capable players, make good decisions when in possession of the ball. There is developing understanding as to when and how different techniques are applied in games. The progress and development of girls' games skills are limited by lack of opportunity to extend what they already know. Basic passing and handling techniques are good in netball, and the majority of girls can control their movements effectively within the footwork rule. They pass the ball accurately in hockey, with sufficient power and ahead of a moving player. Both boys and girls have few opportunities to comment on their own performances in games, or to practise their skills independently.

238. In dance, girls achieve good standards. They choreograph imaginative street dance routines, plan and refine their own work and perform movements with attention to quality. Group work indicates good understanding of floor patterns and how variations in group dynamics can interest an audience.

239. Students in Year 10 consolidate skills and techniques, using their knowledge in playing and officiating games. Written work in Year 11 is generally good.

240. In football, the most talented individuals demonstrate some impressive close ball control skills and sufficient understanding of positional play to direct others in movement around the pitch. Students of all capabilities show growing awareness in using space, exploiting individual opportunities and in movement off the ball, creating space for others.

241. Girls are gaining confidence in officiating games. Their knowledge of rules, penalties and procedures is generally good in both hockey and netball. Only in goalmouth situations in hockey or in making handling or contact decisions in netball do girls express doubt in officiating. In practical play, girls' standards are more variable; the most capable players use a variety of passing techniques appropriately to create or exploit space on court. Those of lower ability lack confidence in movement around the court, and their handling skills are inconsistent.

242. In work on fitness, boys and girls measure and record accurately, help each other and work purposefully and knowledgeably. In the lesson on flexibility a significant proportion of students achieved very low scores.

Is achievement in line with potential?

243. Year 10 students studying for the GCSE are on course to achieve above national expectations.

How good is the teaching?

244. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Only in a minority of lessons for girls in Year 9 is there a mismatch between students' needs, the demands of tasks and the expectation of teachers. In the great majority of lessons there are no significant shortcomings in the quality of teaching which is having a very positive impact on the standards attained and the progress made by students throughout the school.

245. Lessons usually have clear objectives. Varied and well explained tasks and innovative approaches to skill learning indicate the depth of teachers' subject knowledge. Plenary or summing up sessions at the end of lessons are used effectively to review the work undertaken and how it will be developed in the following weeks. In the best lessons, skilful questioning is used very effectively to establish not only what students know, but also their understanding in expanding ideas into more detailed extended answers. Teachers provide very good support for individuals, adapting language to aid students' understanding. In the Year 10 lessons on umpiring, teachers focused their attentions on the umpires, providing good basic information on movement and encouraging girls to make fair decisions. Teachers have very high expectations of what individual students can achieve, making every effort to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers cope well with the limited time available for examination study, manage lesson time effectively and make good use of homework to support learning.

How good is management?

246. The monitoring of students' progress is however, an area for further development. The criteria used to assess students' standards in Year 9 and Years 10 11, although based on the new levels, are not shared with students. As a consequence until reports are issued to parents, students have limited knowledge of the standards attained or what they need to do to improve.

247. Within the extracurricular programme, teachers try to extend opportunities for students to experience competitive and recreational activities. The school runs teams in all the major sports and arranges interschool fixtures. Geographical isolation increases transport demands on the school to attend fixtures and tournaments, and for individuals to access representative opportunities. Inter-form sports and a school sports day increase numbers involved in extra physical activity, and the school is part of a flourishing area youth association offering extra out of school activities for students.

248. The school has a good range of facilities to support learning, although there remain shortcomings in the maintenance that are soon to be addressed. The use of the gymnasium is limited by its extra use as an assembly and dining hall, resulting in one early morning dance lesson being taught in inadequate facilities. Resources are adequate to service practical lessons. There are adequate supplies of textbooks, and the library contains a good range of technical and recreational books and CD ROM. However, the lack of video equipment within the department limits students' development of skills of analysis and evaluation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

249. The quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- The standard of teaching is very good.
- Students at all levels of attainment make good progress.
- The learning environment is extremely good.

Areas for improvement:

- The allocation of time to the subject. This does not meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus. It affects the standards of work reached.
- The setting of tasks that are designed to challenge the higher attaining students.
- Continuity in the allocation of non-specialist teachers.

In the absence of any level descriptors in the local agreed syllabus, this report is based upon the level descriptors set out in the QCA national guidelines for religious education.

Standards in relation to national standards

250. There are no recent examination results but in 1999 the school entered 42 students for the short course GCSE, with 90 per cent obtaining grades A* to C. This is well above the national average.

Standards of work seen

251. The standard of work seen in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Given the time available for study, students of all abilities make good progress. They have a sound understanding of the major beliefs and practices of the religions they have covered. Year 9 students are able to show that they understand the major festivals and teaching of Christianity. They also have a good understanding of the importance of symbolism in religion. The written work of the previous Year 9 students showed a clear understanding of the Sikh religion, including full appreciation of the importance of the Five Ks. They are willing to carefully consider their own responses to religious matters. In an excellent lesson on meditation, students thoughtfully produced poetry and painting after listening to

a guided fantasy story. At all times students were interested and involved in the work they were doing.

252. Despite an even smaller allocation of time in Years 10-11, this progress is maintained. Students continue to have a good factual knowledge of religious language and beliefs. They are able to use a variety of research skills to investigate religion, and present their results well. They are also willing to express their own opinions in a thoughtful and sensitive manner. They recognise the important role that religion plays in guiding peoples' life styles. Year 11 students have been carefully setting out some philosophical answers to the first cause arguments. Their ability to read and respond to religious issues continues to develop well. A small GCSE group has just started on the philosophy and religion course, and is making good progress.

How good is the teaching?

253. The quality of teaching is very good. A specialist teacher who has a very good knowledge of the subject teaches most of the lessons. Lessons are well planned with suitable tasks for students of all abilities. A warm learning environment is skilfully used to create an atmosphere of trust and respect. In an excellent lesson students were encouraged to explore their own responses to religious stimuli. Good use is made of information technology. In a Year 10 lesson, students were taught to explore a variety of research techniques to find out information on the life of the Buddha. Assessments are efficiently carried out, with work being carefully marked. Opportunities to reinforce literacy skills are used well. The requirements of students with special educational needs are carefully addressed, but in some tasks the lack of extension activities for the more able students is limited.

