

INSPECTION REPORT

THE CRESSEX COMMUNITY SCHOOL

High Wycombe

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110500

Head teacher: Mrs L Caldicott

Reporting inspector: Mr R Palmer
31198

Dates of inspection: 15th – 19th October 2001

Inspection number: 219326

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

Crown copyright 2001.

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary Modern

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Holmer's Lane
High Wycombe
Bucks

Postcode: HP12 4QA

Telephone number: 01494 437729

Fax number: 01494 461502

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr K Simmons

Date of previous inspection: 8th November 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
31198	R Palmer	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	B Quest Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30690	G Allison	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
8216	G Binks	Team inspector	English	
7926	J Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
12499	M Durkin	Team inspector	English	
4773	P Gilliat	Team inspector	History Religious education	
10209	V Gormally	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	

23188	V Maunder	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18846	P Priest	Team inspector	Music	
27485	M Sims	Team inspector	Urdu Equality of opportunity Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
13623	J Waddington	Team inspector	GNVQ Provision for students in the sixth form	
4829	I Waters	Team inspector	French	
20497	V Williams	Team inspector	Geography	
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics	

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

15 The Birches
Bramhope
LEEDS
LS16 9DP

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 15
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	16 - 22
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	22 - 27
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	27 - 32
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	32 - 35
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	35 - 36
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	36 - 42
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	43
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	44 - 48
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	49 - 78
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	79 - 93

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cressex School is a co-educational, secondary modern school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years, located on the south western side of High Wycombe. The school is of average size compared with all secondary schools in England. It has 900 pupils (466 boys and 434 girls), including 99 students in the sixth form. The number of pupils entering the school at the age of 11 is increasing and exceeded the school's standard number for admissions in 2001. Pupils come from areas of established housing close by the school and from other parts of the town. They have a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Many pupils experience financial disadvantage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, two pupils in every five, is well above the national average. A very high proportion, more than one pupil in every two, speaks English as an additional language, including 18 pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. A very large proportion, three out of every four pupils, are of non-white ethnic background. The large majority of these pupils are of Pakistani heritage. About one in every 20 pupils is of Afro-Caribbean heritage. An above average proportion of pupils, one in every four, has special educational needs. Most of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, about one in every 35, is average. The attainment of pupils on entry at age 11 is well below average. This is because around four pupils in every ten in the area attend grammar schools that select their pupils on the basis of high attainment. The number of pupils joining or leaving during the school year is high; in 2000/2001 around one in every eight pupils either joined or left the school. The school has significant difficulties in recruiting teachers of suitable quality. Six vacancies are currently filled by temporary, short-term appointments.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is improving. It now provides a satisfactory quality of education for pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment. Leadership and management, particularly of the head teacher, are good. They are key factors in the school's good progress since its previous inspection. Standards are generally well below the national average. However, achievement for pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and usually good in other years. This is because the quality of teaching has improved, is satisfactory overall, and often good or very good. GCSE results in 2000 represented good achievement based on pupils' prior attainments. The achievement of pupils of black African and Caribbean heritage, though satisfactory, is not as high as that of other pupils. The school is working hard to raise the achievement of these particular pupils. Higher achievement is hindered by the school's inability to recruit suitably qualified teachers in some subjects and by the unsatisfactory attendance of a decreasing minority of pupils. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. The school has more strengths than weaknesses. Senior managers and most staff have a determination and a capacity to improve. It provides a good standard of care for its pupils and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Achievement at the end of Year 11 in most subjects is good compared with pupils' previous attainment.
- GCSE results recently in English literature and religious education are slightly above average and represent very good achievement. Results in Urdu in 2001 were well above average.
- Good leadership and management, particularly of the head teacher, ensure the

school's good progress.

- A large amount of teaching is good or better and contributes to pupils' good achievement.
- Provision for pupils' social development is very good and contributes to racial harmony.
- Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve well.

What could be improved

- Unsatisfactory teaching occurs because the school is unable to recruit enough teachers of suitable quality.
- Pupils do not develop or use their skills in numeracy or information and communication technology (ICT) to improve their work in many subjects.
- Unsatisfactory curricular provision adversely affects pupils' standards in French and in Urdu.
- Attendance has improved but remains unsatisfactory.
- Health and safety arrangements do not prevent vehicles driving around the site while pupils are at school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement in the short period since its previous inspection in 1999, when it was judged to have serious weaknesses. The governing body, as a result of its commitment and intensive training, has improved its work considerably and is now effective in managing and supporting the work of the school. The leadership of the head teacher is particularly good and provides inspiration for staff and pupils alike. However, results in the national tests for pupils aged 14 improved slightly in 2001. GCSE results in 2000 were above average in comparison with results achieved by similar schools and were above expectations based on pupils' prior attainment. The quality of teaching has improved as a result of effective programmes of in-service training and is satisfactory overall. It is often good or better. Most of the unsatisfactory or poor teaching is due to the school's considerable difficulties in recruiting teachers of suitable quality. Pupils learn better and now make generally good progress in most subjects. Governors and senior managers have vigorously tackled the key issues identified in the previous report and achieved good improvement on most. The issues in which progress is less than good include the development of numeracy and ICT, curricular provision for modern languages and for a daily act of collective worship. Although attendance is still unsatisfactory it has improved considerably. The number of pupils entering the school at the age of 11 is increasing. The school is making useful progress towards its suitably challenging targets. Its cost-effectiveness has improved and is satisfactory. The school has the capacity and the commitment to make further improvements.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	D	E	B
A-levels/AS-levels	N/a	E*	E*	

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

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average. In 2000, results in the national tests for pupils aged 14 were well below the national average in English and mathematics and were in the lowest five per cent nationally in science. These results were below those achieved by similar schools, but were a satisfactory achievement for pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities when compared with pupils' prior attainment. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above increased slightly in 2001 in all three subjects. In 2000, GCSE results at grades A*-C were well below the national average for both boys and girls. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A*-G was below average. Results were above the average for similar schools. They represented good achievement when compared with pupils' results in the national tests taken two years earlier. Pupils of all backgrounds and levels of prior attainment who attended regularly, including those with special educational needs, made good progress in most subjects. Because the school's data about results in external examinations prior to 2000 is unreliable, it is not possible accurately to determine trends in performance.

In lessons and in the work seen in their books, pupils' attainment was well below average in Years 7 to 9 in English, mathematics and science. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' work was below average in English and mathematics and was well below average in science. Standards in subjects are higher in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 partly as a result of improvements in literacy and partly because the older pupils tend to have better attitudes to their work. The work seen in classes was of a slightly higher standard than that indicated by results in external examinations recently. Standards are well above average in Urdu. Standards are above average in religious education in Years 10 and 11. They are average in physical education throughout the school and in history in Years 10 and 11. Standards are below average overall in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music and religious education. They are well below average in French and in business studies.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In all subjects in Years 7 to 11, pupils' achievement is satisfactory or better apart from French, in which it is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a result of very good provision to meet their learning needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make broadly similar progress to that of other pupils. The achievement of pupils of black Caribbean heritage is satisfactory but, particularly among boys, is less good than that of other pupils. The school sets appropriately challenging targets for improvements in pupils' achievements and did not achieve these in 2000.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils who attend regularly have generally positive attitudes, are eager to learn and respond well to good teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. It is better in lessons than around the school. Oppressive behaviour occurs among a few pupils. The level of fixed-term exclusions is high.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on harmoniously with each other and work well together in classes and in activities outside lessons. Racial harmony is a positive feature.
Attendance	Below average. It is much improved and has nearly reached 90 per cent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching has greatly improved and is now satisfactory. In most of the lessons observed, teaching was good and often very good. However, in a few subjects, and confirmed through scrutiny of pupils' work, there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching and a small amount of poor teaching. This is due mainly to the lack of commitment and general unsuitability of some of the temporary, short-term replacement teachers. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. Unsatisfactory attendance hinders the progress of a decreasing minority of pupils. Most pupils achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work. Teaching is good in mathematics in Years 7 to 11 and in English in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in English in Years 7 to 9 and in science in Years 7 to 11. The teaching in science is occasionally poor. On balance, the quality of teaching is good in most subjects and is satisfactory in the others.

Most teachers use their good knowledge of the subject well to assist pupils' motivation and learning. The main strength in teaching is the effective way in which teachers manage their classes to ensure that pupils work at a good pace. Good relationships between teachers and pupils create a positive learning environment in the large majority of lessons. Most teachers provide work of suitable difficulty for pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and learn well. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make at least satisfactory progress because most are keen to do well. The teaching of the gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy is good in English and in most other subjects. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics but is unsatisfactory in many other subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory in all years. There is insufficient provision for French in Years 7 to 9 and for Urdu in Years 10 and 11. A wide and suitable range of extra-curricular activities assists pupils' learning, particularly in physical education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils learn well and make good progress towards their targets for improvement as a result of the extra help and very good support they receive.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils make good progress when they receive special support. Their work is satisfactory when the support is unavailable. Monitoring of pupils' progress has improved and is effective in helping pupils to raise standards.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Provision for pupils' social and personal development is very good. Provision for moral and cultural development is good and that for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school looks after pupils well. Support and guidance are good. Procedures for monitoring standards, attendance, behaviour and personal development are good. However, arrangements for health and safety do not prevent the circulation of traffic in the school grounds when pupils are present.
How well the school works in partnership with parents.	Satisfactory. Parents are closely involved in their children's education through attendance at the academic review days. Reports to parents about pupils' progress are not always sufficiently informative.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The very good leadership and effective management of the head teacher, supported well by a relatively new senior management team, are key elements in the school's good improvement over the last year or so. The leadership in subject areas is satisfactory. It varies from good to unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors have improved their work considerably. They are supportive, committed and effective in helping the school to improve its standards and the quality of education. They know the school very well and set a clear direction for future improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It sets suitably challenging targets for improvements. Appropriate strategies have led to improvements in teaching and learning,
The strategic use of resources	Good. Although it has to operate with a significant budgetary deficit, financial management is good. The school makes effective use of its limited staffing, accommodation and learning resources. Spending decisions are carefully considered and are suitably related to the school's stated educational priorities.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school expects pupils to work hard.• Parents feel welcome at the school.• Pupils like school and make good progress.• The school helps pupils to be responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Better information about pupils' progress.▪ Behaviour in school could be better.▪ The way the school works with them.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and that information about pupils' progress could be improved to give parents a better understanding of how well pupils are progressing. In many subjects, the reports do not adequately describe what pupils know, understand and can do. Inspection findings are that behaviour is satisfactory and is often good. The school makes a satisfactory attempt to work closely with parents but could do more.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11–18 secondary modern school has 99 students (64 girls and 35 boys). Numbers have declined recently. The proportion of students of non-white ethnic minority heritage is high. English is an additional language for approximately one student in every two. Courses are mainly vocational. A small number of A-level, AS-level and GCSE courses extend the curricular provision. There are suitable entry requirements for each course of study. Students' attainment on entry is well below average. Approximately one in four students stays on from Year 11. A few students transfer into the sixth form from other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is satisfactory. It is cost effective. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision relating to the future development of the sixth form and raising standards. Examination results in 2000 were well below average. Results in 2001 improved both at A-level and particularly in the advanced vocational courses. These improved standards match the work seen during the inspection. On balance, students achieve well relative to their GCSE results gained at the end of Year 11. Teaching is satisfactory. In most of the lessons observed it was often good or better. Teachers have high expectations of students, closely related to the information available through satisfactory procedures for assessment. Students are keen to learn. Most have good attitudes in the subjects inspected. A weakness in learning is that students tend to rely too much on the teacher. Many students are reluctant to suggest and try out their own hypotheses. Students do not know how to make the best available use of the time set aside for study. The sixth form is successful in meeting the needs of all students. Accordingly, students of all levels of attainment from each of the different ethnic backgrounds make similarly good progress.

Strengths

- Attainment in vocational courses improved considerably in 2001.
- Students achieve well because of their good attitudes
- Satisfactory, and often good or better, teaching helps students to achieve well.
- Attendance has improved considerably because it is monitored well.
- The proportion of students staying on at 16 is increasing.
- Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection

What could be improved

- Attainment in courses in mathematics and science is not high enough.
- Students' study skills and their use of time for private study are unsatisfactory.
- Students make insufficient use of the key skills of ICT and numeracy in many subjects.
- Students' attendance can be improved further.