How good is management?

254. This excellent teaching and good progress happens despite the fact that the school does not allocate sufficient time to the subject. This is particularly so in Years 10 and 11, where it allocates half the time specified in both local and national recommendations. This reduces the breadth of the syllabus, and means that students do not cover the full syllabus. However, this lack of breadth in the syllabus does mean that overall progress is reduced. The fact that students do make such good progress is directly due to the quality of the teaching. The lack of continuity in the allocation of non-specialist teachers also creates problems for the subject.

255. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. In some respects progress is good; standards are better, and the quality of teaching is significantly improved. However, the failure of the school to address the question of time allocation, which was raised in the last inspection, significantly reduces this judgement. There is no provision for religious education in the Sixth Form.

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

256. 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 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	6	100	89	33	45	6.67	5.99
Chemistry	10	70	89	10	42	3.20	5.87
Physics	4	75	88	25	41	5.00	5.72
Design and technology	4	100	92	25	29	5.50	5.37
Economics	3	100	88	–	36	3.33	5.41
Sports studies	5	100	91	20	25	6.00	4.99
Geography	15	100	92	40	37	6.53	5.73
English language	11	91	90	27	28	5.27	5.19
English literature	6	67	96	17	36	3.67	5.90
Health & social care	No candidates in 2000						

2001

GCE AS Level and GNVQ intermediate courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	25	16	70	0	31	0.6	
Chemistry	14	28	86	0	41	0.7	
Physics	14	35	85	0	40	1.0	
Design and technology	19	94	82	5	24	3.5	
Business studies	14	71	86	11	27	3.7	
Sports studies	18	89	86	11	24	4.2	
Geography	27	88	90	11	39	3.6	
English language	23	91	93	4	36	4.3	
English literature	20	80	93	20	36	3.9	
Health & social care							

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	16	62	89	13	48	2.9	
Chemistry	6	33	90	0	48	1.3	
Physics	10	50	90	10	44	2.8	
Design and technology	5	100	91	40	31	6.0	
Business studies	7	100	91	0	32	3.7	
Sports studies	4	100	92	25	26	6.0	
Geography	11	100	93	18	44	3.6	
English language	9	89	94	11	36	3.3	
English literature	9	89	94	11	36	3.8	
Health & social care	No candidates in 2000						

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

257. The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and physics, but biology was also sampled. In biology, two lessons were seen, in which the quality of teaching overall was good. Excellent relationships within the group support good quality learning. Although there are some weaknesses in students' practical skills, overall levels of attainment seen in biology lessons and in the scrutiny of work are above average.

Mathematics

258. The quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- The school provides a wide range of examination course modules at AS and A2 Levels in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics, taught by specialist mathematics teachers.
- Teachers ensure good relationships to promote good student learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Study skills, including note-taking, for all students to increase the security of their understanding and learning.
- Monitoring of students' notes by teachers to enable them to form a more accurate assessment of students' learning.
- The need for teachers to focus on the requirements of examination course modules in order to meet the needs of students.
- The use of ICT to support students' learning.

Standards and achievement

259. Attainment in GCE A Level mathematics in the last three years was close to the national average. In the summer of 2001 attainment was below the national average, and showed a decline in comparison with that of the previous three years, especially in the proportion of the highest grades, A and B, obtained. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Students studying mathematics start with a wide range of GCSE experience, ranging from the highest grades on the higher level, to grade C at the intermediate level. These latter students find the course particularly challenging.

260. Standards attained by students in the current Year 13 show an improvement on last summer's results and are approaching national averages. They are consistent with the grades achieved in the GCSE. In one class, students were challenged to consider and analyse different patterns of distribution of information, and in another class a structured approach to revision and development of trigonometry was taken. The attainment of these students in last summer's AS Level examination in Year 12 showed a considerable decline on their performance in module tests in the previous three years and some of these students will be retaking module tests from Year 12. To support students, teachers provide extra tuition after school, and both teachers and students are committed to making a success of this venture.

261. Some Sixth Form students have the opportunity to attend after school classes and to retake GCSE examinations. About half of them obtained the higher grades A* to C in 2000.

262. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but have already made an advance in knowledge and understanding compared with the GCSE. In pure mathematics, students quickly revise how to solve quadratic equations, and move on to more general situations. Another group applied the concept of long division in number to long division of algebraic functions. The study of motion in mechanics was linked to complementary studies in physics, and this was recognised by students. In both Year 12 and Year 13, some students lack the study skills of essential note taking, so that revision of basic facts becomes more difficult.

Quality of education

263. Teaching is good overall and leads to good learning by students. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their work effectively and are keen that students succeed. In all five classes observed, relationships between teachers and students were very good. Students are attentive to teachers, who give clear explanations. Some classes have a small number of students in Year 13 who have widely different prior attainment. In general, teachers cope with this situation, but more thought should be given to providing a challenge to all students. Homework, which takes the form of further questions relevant to the lesson topic, is set and marked. However, teachers are missing opportunities to assess the students' progress by not checking note taking in class. Not all students present calculations in a systematic way.

Leadership and management

264. The department is well led and managed by a new head of department. There is a commitment by both teachers and students to improve on previous attainment and to raise standards. Careful planning of courses has taken place this year to address some of the causes of low attainment in last summer's AS Level examination. The present Year 13 studied course modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics last year but this

course proved to be too wide and demanding for some students. This year all students must choose either pure mathematics with mechanics, or pure mathematics with statistics, which will help to give a greater focus to their learning. The new schemes of work need to contain provision for the regular checking of students' attainment and progress. At present, there is little provision for information and communications technology, and the department has plans to correct this.

Numeracy

265. Provision for numeracy in the Sixth Form is satisfactory. Some subjects make use of mathematical skills but, with limited exceptions, others do not promote the teaching of number skills both to enhance the subject and to strengthen mathematics. This is because there is no overall school policy for numeracy at the present time. In service training for the whole staff is planned for the spring term 2002 from which a whole school policy will be developed.