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	Unsatisfactory. Standards in the Application of Number are below average but improving. The rate of success for students retaking GCSE examinations is low. Teaching is satisfactory but lacks flair.
Science	Satisfactory. Standards are below average but as good as expected from students' GCSE results. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory. Students have positive attitudes to work.
Advanced business studies	Good. Teaching is good. It helps students to achieve very well. Students' attitudes are good. They have good knowledge of their learning. The course lacks strong links with ICT and work experience.
Intermediate and foundation business studies	Satisfactory. Intermediate GNVQ results are improving and are satisfactory. Attainment in the new foundation course is well below average. Students' good attitudes assist learning. Both courses lack sufficient links to ICT and work experience.
ICT	Good. Standards are below average. The achievement of students is good in relation to their prior attainment. Students' enthusiasm for the new courses ensures their good progress. Teaching is good.
Health and social care	Good. Teaching is very good and helps students to achieve well. Standards are well below average in the advanced course but are improving, as are those at the intermediate level. Attitudes are very good. Students are aware of how they can improve.
Art and design	Good. All students who have entered for A-level in the past two years have achieved a pass. Teaching is good. Attitudes of students are good. Standards are slightly below the national average.
Technical Theatre	Good. Good and often very good teaching leads to good achievement. Students are highly committed and undertake substantial extra-curricular activity to enhance their skills and understanding.
English	Satisfactory. Standards are well below average. Students' achievement is good. Teaching is good. Attitudes are good. Students are keen to learn but need better information on how to improve and to work independently.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching and learning was good in psychology and law and very good in physical education. The attitudes of students to their learning were good and sometimes very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. Students receive good support within subject areas. Planning for the development of students' study skills and the use of their basic skills in numeracy and ICT is unsatisfactory in many subjects. Induction is satisfactory. Few students leave before the completion of their course. Students enjoy good, personal contact with their subject tutors who know them very well. Suitable targets are set and reviewed in a consistent manner in most subjects. Careers education and guidance are satisfactory. Opportunities for work experience are arranged by the local education and business partnership but are not closely linked with the sixth form curriculum.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The school has clear aims for the sixth form and has responded to the needs of the students by introducing new courses at AS-level and in some vocational areas. It has made satisfactory progress in addressing shortcomings identified in the previous inspection. The governing body is playing a more strategic role in the quality of sixth form provision. Good arrangements keep the curriculum under review. Monitoring and reporting of students' work are satisfactory. They do not sufficiently influence the detailed planning of the curriculum. Not enough use is made of partnerships with other institutions to broaden and strengthen the curriculum.

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"> • Most are pleased with the courses available and the match to their needs and aspirations. • Most say that they are taught well. • Assessment informs them well. • Induction is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and use of the common room. • Access to ICT facilities. • Advice about future options. • Arrangements for private study.

Students' hold generally positive views, although a few expressed concerns about the school's inability to recruit teachers in some subjects. Inspectors agree for the most part with students' positive views and some of the areas suggested for improvement. Inspectors found that courses did generally match needs and aspirations though the range of courses was relatively narrow, particularly at A and AS-levels. Teaching is satisfactory but is often good. Improved and satisfactory systems of assessment give students a clear picture of how well they are doing in most subjects. Arrangements for induction of students into the sixth form are appropriate and effective. The common room does not allow for privacy of study but in the context of the current accommodation available to the school is adequate. Provision for ICT has improved and is satisfactory, but is not used enough in some subjects. Students receive satisfactory advice about future options through the careers service and increasingly through the school's improved and good programme of personal, social and health education. Arrangements for private study are not particularly effective and, until recently, students have received insufficient teaching of study skills.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When they join this secondary modern school at the age of 11, pupils' attainment is well below average. This is confirmed by information provided by the local education authority, which indicates that around four pupils in every ten in the Wycombe area attend selective, secondary schools. Many pupils have low standards of literacy and numeracy when they join the school.
2. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9, relative to their prior attainment and capabilities, is satisfactory, and is good in some subjects. By the end of Year 11, when they are 16 years old, pupils' achievement is good because a large proportion of the teaching they receive is good or better. These achievements are indicated by results in national tests and in GCSE examinations and in the work seen in pupils' books and in classes.
3. Pupils achieve well in many subjects, because they receive much teaching of good and very good quality. The provision of good care and support helps to provide a suitable environment for purposeful work. The large majority of pupils who attend school regularly have positive attitudes to their work that ensure they make suitable progress in their studies.
4. The most important factor that is preventing higher achievement is the inability of the school to attract sufficient teachers of suitable quality to fill vacant, full-time teaching posts. This results in pupils sometimes receiving unsatisfactory or poor teaching, which adversely affects their learning. Sometimes the school has had to appoint a succession of short-term, temporary teachers in the same subject. This has understandably led to discontinuity of learning and had a negative impact on the morale of the pupils affected. In their discussions with inspectors, pupils said they achieved well in many classes but felt that their GCSE results would be seriously handicapped in a few subjects in which they had been taught by many teachers over a relatively short time. Some of the temporary teachers, particularly the ones from overseas, lack the commitment shown by the vast majority of the permanent teachers.
5. The unsatisfactory attendance of a small minority of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, has an adverse effect on the school's results in GCSE examinations and prevents the school achieving the higher standards it seeks.

National curriculum assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9

6. When they are 14 years old, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests in recent years have been well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Compared with pupils' previous attainment in the national tests taken at the age of 11, the results in 2000 indicated good achievement in English and satisfactory achievement in mathematics and science.
7. In comparison with the results obtained by similar schools in 2000, the school's results in respect of average points scored were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. However, the proportion of pupils

reaching the nationally expected standard of Level 5 matched the average for similar schools in mathematics and was below average in English and science. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of Level 6 and above was below the average for similar schools in all three subjects.

8. Because the records of the school's results prior to 2000 are not reliable, long-term trends in the school's performance are not particularly meaningful. However, in 2001, results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science, though well below average, had improved slightly in all three subjects.

GCSE results of pupils at the end of Year 11

9. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average in most subjects. However, when compared with pupils' prior attainment, these results show that pupils achieved results that were higher than could reasonably be expected.
10. Because the records of examination results prior to 2000 are unreliable, it is not possible accurately to determine long-term trends. GCSE results in 2001 were, on balance, similar to those in the previous year.
11. In 2000, the school's results in GCSE examinations were well below the national average overall and for boys and girls separately. Girls gained much better results than boys in obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-C. Compared with the results achieved by similar schools, the GCSE results were above average and the proportion of pupils gaining the benchmark of five or more GCSE passes at the higher grades A*-C was average.
12. In relation to their prior attainment, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher GCSE grades A*-C in 2000 was well above expectations in mathematics, matched expectations in English and was well below expectations in science. GCSE results at grades A*-C were well below the national average in most subjects. They were slightly above average in English literature and religious education and represented very good achievement in these two subjects. Taking the GCSE results of all subjects into account, the school's performance in GCSE examinations in 2000 was above expectations based on pupils' prior attainment. Results in Urdu in 2001 were well above the national average and represented good achievement.
13. Two factors relating to attendance are hindering the school's attempts to improve results in GCSE examinations. A decreasing, but quite large, number of pupils have unsatisfactory and erratic attendance, which adversely affects the continuity of their learning. A few pupils take extended family holidays during term that result in them missing much important work.