266. In business studies and vocational courses, some students have difficulty in adding columns of figures. They are able to deal with cash flow forecasts, but are not able to deal with breakeven and variable costs. In home economics there is analysis of data from graphs, but some difficulties are experienced in basic number work. In geography, effective use is made of a wide range of statistical information but there is an absence of variance tests of significance. There is good coordination of the teaching of the movement of objects in mechanics and physics, with both teachers and students being aware of a complementary approach to this topic.

Chemistry

267. Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is unsatisfactory.

Strengths:

- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- Students' attitudes and engagement in lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- Levels of attainment in both Year 12 and Year 13.
- Quality of teaching, to ensure that students make steady progress.
- Planning to ensure that students not only learn the facts of the subject, but also gain steadily in their understanding and in their ability to apply their knowledge in unfamiliar situations.
- Assessment and monitoring to ensure that any difficulties experienced by students are quickly resolved.
- The use of ICT to support student's learning.

Standards and achievement

268. Standards of attainment in chemistry are well below average. In 2000, about two thirds of those who entered for the advanced level examination passed with a grade C or better, and about 10 per cent gained the highest grades, A or B. These standards have not changed significantly over the last three years. Overall, performance of girls and boys is similar, though all those failing to gain the lowest grade of pass, during the period 1998 – 2000 have been boys. The results showed an unexpected dip in 2001, with two thirds of the entry failing to gain at least a grade E.

269. In 2001, examinations at AS Level within the new framework were taken for the first time. Of the 14 candidates entered, four gained a pass grade. One student has chosen to continue with the subject at A2 in 2002.

270. In lessons, students in Year 12 work hard to understand the subject. They know how to carry out a titration between an acid and base and understand the process of neutralisation and how their measurements lead to a value for the concentration of one of the solutions used. They are able to carry out simple calculations for systems which use a monoprotic acid and a monoacid base. They can take part in discussions and ask sensible questions whose answers lead to a better understanding of the topic. They are able to use their own experimental values, and an algorithm given to them by the teacher, to calculate a final result for the concentration. Overall, their attainment is in line with expectations for this early stage in the course.

271. In Year 13, students can undertake preparative organic chemistry with due care, and good attention to safety, using instructions provided by the teacher. However, they have difficulty interpreting what they are doing at a molecular level, and in using their results to calculate a value for the yield. This is because the process assumes familiarity with topics from Year 12 which have been imperfectly understood, such as balancing equations. However, in discussion, students show a good understanding of some more difficult qualitative aspects of chemistry, such as polarity in a molecule and its importance in explaining reaction mechanisms. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory, but they need more experience in the use of ICT in chemistry. Overall, levels of attainment at the beginning of Year 13 are just below average.

Quality of education

272. The quality of education in chemistry provided in the Sixth Form is unsatisfactory. Although teachers' subject knowledge is good and students are responsive, the structure and presentation of lessons does not support high quality learning, and lessons are, at best, satisfactory. For example, in a practical class in Year 13, students carried out the preparation of an organic compound successfully, but were insufficiently challenged to think about the reasons for the procedures used. As a result, although learning about this particular task was satisfactory, there was little development of wider skills of evaluation which could have been applied to a variety of similar preparations. In a lesson on calculations arising from titrations in Year 12, the group learned how to undertake calculations successfully, but were not sufficiently challenged to think for themselves, or to attempt calculations of a less familiar type. In less successful lessons, students are confronted with the need to apply skills which have been inadequately assimilated. In these circumstances, the teacher shows students how to complete the task and arrive at the correct answer, but not how to approach the problem in the first place. Learning is poor as a result.

273. Written work by students, although of a satisfactory standard, tends to be routine; it fails to provide the challenge necessary to develop thinking skills which can be applied across and beyond the subject. Planning by teachers should take account of the need actively to develop these skills both within and outside lessons in order to meet the requirements of the new specifications in science. Written work should require much more independent thought by students, and monitoring should be used to identify problems and misconceptions as they arise so that they can be quickly resolved. In this way, students will be better prepared to face the challenges of the new examinations.

274. Students respond well to their teachers, and are keen to learn. Teachers should build on this enthusiasm by introducing a more equal academic partnership into the learning process, so that students have more overt ownership of their own learning. In this way, they will gain in confidence, their learning will become more independent, and their understanding will deepen.

Leadership and management

275. Management of the science department is good and resources are well maintained and readily available. However, the management of the chemistry curriculum needs to be strengthened in order to raise the quality of teaching and learning, and the levels of confidence and attainment of students. The new monitoring system which has been introduced in the Sixth Form from September 2001 will provide an excellent basis for improvement, and help teachers and students to work together to raise attainment in the future.

Physics

276. Overall, the quality of provision in physics is good.

Strengths:

- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- Quality of teaching.
- Development of key skills.
- Students' attitudes and engagement in lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- Levels of attainment in both Year 12 and Year 13.
- Assessment and monitoring, to ensure that any difficulties experienced by students are quickly resolved.

Standards and achievement

277. Standards of attainment in physics are close to the national average. In 2000, three-quarters of those who entered for the advanced level examination passed with a grade E or better, and a quarter gained the highest grades, A or B. These standards have varied over the last three years, but the number of students in this subject is small, and differences are not statistically significant. Overall, performance of girls and boys is similar. The results showed an unexpected dip in 2001, when half the students failed to gain a grade E and no higher grades were obtained. In 2001, examinations at AS level within the new framework were taken for the first time. Of the fourteen candidates entered, about two thirds failed to gain a pass grade. One student has chosen to continue with the subject at A2 in 2002.

278. In lessons, students in Year 12 respond well to excellent teaching, and levels of attainment are above expectation for this early stage in the course. Students take part well in discussion, and are able to think beyond what is obvious, evaluating carefully what is being asked. For example, in an experiment on interference and diffraction they can see the similarity between waves in a ripple tank and light waves; they use their understanding of the concepts involved to make critical observations, not only about this experiment, but also about the Young's slit experiment which follows it. They make good use of a computer simulation, written by a former student, and one student carries out

experiments in her own time to see the effect of changing the parameters in an interference experiment.