Achievements in classes observed during the inspection

14. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' work in class and standards seen in examination of their written work are average in art and design and physical education. Standards of work are well below average in geography, French, and science and are below average in all other subjects. By the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement and the progress they make, relative to their prior attainment, are good in English, mathematics, art and design, history, ICT, physical education and religious education. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects apart from French in which it is unsatisfactory.

15. Standards of work seen in classes in Years 10 and 11 and in scrutiny of coursework and written work are average in art and design, history, physical education and religious education. Standards of work in Urdu are well above average in Year 11 and represent satisfactory achievement. The subject is not taught in Year 10. Standards are well below average in science and French and are below average in all other subjects. By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement, relative to their prior attainments is satisfactory in science, design and technology, music and business studies and unsatisfactory in French. Achievement is good in all other subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs

16. Pupils on the register of special educational needs, including those who have statements, achieve well in nearly all subjects. They make good progress in lessons and when they are withdrawn for particular support, because teachers and classroom assistants prepare work of appropriate levels of difficulty and provide additional help for them.
17. Pupils who are gifted or talented make satisfactory progress. In a few subjects they are beginning to benefit from the work of the recently appointed co-ordinator, who has responsibility for ensuring that these pupils receive appropriate work. They make good progress in mathematics, history, physical education and religious education because teachers make sure that the work is suitably challenging. Their progress in science is unsatisfactory because they do not receive work that consistently challenges them.

Pupils for whom English is an additional language

18. Standards of pupils for whom English is an additional language and of pupils of ethnic-minority heritage are well below national averages at the age of 11 on entry to the school. At the end of Year 9, nearly all ethnic-minority pupils are below the expected National Curriculum level in English. By the end of Year 11, almost a third of these pupils make very good progress so that they reach the expected level for pupils of the same age nationally.
19. The achievement of these pupils is satisfactory. When they receive effective support, they make good progress. When support is unavailable, their progress is satisfactory. Progress is impeded in some lessons in which, despite the best efforts of the support staff, the unsatisfactory teaching of the particular subject, leads to unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. Two pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have been in England for less than a year are fully integrated into lessons in ICT and science and achieve well.
20. Eight out of ten black Caribbean pupils enter school with well below average attainment, and levels of achievement below their capabilities. By the end of Year 11, black Caribbean boys are still underachieving. The school is tackling this underachievement through a 'black Caribbean pilot project', which started last term. Pupils in Year 11 have been targeted for mentoring. Their work is checked closely to identify those pupils working below expectations and to provide them with appropriate support to improve their standards.

Sixth form

21. Attainment of students in the sixth form is well below the national average. This is not surprising because students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is well below

average. Not only do many pupils in the area go to grammar or other selective schools from the age of 11, but also most of the pupils at the school who achieve average or above average GCSE results tend to transfer into colleges or the sixth forms of other schools to study A-level courses from the age of 16.

22. In 2000, results were well below the national average for the 14 students who entered A-level examinations. Between them, students gained two passes at grade D and six passes at grade E in the A-level examinations. Only two students sat the equivalent of two or more A-level examinations. Results in AS-level examinations were well below average for the small number of entrants. Results in vocational courses were well below average. Taking into account students' prior attainment in GCSE examinations their achievements were satisfactory.
23. Results in 2001 indicate that attainment has improved but remains well below average. Taking into account the well below average prior attainment of the students, these results indicate good achievement.
24. In the advanced GNVQ courses, 36 students achieved the qualification in 2001, including 13 with the merit award and four with a distinction. The school entered students for A-level courses in three subjects. A-level results in art and design were good because all four students who entered, passed at grades B-D. Four of the five students entered for law passed and gained grades D-E. In English, only two of the five candidates gained a pass. The results in AS-level examinations in the four subjects entered were well below the national average. They represented very good achievement in law, good achievement in art and design and satisfactory achievement in psychology. The results in English were unsatisfactory because some students were inappropriately entered for the examination. The number of students entering GCSE examinations in 2001 was too small to enable meaningful comparisons to be made with national averages.
25. Students do not always progress as rapidly as they should because they have not fully developed their study skills. They prefer to rely on the teacher's support and guidance than to explore solutions to problems on their own or in groups. In several subjects they have limited opportunities to improve their work through the development and use of basic skills such as ICT and numeracy. In the science and mathematics courses, students' progress is not as good as progress made by students in other subjects.
26. The school sets challenging targets for students' performance in external examinations taken in the sixth form. Sometimes the targets for particular students have been unrealistic, as for example in English last year, when several students were entered for an examination that was clearly beyond their capabilities. The progress of a few students is hindered because their attendance is unsatisfactory and they fall behind in their studies. The unsatisfactory attendance hinders the schools attempts to meet its targets for performance.

Literacy, numeracy and ICT

27. Pupils' standards of literacy are well below average. Pupils improve their skills in reading, writing and oracy as they move through the school so that pupils who attend regularly acquire satisfactory, and occasionally good, skills in relation to their capabilities by the end of Year 9. Pupils make satisfactory and often good use of their literacy skills to develop their work in many subjects. The teaching of literacy is good

in English and in many subjects such as religious education and history. It helps pupils to improve their competency in answering written questions and increases their confidence in reading and writing.

28. Pupils' standards of numeracy are also well below average. Pupils develop their numerical skills well in mathematics lessons so that those who attend regularly acquire skills in the subject that are good in relation to their earlier attainment in mathematics. They make satisfactory use of these skills to assist their work in a few other subjects such as science, but in most subjects they make little use of numeracy to enhance their work.
29. Pupils' skills in ICT are below average. As they move through the school they develop these skills well in the timetabled lessons in ICT. They acquire knowledge and understanding of ICT that are good in relation to their levels of attainment. However, in many subjects, pupils have few opportunities to practise and apply these skills to enhance their work.

Targets

30. The school sets appropriately challenging targets for pupils and departments. It bases the targets for performance in external examinations on pupils' prior attainments and comparisons with appropriate national data. It was five per cent short of its challenging target for 32 per cent of pupils to gain five or more grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2000.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

31. Pupils' attitudes have improved since the previous inspection and are good overall. The large majority of pupils of all backgrounds and levels of attainment have good attitudes to their studies and come to school prepared to work. Pupils' attitudes improve as they progress through the school. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' attitudes to work vary from very good to occasionally poor. In an English lesson in Year 8 for example, pupils showed a very keen interest in talking about their choice of novel and their own writing based on it. Yet in an English lesson in Year 9 when pupils were practising the use of adjectives, they did not respond well, finding it difficult to hold a discussion as a whole class without degenerating into noisy chaos. When teachers exact high standards of work and behaviour, pupils respond well. They settle quickly, listen and work hard. This was evident in a mathematics lesson in Year 7 on perimeters, and in many physical education lessons. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' attitudes are more consistently good. They are best when teachers show enthusiasm for the lesson and pupils share this. In a science lesson in Year 10, pupils responded very well to the variety of teaching methods, which held their interest and sustained their enthusiasm throughout. In an ICT lesson for the same year, pupils were very willing to experiment when designing web pages. Pupils in Year 11 in the same subject wanted to make sure their work was accurate, questioned the teacher carefully and helped each other.
32. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons. They know how the points system works and think that the introduction of the isolation room is good. There are instances of disruptive and immature behaviour, usually among pupils who find concentration difficult. These are mainly boys. Some groups of pupils can be noisy, especially at the beginning and end of lessons. Behaviour as pupils move around the school is more variable. While the majority of pupils continue to behave

well, there are instances of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, mainly among pupils in the lower part of the school. Most bullying is of the name-calling kind, very occasionally with racial overtones. There are some cases of physical bullying, usually among boys. Pupils who were interviewed consider that the school now acts firmly when such incidents arise. The number of permanent exclusions is average for a school of this size, but the number of fixed-term exclusions was higher than average last year. Most exclusions were for aggressive behaviour.

33. The way in which pupils respond to their personal development is good. This is largely because the relations that they have with each other and with members of staff are harmonious and help learning. It is most noticeable among older pupils. Pupils co-operate and work well together in pairs and groups. Many examples of this willing and productive co-operation were seen in lessons during the course of the inspection, such as one in French in which pupils in Year 10 worked in pairs to prepare a presentation and a buzz of purposeful activity pervaded the room. Relations are good between pupils and members of staff. All interviewed pupils were confident that they would receive help both with personal and academic problems should they ask for it. Pupils appreciate the programme of personal and social development and citizenship. They value the factual information it gives them and the social skills they acquire. Most pupils show respect for one another, such as that indicated by the serious and mature attitudes of pupils in Year 11 in an Urdu lesson in which there was no response if someone made a mistake.
34. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The rate of attendance for the academic year 2000/2001 was 89.5 per cent and below the national average of 91.3 per cent. Authorised absence was 9.5 per cent, compared with a national figure of 7.7 per cent. Unauthorised absence was close to the national figure. Although unsatisfactory, the level of attendance represents a substantial improvement on previous years. Various factors contribute to the below average attendance. Apart from absences for medical reasons, they include holidays taken during term-time, some of which are for extended periods, and days for religious observance.
35. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are supportive and appreciative of the help and support they receive from the learning support department throughout their time in the school. This is reflected in the positive attitudes they have about the school.
36. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils for whom English is an additional language are satisfactory and often good. Attitudes are closely linked to the effectiveness of the support. Where support is appropriate, students are keen to learn and highly motivated. However, in some instances pupils become demotivated if there is no support or teaching is ineffective.

Sixth form

37. Sixth form students generally have good attitudes to their work. They respond well when teachers make clear what is expected of them and are careful to involve them in their own learning. However, the development of students' skills for lifelong learning, though improving, is unsatisfactory overall. In some lessons, male students are more reticent in asking and answering questions, as for example in a science lesson Year 12. Asian female students are sometimes shy in lessons, for example in business studies and health and social care. Nevertheless, they contribute very sensibly when asked. More students are now staying on into the sixth form.

Relationships are good among students, as well as between students and their teachers. These help learning and promote positive attitudes and behaviour. Most students work well together. They also work well with pupils from the main part of the school, as for example in an expressive arts lesson Year 11, when students worked as technicians managing the music, lighting and special effects alongside the groups preparing their performances.

38. Students behave well inside and outside lessons. The level of exclusions in the sixth form is low. Some students are able to take responsibility for their own learning when given the opportunity to do so, for example in a business simulation activity in Year 12. Not all students find independent study easy. Many need help to make effective use of their time for private study, which can be almost half of the time they attend school. Students who were interviewed expressed a need for greater guidance in developing strategies for deepening their understanding within subjects. Levels of attendance were not satisfactory last year, but they have improved considerably this year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

39. The quality of teaching has greatly improved and is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 13, teaching was satisfactory or better in more than nine out of every ten lessons seen. It was good or better in three out of every five lessons seen and was very good or better in one out of every five.
40. In two out of every three of the lessons observed in Years 7 to 11, teaching was good or better. In many subjects, teaching is good. However, in a few subjects, and confirmed through scrutiny of pupils' work, there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching and a small amount of poor teaching. Teaching was less than satisfactory in one lesson out of every twelve observed. This is due mainly to the lack of commitment and general unsuitability of some of the temporary, short-term replacement teachers. Pupils' learning is satisfactory. Pupils correctly feel that their standards of work in a few subjects are adversely affected because of the school's inability to attract enough teachers of suitable quality. Unsatisfactory attendance hinders the progress of a decreasing and small minority of pupils. Most pupils achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work.
41. The quality of teaching is good in mathematics in Years 7 to 11 and in English in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in English in Years 7 to 9 and in science in Years 7 to 11. Some unsatisfactory and a small amount of poor teaching occurred in science. In all three subjects, there were examples of very good, good and satisfactory teaching. A small amount of excellent teaching was seen in French.
42. The quality of teaching is very good in ICT in Years 10 and 11 and is good in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 in art and design, history, ICT, physical education and personal and social education. The teaching in geography is good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects.
43. In most subjects, the quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory. In a few subjects, most notably science, the quality ranges from very good to poor. This matches the views expressed by pupils in their discussions with inspectors and by the few parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting. The inconsistency in the quality of teaching is largely explained by the school's inability to recruit enough teachers of suitable calibre in a few subjects. However, a minority of the

unsatisfactory teaching was performed by a very small number of the permanent and more experienced teachers.