279. In Year 13, students understand well how quantitative study leads to a better understanding of everyday phenomena. For example, in a lesson on Newton's laws and conservation of momentum, a student showed a good appreciation of the power of the concept of a vector in analysing everyday situations and was able to use numerical methods confidently to arrive at an answer to a numerical problem about water from a pipe striking a horizontal plate. Overall, levels of attainment at the beginning of Year 13 are above average. Students' skills in literacy and numeracy are good, and they make good use of ICT in experiments which would be tedious if manual methods were to be used.

Quality of education

280. Physics teaching in the Sixth Form is never less than very good, and is sometimes excellent. Well planned lessons include a good variety of demonstrations and practical tasks which are meticulously prepared to ensure that everything works first time. The emphasis is always on communicating ideas, and students' literacy skills are developed as a result. Pace of learning is very well judged to ensure that students are challenged, but never overstretched. There is excellent support for students of all abilities, including the most able. A student for whom English is not his first language is very well supported to ensure that his progress is not inhibited by the problems of technical vocabulary.

281. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is infectious, and there is obvious delight in seeing students respond so well to a wide variety of illustrative material. They in turn respond very well, and show good understanding of quite difficult concepts such as the formation of interference fringes in the Young's slit experiment. Teachers have carefully designed the course to build on what students already know, in line with the new specifications which came into effect in 2000. Students appreciate the support given by their teachers, and are confident in their knowledge of their own progress.

282. Teachers in the department are aware that still more needs to be done to raise attainment and are making good use of the new system for monitoring students' progress and providing support where necessary. Evidence from lesson observations suggests that they have made a very good start.

Leadership and management

283. In terms of general objectives the department is well led and managed. Resources are well maintained and readily available: demonstrations are meticulously prepared. Courses are well designed and support the very good or excellent teaching seen in lessons. Although laboratories are sometimes crowded when they are used by large groups, relationships are good and learning is not impeded. Equipment is well maintained and contributes in no small measure to the success of lessons.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

284. The focus of this inspection was AS/A Levels in product design, but AS/A Level home economics was also sampled. In home economics, two lessons were seen, and the teaching in both was good. Students' levels of understanding and involvement in discussion were better in the Year 12 lesson than those in Year 13. Examination results are well below average, and the number of students taking the course is low. From lesson

observations and discussion with students it is evident that they find the technical, scientific and mathematical elements of the course difficult.

Design and technology; product design

285. Overall, the quality of provision in product design is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and has resulted in good working relationships with students.
- Accommodation and equipment for the subject are good.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of attainment, through the refinement of course delivery.
- The development of strategies for improving students' independent learning skills.

Standards and achievement

286. Standards in the course are now average. Examination results have been below average in the past 3 years, and, whilst all students achieve at least a pass grade, the proportion of higher grades awarded is low. In 2000 for example, only one of the four students entered gained a B grade or above. Results for 2001 indicate a slight improvement on this figure, but the average points score per student is still below the expected average.

287. Attainment in lessons is average. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students were following a sound design methodology to evaluate initial ideas for major design projects. Well-chosen projects arising from carefully identified problems provided students with an appropriate challenge but with a realistic chance of a successful conclusion. Through an investigation of the background context of her project, one student gained insights into the role of a designer in improving the quality of life for elderly people. Some students rely too much on their teachers to make decisions about their work and to control its pace. Although they all have clear deadlines for the completion of the project, few understand the value of tracking their own progress against targets set by themselves. They do not use sketching or other graphic techniques fluently, to record or develop ideas.

288. The course has increased in popularity and now has 16 Year 12 students and fourteen in Year 13. The ratio of female students to male students has increased and both groups achieve similar gains in their knowledge and understanding. All students gained a greater understanding of 'smart materials' from a well-taught Year 13 lesson that succeeded in relating developments in materials technology to improvements in environmental care. Students make satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at the GCSE. All are able to undertake work of greater depth and complexity, and benefit from mature discussion of their work. The highest attaining students reach good standards of work, but there is no evidence of any student producing outstanding work.

Quality of education

289. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and students are presented with a good range of learning opportunities. They benefit from the mature discussions which they have with teachers and fellow students. These discussions, and the good range of practical tasks which they undertake, lead them to consolidate their learning well. Good teaching has established good working relationships with students. They enjoy their work and speak enthusiastically about their projects. They are given good individual help and advice. However, this strength leads many students to rely too much on teacher guidance, and although their learning of the skills associated with the subject is good, the quality of learning overall is satisfactory. Students should be encouraged to put

more intellectual and creative effort into their studies, so that they gain the maximum benefit from the good opportunities which they are presented with.

Leadership and management

290. The leadership and management of the course are good. The head of department is knowledgeable and experienced. Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses well and students appreciate the good level of support and advice they receive through written assessments and verbal consultation. Teachers are aware that some students do not have good independent learning skills, and recent experience of disappointing AS Level results has prompted a review of the course content and delivery to address this. Accommodation and equipment are good, but low funding limits the range of consumable materials available to students. Students have good access to computers and computer aided design and manufacturing equipment, and this is effectively used in raising the quality of their work.

291. Satisfactory progress has been made in improving the popularity of the course, but no impact has yet been made on improving standards of attainment.

BUSINESS

292. The focus was on business and economics at A Level, and business studies at AS Level and GNVQ intermediate, but the business course in GNVQ advanced was also sampled. GNVQ advanced results in 2000, from a small entry, were similar to national results at merit and pass levels but with an absence of distinction grades: results in 2001 followed a similar pattern. The GNVQ advanced course has now been discontinued in the school.

Business Studies

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

Strengths:

- The secure subject knowledge of teachers.
- Planning to meet course requirements.
- GNVQ achievement at intermediate level.

Areas for improvement:

- Some aspects of methodology.
- Assessment.
- Outside links.

Standards and achievement

294. The GNVQ intermediate results in 2001 showed a good range of grades with all students who completed the course passing, and with few students dropping out during the course. GCE A Level results in economics and business studies in 2000 were well below average especially in relation to higher grades achieved; results in 2001 were similar, with a wider range of pass grades. The GCE A Level economics and business studies course will be replaced at the end of this school year by an A Level business studies course. GCE AS results in business studies in 2001 showed a good range of grades achieved, but with a high proportion of students who did not achieve a pass grade.