44. The school has made good improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since its previous inspection less than two years ago. These improvements are due to a concerted effort by the head teacher and other senior managers to monitor classes and to ensure the spread of good practice. The appointment of a consultant for teaching and learning, a joint venture between the school and the local education authority, has contributed well to the school's good programme of in-service training for teachers and support staff. The introduction of the 'three-part lesson' structure has helped teachers to improve the planning of lessons. It ensures that there is an appropriate range of activities of appropriate difficulty for pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils' learning is enhanced because they know exactly what is expected of them in each lesson. Teachers, as a matter of routine, list the objectives of the work on the board at the start of the lesson. They discuss progress with the pupils as the lesson continues. They usually ask pupils towards the end of the lesson to explain what they have learned and then place this learning in the context of what work is to follow. Teachers help pupils to achieve well by setting relevant homework of appropriate difficulty.
45. Most teachers make effective use of their good knowledge of their specialist subject to teach the basic skills of the subject and to assist pupils' motivation and learning. The main strength in teaching is the effective way in which teachers manage their classes to ensure that pupils work at a good pace. In an excellent French lesson for pupils of higher attainment in Year 10, for example, pupils successfully acquired knowledge and improved their basic skills. In previous work, the teacher had identified some important gaps in pupils' work in French. She rapidly explained the lesson's objectives to the class in English. From then on, the teacher used French and showed high, but realistic, expectations of pupils' achievement. A wide range of interesting activities, suitably matched to the needs of all pupils, kept pupils interested. All the tasks were carefully timed, several lasting just 30 seconds, so that the pace and productivity of the pupils' work were very good. In an exercise involving use of an overhead projector, pupils were forced to think and to search their memories for answers. Pupils enjoyed the challenge of extending sentences in French by using adverbs. The teacher skilfully used the overhead projector to improve pupils' oracy. Plenty of revision and consolidation of learning occurred, for example, when pupils considered the gender of adjectives and the conjugation of irregular French verbs. Pupils eagerly participated in a game that provided a good challenge and developed their skills in using a dictionary. Pupils learned well because they were actively involved in the lesson. They responded well in work in pairs and in choral work. The very good relationships among pupils and with the teacher, which feature in many lessons, enabled pupils to make very good progress.
46. Most teachers have suitably high expectations of what pupils can achieve in their particular subjects. In the good and very good lessons, teachers provide a good range of interesting and challenging activities, suitably matched to the needs of all pupils, to maintain pupils' concentration and interest. A common feature in most of the good or very good lessons observed was the active participation of pupils. In most lessons, teachers make effective use of the time, support staff and available resources. Good relationships between teachers and pupils create a positive learning environment in the large majority of lessons. The teaching of the gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory.

47. A few teachers, particularly the replacement teachers, do not plan their lessons well despite the good attempts of senior and departmental teachers to help, so that teaching and learning are unsatisfactory and occasionally poor. These teachers underestimate the potential of pupils in some of their classes. In a poor science lesson for low attaining pupils in Year 10, for example, the teacher allowed the pupils to copy the lesson's aims down from the board. However, no verbal explanation was given and no reference made to these aims during the lesson. As a result, the pupils were unaware of the purpose of the lesson or of what they were expected to learn. Pupils' attitudes to the work deteriorated as the lesson progressed because the teacher could not manage the class effectively. The lesson lacked pace and variety as the teacher relied on dictation and copying down from the board. Despite the increasingly poor behaviour of several pupils, the teacher carried on, talked for too long and ignored the pupils who were being disruptive. Other pupils understandably became bored. As a result of the unsatisfactory teaching they have received, pupils in this class have very little understanding of any of the topics covered in science so far this term.
48. Senior staff are very well aware of the shortcomings of several of the temporary teachers. Whenever possible, senior teachers visit the lessons to provide support and guidance. Teaching is usually satisfactory when the head of department or one of the senior management team is present in these lessons. The arrival of the head teacher in lessons in which pupils are responding badly to poor teaching, causes a dramatic improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils clearly respect the head teacher highly and want to work well for her. However, pupils feel let down by the weak teaching they receive from some of the unsuitably qualified, stand-in teachers.
49. In the large majority of lessons, pupils make good progress and achieve well. In most subjects, they gain an appropriate understanding of the work and acquire a good level of skill. Because most of the teaching is good or better, pupils generally apply themselves well to classwork and homework and develop their ability to solve problems and to work creatively. They show interest in their work and enjoy the limited opportunities to work independently. Good systems of assessment provide pupils with an adequate knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Marking is inconsistent but is usually thorough and encouraging for pupils.
50. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 11 make good progress in most subjects. The good quality of support for pupils who are withdrawn from some lessons in small groups, in both the 'learning support' area and the 'pupil support unit', helps these pupils to increase their confidence and to develop their basic skills. Learning activities are structured well to motivate pupils and to maintain their concentration. Pupils respond positively to the high expectations and encouragement of support teachers and the learning support assistants. A positive learning atmosphere, created through the expertise and good understanding of the support teachers and assistants, enables pupils to achieve well. For example, in a lesson about skills in a circus, pupils responded very well to the challenge offered and concentrated well. A group of six boys from the behaviour support unit received effective and purposeful help from the teacher in charge of the group and a senior support assistant, while working well on a commercially produced literacy course on the computer. In lessons related to the Youth Award Scheme, pupils are making good progress as a result of carrying out an interesting range of practical activities. In normal lessons, support assistants work very well with teachers. This means that their support for pupils with special educational needs is effective and enables pupils to

make good progress towards their individual targets for improvement. The attachment of support staff to a range of subject departments has created more effective links with the learning support department. This is having a positive impact on the progress made by pupils with special educational needs.

51. The teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language and for those of different ethnicity is satisfactory. Good relationships between teachers and these pupils stimulate learning. Pupils do not feel stigmatised by support, as they are not singled out in lessons. The specialist, supporting teachers are made welcome by the main class teacher. They draw on their specific knowledge and experience to match their support with particular subjects. The good subject knowledge of a support teacher in ICT enabled a pupil to work through *Publisher* to design a poster for the Internet. Support teachers keep thorough records. They closely track the progress of pupils who are learning English and set suitable targets for improvement. Accordingly, these pupils make at least satisfactory progress in learning English and using it effectively in other subjects. Most of the bilingual support is satisfactory. In a science lesson, for example, in which the bilingual assistant made good use of the time and resources, English learners concentrated well and had access to work on reactive metals. One bilingual assistant made good use of a pupil's mother tongue to record personal information in French and Urdu.
52. The use of specialist teaching and bilingual support is less effective for pupils for whom English is an additional language during periods of inactivity in mainstream lessons, for example, when the subject teacher is addressing the whole class. Use of such time is not planned well. Withdrawal of pupils from some lessons, which is not planned with subject teachers nor linked to National Curriculum programmes of study, does not give some learners of English full access to the curriculum. Models of how to teach in partnerships of subject and support teachers are at an early stage of development. In a few lessons, bilingual staff made little use of pupils' mother tongues, so that opportunities were missed to consolidate pupils' understanding of the work.
53. The quality of teaching received by boys and girls is similar. However, the attitudes to learning of some boys, particularly those of black Caribbean heritage, are not always as positive as those of most pupils. This results in the achievement of these boys being satisfactory rather than good.
54. Pupils who are gifted or talented receive satisfactory teaching in most subjects. The recent appointment of a co-ordinator to oversee the provision for these pupils has helped to improve their quality of learning in a few subjects. In history, for example, the use of different approaches to stimulate and stretch these pupils is proving successful in raising standards.
55. One of the key issues of the previous inspection in 1999 was 'to implement policies to set out whole-school approaches to literacy, numeracy, and ICT, in order to improve pupils' access to the curriculum'. The teaching of literacy is now satisfactory. It is good in English and a few other subjects and satisfactory in others. The school has made good progress in developing a whole-school approach to literacy. Initiatives started in September 2000 led to a useful focus on awareness of language in lessons. Teachers in all subjects pay suitable attention to the teaching of literacy. Many classrooms, particularly those in which English is taught, display key words for the subject and linking words that encourage pupils to use more varied constructions of sentences. As a result the quality of pupils' writing has improved. In modern

languages, pupils use dictionaries well to improve their vocabulary in the foreign language and to increase their understanding of the meanings of English words. Teachers in many subjects, as in mathematics, draw pupils' attention to the spelling and use of relevant vocabulary. In many subjects, pupils develop their speaking skills through good opportunities to engage in discussions about work in class and in small groups.

56. The teaching of numeracy is generally good in mathematics lessons but is unsatisfactory in many subjects. This is largely because the school has not completed work on producing a policy for the teaching of mathematical skills across all subjects. As a result, the teaching of numeracy is inconsistent. In most mathematics lessons, teachers use a short numeracy session to reinforce pupils' skills in using number and their understanding of basic, mathematical processes. These sessions are effective in raising standards, though not all teachers in the department use them consistently. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use and develop their mathematical skills in a few subjects. For instance, in geography, pupils use graphical presentations of statistical data well in individual project work, but in contrast, they do not learn how to analyse statistical data properly. Pupils sometimes lack confidence in their numeracy, as seen in a science lesson in Year 11 in which they were unsure how to plot their graphs.
57. The teaching of the key skills of ICT is effective in the discrete lessons in ICT. Although there has been an improvement in the school's provision for ICT, few subjects provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to enhance their work through using these skills. However, teachers in mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages provide good experiences for pupils to use ICT to improve their achievements.

Sixth form

58. The quality of teaching in the sixth form and of the learning that it supports is satisfactory. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all of the lessons observed in Years 12 and 13 and was very good in a quarter of them. The characteristics of satisfactory and better teaching that are evident in Years 7 to 11 are present in the sixth form. Teaching has improved slightly since the previous inspection because the school's good programme of in-service training of teachers has enabled good practice to be effectively shared across subjects. Learning has improved as a result of better teaching and also because students' attendance has improved substantially and students have positive attitudes to their work.
59. In 30 of the 40 lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good or better. Teaching and learning, on balance, are both satisfactory rather than good for the following reasons. Examination of students' books and other work and discussions with them about their work indicated that often their work was of a satisfactory standard and depended too much on the input of the teacher. Students' learning has been hindered at times because of staffing difficulties. In several subjects, students have insufficient opportunities to develop their key skills, particularly those of numeracy and ICT. They have had insufficient teaching about how to study properly and do not know how to use the time set aside for private study effectively. Although attendance has improved, the progress of a few students whose attendance is irregular is hindered because of the consequent discontinuity of their learning. Students acquire suitable basic skills and understanding in the particular subjects that

they study. They apply themselves and concentrate well in most subjects so that the pace and productivity of their work are generally good.

60. Teaching is satisfactory in sixth form classes in mathematics and science and good in most other subjects observed. Students achieve well because they want to do well. Improved results in vocational and A-level examinations in 2001 reflect the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
61. Most students feel that they are taught well and receive work of suitable challenge. For the most part, they are justified in holding these views. However, understandably, those whose work has previously been adversely affected through the school's difficulties in recruitment of staff, have a different view. About one student in every four who responded to the invitation to complete a questionnaire for the inspection team said that they did not receive enough help to be able to work independently. Inspection findings support this view of the students. The school recognises this concern and is appropriately considering how to improve students' study skills.

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

62. The quality and range of learning experiences are satisfactory throughout the school. Good progress has been made in tackling the key issues relating to deficiencies in curricular provision identified in the report of the previous inspection. The school now meets statutory requirements for the curriculum in all years. There still remains a shortcoming in the curriculum in Years 7 to 9, because insufficient time for the teaching of French is having an adverse effect on attainment.
63. The governors' curricular committee works closely and effectively with the senior management team to monitor and oversee the curriculum, its planning and its implementation. The investment of time and money into ICT development is contributing to the improved standards now being achieved. ICT is now taught, on its own account, as a discrete subject for all pupils, as well as featuring in the work of other subjects.
64. In Years 10 to 11, the range of opportunities has been helpfully extended by the opportunity to follow an additional subject from a good range of options. All pupils now develop their ICT skills well through following a course in ICT to GCSE level. A second technology course has been introduced as an optional subject and pupils now have the opportunity to follow a full GCSE course in religious education. It is also possible for some of the lower attaining or disaffected pupils to follow the suitable Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses. A shortcoming of the current provision is that no pupils in Year 10 are studying Urdu, even though many students have good skills in the language.
65. The provision for gifted and talented pupils has improved and is generally satisfactory. Gifted and talented pupils are the focus of a pilot study that has recently started at the school. A co-ordinator has been appointed to ensure that the needs of these pupils are properly met. This arrangement is good preparation for the school's involvement from next year in the government's Excellence in Cities initiative.
66. The school has made good progress since the 1999 inspection in provision for literacy, which is now good. Initiatives started in September 2000 led to a useful focus on language awareness in classrooms. Many classrooms, particularly those in

which English is taught, display key words for the subject and linking words to encourage more varied construction of sentences. The first stage of raising teachers' awareness of the need for a concerted school approach has been accomplished this term through introductory talks and the provision of workshop training. External literacy trainers worked with staff during a training day and will continue to support the school in the immediate future. There is now a general awareness among all staff within the school of issues relating to literacy and spoken language.