295. The work of GNVQ intermediate students meets course requirements and their achievement is satisfactory. They apply their knowledge well to identify suitable working arrangements for different types of employment. In class discussion they describe the results of interviews with family members about their work experiences. They use appropriate terminology including 'shift', 'parttime' and 'temporary work' in a study of working arrangements; but their evaluation skills in assessing the impact of different working arrangements on individuals and firms are less secure. In work on breakeven analysis, students calculate the breakeven point for a firm after totalling revenue and costs. They use appropriate terminology in discussion, although their understanding lacks depth; for example in knowing the relationship between price, quantity and income and the difference between fixed and variable costs. They complete a spreadsheet exercise to show opening and closing balances for each month over a period of time; but some students are unsure of the calculation method to apply, and some use the correct method but make simple addition errors. Students' literacy skills in scanning text for meaning are variable and some have difficulty, for example, in understanding the impact of new technology on work practices. Students use ICT to finalise work already written in form, but they do not always apply themselves to work productively and efficiently. One student with special needs follows a foundation course and shows good concentration when reading case studies and classifying workers into different groups including full and part-time.

296. The work of AS students also meets course requirements. Students display a good understanding of why a variety of methods of comparison are necessary to compare accurately different companies. They carry out research to make comparisons between companies including the use of the Internet; but they are not always methodical in their approach to selecting information from sources. They identify different forms of economy of scale from case studies. In coursework from last year, students carried out investigations into the likely success of new businesses in their local area. Their survey results are well presented, with good use of ICT, but their skills in analysing and evaluating results are weaker.

297. The work of A Level students is below average. In a study of competitiveness, students are confident in their use of terminology, including 'niche market' and 'mass market'. They study different lifestyles in relation to different potential markets, and classify individuals into different socio-economic groups; but they are less confident in explaining their reasons for classification. Their knowledge of some terminology used in economics, including 'supply and demand', 'elasticity' and the concept of the margin, is an area of weakness; but their knowledge of other concepts including the multiplier and opportunity cost is relatively stronger.

298. Overall, standards reached in business studies are satisfactory.

Quality of education

299. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with no unsatisfactory teaching and some good teaching. In GNVQ lessons, teachers have secure knowledge; work is challenging, with good use made of appropriate terminology in class discussion, and case studies that offer progressive challenge. Lessons are well planned to enable individual students to work at their own pace. Resources are mostly well used; in one example the resources provide students with a clearly laid out task to enable them to complete a cash flow forecasting exercise. In contrast, the resources used by a student with special needs did not provide sufficient structure for independent work in one lesson observed. Assessment during classwork is not always effective, for example in focusing on individual students who require support to begin an activity. Testing is well used, and students themselves report the value of frequent testing to check their understanding. In some lessons, methods

need to be more systematic to give students time to complete tasks, and then allow time to check their understanding through questions and, where appropriate, through the use of

demonstration. In one lesson seen, learning was limited by the sources of information provided which did not provide sufficient information for the task. The use of ICT is appropriately incorporated into lesson planning, although students do not always use it productively.

300. The teaching of students following the AS course in Year 12 is satisfactory and some is good. In one lesson seen, time was well used with students reporting back on company investigations in the first half of the lesson. The teacher then extended students' learning in discussion about the advantages of large companies with good use made of students' own learning about different companies. Although students make good use of up-to-date sources of information, including the internet, there is sometimes a lack of emphasis on the need to be methodical in conducting research.

301. The teaching of students following the A Level course in Year 13 is satisfactory and some is good. In one lesson seen, students gained a good understanding of the characteristics of different markets through a combination of discussion and group activities. Good use is made of appropriate terminology throughout to ensure that students' learning follows course requirements. In another lesson seen, resources were well used with students entering definitions of difficult terminology on to a grid during discussion. However, the content of the lesson did not match learning needs well, with an over-emphasis on a wide range of difficult terminology and insufficient opportunities taken to consolidate understanding.

302. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Attitudes displayed in GNVQ lessons observed were variable but not less than satisfactory. Attitudes displayed in AS and A Level lessons observed were good.

Leadership and management

303. Leadership is satisfactory and the department has anticipated in its planning the need to develop assessment to focus on individual targets and progress and strengthen outside links.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

304. The provision in information and communications technology at AS/A Level was sampled. There is some unsatisfactory teaching which does not inspire or extend the students to achieve at the appropriate level. This is a weakness which impedes learning, though there was evidence that students themselves are making the effort to succeed. Results at advanced level in 2001 were below the national average, with the single candidate at AS Level achieving a grade D.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

305. The focus was on sports studies.

Sports Studies

306. Overall, the quality of provision in sports studies is good.

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching on examination courses.
- The standards achieved by students in external examinations.
- The positive attitudes of students.

Areas for improvement:

- The time allocated to A Level study, which is currently very low.
- The consistency of assessment and marking of students' work.
- Students' use of technical vocabulary.
- Resources to support learning at advanced level.
- Recreational opportunities for Sixth Form students.
- Systems for assessment which provide positive links to the development of the curriculum.

Standards and achievement

307. In the first year of the AS/A Level course it is clear that some students had difficulty in adapting to the level required. However, overall, results indicate that students make very good progress. Results at AS and A2 indicate average points scores of 4.2 and 6 respectively. Although all students passing GCSE achieved good AS Level grades in relation to their capabilities, there is wider variation in those with less subject background. It is clear in the early stages of the current courses that some students find the challenges of A Level study very demanding. Nevertheless results indicate students achieve higher grades on the AS and A2 Level courses than they do elsewhere in the curriculum, representing very good progress.

308. Students demonstrate growing confidence in talking about what they know, and, in the best examples, in considering points at a deeper level. The most capable individuals provide detailed and extended answers to questions; by Year 13, they can support their opinions and points with carefully selected and appropriate examples from earlier study or their own experience. Accuracy in sourcing references remains a skill for further improvement, as is confidence in the use of technical vocabulary.

309. Students use a variety of library and ICT resources to follow up current topics, to prepare for new work and to support their research. They are confident in sharing their ideas in collaboration with others. Presentations of their findings indicate good understanding of topics, and, in the best examples sequential development of points. However, Year 12 students have not, as yet, grasped the significance of this additional reading, and do not always prepare for lessons or complete homework essays.

310. Students generally read with understanding, although they sometimes miss the emphasis on pertinent points when reading aloud. Note taking is a developing skill, and is not always used to the full. Written work is generally organised well and personal exercise plans are very well structured. They indicate a sound understanding of the principles of training applied appropriately to different sporting activities. The quality and depth of students' comments on their own work varies substantially: some are unduly repetitive

whilst the best examples are detailed and comprehensive, with physiological references to support comments.

Quality of education

311. Increasing numbers of students taking AS/A Level courses have resulted in additional staff being involved in teaching the subject. Preparation has been thorough, and detailed additional notes developed by individual teachers provide sensible and useful support material. Lessons are well prepared and, during the inspection week, there was evidence of increasing confidence by teachers in adopting new approaches. Brainstorming is used effectively as a lead-in to topics; and detailed discussion and focused questioning explores students understanding and application of knowledge. Teachers are rarely satisfied with one word or superficial responses in theory sessions, probing for more information or detail through skilful questioning. They maintain students' interest and improve their understanding in drawing close links between the topics and the students' own experiences of practical activity, and experiences of sport through media presentations.

312. In a Year 13 lesson on leadership, examples of topical sports captains developed into a lively 'nature/nurture' debate. In practical situations, boys are particularly skilful games players, demonstrating good levels of technical skill. Dribbling techniques are very good although in discussion, students are less certain when these should be applied to best advantage in gameplay. Teachers expect students to work hard in both practical and theory sessions, and, in the main they respond very enthusiastically.

313. Students indicate that they are clear about their own progress and what they need to do to improve. However, there is very limited evidence of diagnostic feedback to students on their written work, or of regular assessment of progress in different aspects of the course. Regular testing helps to improve focus, and mentoring sessions with Sixth Form tutors give opportunity for discussion of problems or concerns.

314. Teachers cope well with the limited resources and time available to them. Lack of equipment, such as TV and video, limits students' opportunities to study, analyse and evaluate actions. Limited access to more advanced training and testing equipment restricts their awareness and understanding of a wider range of methodologies. Although the school has made very good progress in providing this level of study in curriculum time, the amount of time allocated is very low for comprehensive coverage of the syllabus.

Leadership and management

315. The head of department provides strong leadership in practical subject delivery and in raising and maintaining expectations of staff. There is good in-house support and external professional development for those taking on new teaching commitments in the Sixth Form, but the department should ensure that systems for assessment are developed which provide positive links to the development of the curriculum. The department ensures that risk assessments are completed where necessary, and that health and safety regulations are complied with.

316. However, insufficiently careful planning for new courses and lack of funding sometimes limit the range of resources available.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

317. The focus was on AVCE health and social care at both intermediate and AVCE Levels, with those taking the AVCE able to offer the double award.

Health and social care

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

Strengths:

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.
- Lessons are well planned. Teachers effectively use a variety of methods to motivate students to produce good quality work.
- Students on all the courses make good progress, and achieve grades that are in line with expectations.

Areas for improvement:

- The current organisation of the timetable, which means that students doing the double award are timetabled at the same time as those doing the single award. This has an impact upon standards.
- Current levels of work in the double award group, which does not display the academic rigour required to obtain high grades.
- Work experience, which is not carefully planned to include opportunities for students to apply the knowledge they have in a practical context.
- The teaching of key study skills, which needs to be specifically addressed.

Standards and achievement

319. Results at all levels were below the national average in 2001, but students made good progress and achieved grades that exceeded their expectations. In the intermediate group, only three students out of ten who started the course obtained a pass grade. Six students did not complete the course. There were several factors affecting this, some of which were completely outside the control of the school. For those who remained, progress was good and the grades they obtained exceeded expectations.

320. Although they have only just started the course, the Year 12 intermediate group is making good progress. They have a sound understanding of the subjects covered so far. During the inspection a group was preparing to commence a project on factors affecting health. They were able to explain such things as dietary requirements, exercise and the importance of maintaining a healthy life style.

321. The standard of work in the current year 12 AVCE group is satisfactory, and they are making good progress. They understand the values that underpin the course. A group could explain the importance of respecting confidentiality when dealing with patients. They have explored the importance of developing good communication skills in such work, and can relate this to their own life situation. Their written work demonstrates that they are able to work independently, with good examples of essays and short assignments. They are highly motivated and interested in the work they are doing.

322. The standard of work in the Year 13 single award group is good. Students at every level of ability have made good progress, and are expected to reach grades in the middle range. They have a secure understanding of the work they have covered. They can relate the work that they have done on homeostasis to particular situations, and fully appreciate how various disabilities can impact upon a person's life style. The group clearly understood the impact of diabetes.

323. The standard of work seen in the Year 13 double award group is good. Students have a sound grasp of the subjects covered and have produced assignments that demonstrate well their ability to undertake research. They understand the importance of play in a child's development, and are currently producing an assignment that examines various toys to see how they meet children's needs. Their work demonstrates commitment and enthusiasm. They have been able to take some of the principles they have learned in the classroom and apply them to practical situations. Some students have been looking for evidence to support Freud's theory of psychosexual development in a nursery setting.

324. The overall picture is of students who are achieving their full potential. Most of them are able to work independently, although some lack the study skills required to organise their work efficiently. For example, their folders contained large amounts of written work which was simply copied from other sources; they had not mastered the skills of efficient note making. Whilst most were able to use information technology well some had not really understood the information that they downloaded. A Year 12 group had produced a very good wall display on the dangers of sniffing glue, but had not understood some of the technical words they had printed out on the display.

Quality of education

325. The overall standard of teaching is good, and teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They carefully prepare units of work that are effectively used to motivate and challenge students to produce work of a good quality. In one lesson a teacher had prepared a very thorough information pack that was designed to guide students through a unit of work looking at factors that can affect health. Relationships are warm and friendly, with students being supported and encouraged in a very positive manner. In particular, the needs of those with learning difficulties are carefully met.

Leadership and management

326. The subject is well managed with assessment information being well organised. Students are aware of their target grades and information obtained is used to inform curriculum planning. However, the organisation of work related visits is not carefully planned. Some students use their own initiative to arrange visits, but there is a need to provide carefully structured placements that will enable students to apply the principles learnt in a practical situation. The teaching of key skills needs to be addressed more carefully.

327. Progress since the last inspection is good. More students opt for the subject, and teaching is now consistently good. Although standards remain below the national average, students work hard, reaching the targets that are set.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

328. No subjects in the visual and performing arts and media were the focus of inspection in the Sixth Form, but lessons in art and in music were sampled.

329. In art, teaching is good. Students are encouraged to sit in a place so that they can draw with ease, and are encouraged to walk around the room to see how each member of the group has performed. In this way they are able to compare their efforts with those of others and go through the critical stage of self-assessment. Access to ICT within the department is an issue, as currently no adequate facility exists. Students can be

apprehensive, particularly when asked to work from the human figure, but they relax fairly quickly into the task aided by the well thought through approach taken by the teacher. Once on-task, concentration is good and students try very hard to produce effective results.

330. There is good provision for music in the Sixth Form. In the most recent AS examinations, one student gained a C, two students a D and three students an E pass. There were no Advanced Level entries that year. Currently there are six boys in Year 12 and three girls in Year 13, all showing good standards of attainment. Teaching is very good, and this largely accounts for the standards of attainment. Half of the Year 12 lessons, and a quarter of Year 13 lessons are taken after school hours. This pattern addresses the point raised at the last inspection concerning insufficient time allocation for the A Level course.

HUMANITIES

331. In the humanities, the inspection focus was on geography, but lessons in history were also sampled. Provision in history is good. Year 13 students make good progress in comprehending the repressive and reactionary nature of Alexander III's domestic policies, and are able to interpret statistical data accurately. The quality of teaching is always good in the Sixth Form, where the teacher's enthusiasm, expertise and pace encourage participation and result in good learning. Good relationships and mutual respect between teacher and students also contribute significantly to progress at this level. Improving attainment and good teaching contribute to an increasing number of students taking up and staying with the subject.

Geography

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

Strengths:

- The academic knowledge and experience of staff results in well structured lessons that help students build up their understanding.
- The quality of marking and tutorial support is very good.
- Enthusiasm for the subject is generated by the energetic teaching styles and effective use of well-chosen video and text resources.
- Fieldwork is well planned and executed and the skills developed are used in a wide range of responses.
- Lower and middle attaining students make good progress.

Areas for improvement:

- Higher attaining students need to develop more proficient skills of synthesis from a wider range of source material.
- Lower attaining students tend to be passive in group discussions. Although well supported in written work, they need to be more firmly encouraged to express and justify judgements and opinions.
- Although the library provides good facilities greater use should be made of ICT, particularly for the more efficient location of academically rigorous sources.
- Students need to develop a clearer understanding of assessment and evaluation criteria early in their courses in order better to focus the use they make of study time.

Standards and achievement

333. In 1999 and 2000, all students achieved a pass grade A–E, and this was above the national average. In 2001, there was an unpredicted dip, especially in the higher grades, although the department still achieved 100 per cent A–E passes. This coincided with a unique combination of a new national Post 16 structure and new specifications, delays in receiving support materials from the external awarding body and a need to change fieldwork plans at the last minute owing to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the Lake District. Alternative provision for fieldwork was of high quality but did not allow students sufficient time to develop confidence. The department is responding vigorously to the lessons learned.

334. The standard of work of current Year 13 students suggests that they are progressing steadily towards their targets. Limited coursework was available from this year, but observation of lessons and discussions with students about their Year 12 work revealed a good standard of achievement in all the topic areas, with a particular strength in physical geography.

335. Students in Year 12 have only just started their course, but, in one lesson, they confidently drew on their previous knowledge to discuss what to include in a presentation on river processes and resulting landforms. They have adapted well to new styles of teaching and independent learning, and are already responding to the high quality of tutoring.

336. Year 13 students have made good progress, and are likely to meet their predicted A/S and A Level grades. Work involving fieldwork information is particularly good, with data carefully assembled and analysed. It is effectively used to support clearly expressed hypotheses. Students draw on a wide range of information and the most articulate can make sensitive judgements about the quality of contradictory information. Students show increasing understanding of the way that bias influences the reporting and analysis of those problems with a political dimension. A Year 13 group was able to identify and discuss the socio-political forces at work in a case study of the consequences of ecological damage. They identified the extent to which this had resulted from government and multinational exploitation of oil resources. Year 12 students are already working well and have an impressive recall of their GCSE work. This allows them to move straight in to the more challenging assignments of A/S Level work.

337. Enthusiasm for the subjects exists equally between the strands of physical, socio-economic and practical geography. In the lessons observed, not all students made contributions to discussions or information sharing. There was a greater reluctance to participate among girls. However, students are confident in their work and can independently make good quality notes from a variety of sources. These are carefully constructed in a way that helps revision. Use of ICT is less obvious, but there is Internet access through the library and a recently completed ICT room is intended for group use. Some higher attaining students find it hard to demonstrate their scholarship because of limitations in their higher language skills which reduce the effectiveness of discussion and synthesis.

Quality of education

338. Students are highly motivated by the good teaching and display a genuine enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers are very well informed and provide students with carefully structured learning. Content is constantly revised to include the latest developments in subject knowledge, as with a lesson on how the Mt. St. Helen's eruption has developed understanding of the mechanisms and effects of explosive volcanic activity. Teaching and tutorial support is very responsive to the needs of students. This results in good progress being made by most students. Exchange students attend the school, and

the learning needs of a German-speaking exchange student were effectively addressed so that he was able to contribute well to group work.

Leadership and management

339. The subject is well led and this contributes to the good teaching and learning. There is a commitment to continuing development in teaching approaches. Learning support materials are under constant revision and there is an effective mechanism for getting the latest information to the students. The range and quality of resources is good but the quantity does not always meet the needs of this popular subject. Students make good use of a well-managed library with its Internet access. Progress targets are set and students are carefully and regularly monitored. Marking of work and monitoring of notes is systematic and the advice given is very much valued by students. The availability of staff and their support for students is a strength of the department

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

340. The inspection focus was on English, but lessons in French and German were also sampled. Over the last three years, and in 2001, results were average overall. In the present Sixth Form in French and German, standards are good overall and achievement is very good. The department supports students well in acquiring the key skills of communication and ICT, and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Reading skills are well developed, and students are effectively challenged by IT generated resources well selected by teachers to support the topics under study. Students have very good attitudes to language learning, and teaching in the Sixth Form is very good. The efficient departmental assessment system supports students with regular testing and target setting in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The teachers support able linguists well, and provide additional lessons after school where necessary.

English

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

Strengths:

- Teachers know their subject well and understand their students' learning requirements.
- Students' attitudes are positive- they want to succeed.
- Attainment is improving.
- The department is effectively managed by the acting director of creative arts who also has wider duties as the school's assistant head.

Areas for improvement:

- The assessment and marking strategy is not applied consistently.
- The most recent results at GCE AS and A Level fell below the national average; continuity in teaching needs to be restored following the previous year's acute staffing problems; the appointment of a director of creative arts is a priority.
- Timetable clashes in Year 13 impede achievement.
- Some students, especially in Year 13, need to develop their range of reading as a means of increasing their learning.

Standards and achievement

342. The provision for English caters for some 97 students. GCE AS Level and A2 Level courses are offered in English language and English literature. The media studies course is offered at GNVQ intermediate level. Critical thinking is offered in association with the RAIS scheme.

343. Although students' attainment in 2000 at the end of Year 13 in GCE A-Level English language was marginally above the national average, the unvalidated results for 2001 indicate that standards fell below the national average, with most students scoring at the lower grades. Attainment at A-Level in English literature in 2000 was well below the high standards achieved in 1999, and fell below the standards expected nationally. Moreover, the unvalidated results for 2001 also indicate that attainment remained below the standards expected nationally. The unvalidated results at GCE A-Level in both English language and English literature in 2001 were also below the standards expected nationally, with few students achieving at the highest grade. The school explains that serious, acute staffing shortages were contributory factors to this sudden decline in academic standards. The present situation, however, is that staffing stability has largely been restored and that continuity of learning is being re-established.

344. Although Year 12 students currently taking GCE A-Level English language and English literature were in the early stages of the courses at the time of the inspection, observation of their work indicates that standards are improving. Students of language were observed analysing the varying writing styles of newspaper reporters; students understand clearly how words are used to manipulate thought. In an English literature lesson, after a hesitant start, students showed understanding of the essential qualities of drama and how dramatic tension is created. Students are seen to be building well upon their previous GCSE knowledge; a secure foundation is being prepared for study in the early stages of the AS Level courses. In critical thinking lessons, students appreciate the importance of formulating the appropriate questions before attempting solutions to complex issues.

345. Attainment observed in the Year 13 lessons is nearer national expectations than the GCE A-Level results for the previous academic year suggest. In one language lesson, students were observed examining young children's reading schemes. Their teacher provided a banquet of good quality reading for children; the students showed correct judgement in selecting the effective schemes whilst rejecting those which offered no nourishment to young minds. Most students are developing a satisfactory understanding of the fundamental principles of language analysis to be applied to the study of all texts. In English literature, higher-attaining students are becoming autonomous readers, showing insight into complex texts; but most students need to increase their range of reading to acquire the scholarship required for success at the higher grades. The majority show a capacity to reflect sensibly on the subject, and present their arguments in a clear written style. A minority of students addresses only the superficial features of texts, and does not explore ideas fully.

Quality of Education

346. Almost all teaching at AS, A and GNVQ Levels is good; one satisfactory lesson, which fell short of this standard contained teaching strengths to be developed with further experience. In another lesson a timetable clash made it impossible to proceed as planned. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Teachers are sure of their subject, plan their lessons well, and adopt a brisk pace. Questioning is purposeful and challenging, and teachers listen with respect to students' ideas, encouraging them to further endeavour. Although the students represent a wide range of attainment, most teaching is pitched at the appropriate level, and expectations are good. Teaching, however, is less successful when a task becomes too ambitious for average and borderline attainers. The successful lessons increase students' confidence and create an appetite for learning; in these lessons teachers draw out what students know, as well as instill knowledge. In language lessons teachers raise awareness of the power that language has in moulding our thoughts and behaviour. Good teaching - often made more effective by touches of healthy humour coupled with the teacher's own facility with word spurs students on to improve the power

of their own writing by judicious selection of vocabulary. In critical thinking lessons, students accept the challenge to think for themselves rather than have their thinking done for them. A secure foundation for learning is being laid in Year 12. However, timetable clashes in Year 13 detract from the best efforts of teachers to restore pace and continuity to all lessons.

347. Although effective strategies for marking and assessing students' GCE AS and A Level coursework have been formulated, scrutiny of students' coursework indicates they are not yet being consistently applied.

348. The department makes a good contribution to students' social and cultural development. Debates, open to the whole school, are organised by the Sixth Form. The school newspaper, 'The Bridges', won the recent competition run by the Times Education Supplement. The department has hosted visits from author Eric Lomax. Students' poetry has been selected for inclusion in a schools' anthology. Theatre visits have been organised and the Sixth Form are engaged in the 'reading in the community' scheme. The recent national poetry day was celebrated in the school library; readings included poetry written by staff and students.

349. Students in Years 12 and 13 work effectively on their own and in small groups. They hold positive attitudes to study, show a desire to succeed and have harmonious relationships with their teachers. The higher attainers are developing maturity of thought; middle attainers and borderline GCE candidates need to read more widely around their subject. Independent work is undertaken in the school library confident use is made of ICT facilities for researching and drafting work.

350. Most are learning to accept that hard work is required for success. Year 12 students indicated they were experiencing a confident start to their course. Year 13 students were optimistic that previous staffing problems were being resolved and that achievement was improving.

Leadership and management

351. The overall good teaching and improved learning largely result from the effective and confident management of the department, undertaken on a temporary basis by the school's assistant head teacher. Staff collaborate well and share good practice. Although timetable clashes impede achievement in some Year 13 lessons, teachers are determined to re-establish that continuity of learning which was denied to these students during the previous year. English at GCE Level and GNVQ media studies are popular options in the Sixth Form.