67. The recent appointment of a co-ordinator to lead and support a whole-school initiative on literacy is an important development as standards of reading and writing are low for pupils entering the school. It is also vital for ensuring that the maximum support possible is given to the many pupils for whom English is not their first language. The English department is successfully introducing the National Literacy Strategy into the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. A two-week summer school targets pupils coming from primary school with low literacy and low numeracy skills. This is a valuable initiative for these pupils, who need tuition and revision in small groups. It helps also to alert teachers to pupils who will need special help in their early days in the secondary school.
68. Provision for numeracy lags behind that in literacy and though it is on balance satisfactory, it is unsatisfactory in some subjects. The lack of an agreed policy for the teaching of mathematical skills across all subjects restricts pupils' use and development of numeracy skills. The provision of ICT is satisfactory. Recent improvements in the number of computers and extensive networking of the school have increased the level of pupils' access to ICT. However, in several subjects pupils have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to improve their work.
69. For pupils who speak English as an additional language, the use of specialist support is planned well, regular and effective. This has helped the pupils now established in the school to learn well
70. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good throughout the school. All pupils are fully integrated into the curriculum and receive intensive programmes of support in small groups and individually. Pupils with special educational needs have good opportunities to study for a variety of accredited courses at GCSE level, for the Certificate of Achievement in subjects such as science and for the ASDAN Youth Award. The school suitably plans to introduce more vocational courses, as part of its commitment to giving all pupils the opportunity to succeed.
71. Extra-curricular provision is good. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 value the activities provided that broaden their learning and contribute well to their personal development. The programme includes academic, musical and sports activities. Provision for music and drama is good, with high levels of participation in the choir, keyboard club, band, drama club and school musical and drama productions. A wide-ranging and balanced programme of physical education activities and sport clubs promote competitive sport. Pupils represent the school in local leagues and cup competitions. The teachers of physical education support the philosophy of 'Sport for All' and encourage as many pupils as possible to participate in activities, whether in a dance workshop, or representing the school in a cricket match. The English department minimised the disruption caused to pupils' and students' education by the loss of two key members of staff in the previous school year, through the head of department taking on

additional classes and by the creation of lunchtime and after-school workshops for pupils.

72. Highlights of the sporting calendar for the past two years have included an Italian Activities course at Villeneuve, a water sports trip to Spain, a visit to Lords for the England v Pakistan one-day international cricket and Wimbledon for the tennis in 2001. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in adventurous activities designed to enhance their personal and social development through exercises in team building and leadership, for example at the Army Schools Challenge at Bicester Barracks. Visits abroad have helped to develop pupils' language skills and an awareness of other cultures. For the second year running the school has organised an Activities Day in which all staff and pupils take part in a wide range of interesting visits and activities. This has proved a big success and succeeds in broadening pupils' horizons and contributing to the good relationships within the school.
73. Many subjects provide enrichment activities. These include such valuable learning experiences as the computer club, visits to theatres, museums, galleries and places of historic interest, and field trips. These, along with homework clubs and booster classes in some subjects, for example, science, provide additional preparation and help for pupils prior to external examinations.
74. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. It increases pupils' awareness of the world of work. Teaching begins in Year 9. The programme in Years 10 and 11 includes the opportunity for all pupils to have two weeks of work experience. Members of the teaching staff monitor all work experience well, with careful preparation and follow-up during, and after, the placement. Good links with the careers service enable pupils to receive individual advice on the range of opportunities available to them.
75. Links with primary schools are very good and assist continuity of pupils' learning. The school has been successful with its sporting ventures, which include going into primary schools and coaching the pupils. The school organises a Year 6 Sports Day, when pupils from all the local primary schools are invited to come along and compete against one another. This has proved to be very popular and is supported well. The school is developing an ICT initiative whereby it loans out expertise to local schools and assists them in setting up, and maintaining, their ICT departments. A number of older pupils go into the primary schools to help in the staging of productions in drama and music.
76. Links with the local community are good and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Year 10 enhance their understanding of business through participation in the annual 'Playing for Profit' scheme. The school subscribes to the High Wycombe Education Business partnership. Pupils often work on projects in collaboration with the local district council.
77. The provision for pupils' personal development is good. The school's strong emphasis on enabling every pupil to achieve success and the good quality of relationships within the school provide a supportive context for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils attend assemblies once a week. These are planned well around weekly themes. Helpful advice is provided for teachers so that they can develop these themes with their tutor groups on the other days of the week. Whilst this is done effectively with some groups the practice is inconsistent so that statutory requirements for a daily act of collective are not fully met. Overall provision for pupils'

personal development has remained consistent since the previous inspection, although social education has improved and is a strength of the school.

78. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Some subjects, assemblies and the thought for the week arrangements make a useful contribution to this aspect of pupils' education. For example, pupils are able to reflect on and respond in a personal way to works of art and music. In English and religious education, pupils have opportunities to explore and extend their thinking about beliefs and values. However, planned provision in some other subjects is underdeveloped and opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development are missed.
79. The school continues to make good provision for moral education. The code of conduct and the daily routines of the school successfully promote positive values, and help pupils distinguish right from wrong. The importance of pupils acting with respect for the feelings and beliefs of others is emphasised well and staff work hard to resolve conflicts. Valuable discussion on ethical issues and dilemmas takes place in a number of subjects, such as English, the humanities and personal and social education. This encourages pupils to consider a range of viewpoints and think through some of the choices they will need to make in life.
80. Social education is very good. Pupils have many good opportunities to develop social and collaborative skills in lessons. The curriculum also makes good provision for pupils to develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Pupils can participate in various aspects of school life in which they can take on responsibilities and show initiative, such as in the Year Councils and the School Council. They can also develop confidence and social skills when acting, for example, as librarians, receptionists or prefects. Sixth formers act as mentors to pupils in tutor groups in the lower school and help with paired reading. Pupils are involved in fund-raising for charities. Pupils in Year 11, for example, raised money by organising an ambitious fashion show during the lunch hour.
81. The provision for pupils' cultural development continues to be good. Opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of different cultures are good in subjects such as English and the humanities. In music and dance, for example, teachers draw on material from a wide range of cultures. In their day-to-day teaching, staff also draw successfully on the different cultural traditions represented within the school to promote knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity. Cultural interests and horizons are extended through pupils' participation in the school's good extra-curricular programme of sport, music, drama and other activities. Pupils also have a good range of opportunities to go on educational visits, such as to the House of Commons on Activities Day, or to the First World War battlefields with the history department or on the trip to Boulogne in Year 7.
82. The school's personal, social and health education programme addresses issues of bullying, racism and sexism. In Year 9, pupils study assertiveness, and in drama, conflict resolution. Departments have not recently analysed their schemes of work for equal opportunities, however.
83. The school has successfully improved relations with a local mosque, particularly over the issue of careers for girls. A discussion group for girls and women runs every week. Provision is made for lunchtime prayers for all Muslim pupils but generally the wide range of extra-curricular activities available does not fully reflect the cultural heritage of pupils. The library has a number of publications to reflect a diverse

multicultural society but there are only a few dual-language and mother-tongue books available. Urdu is offered as an option in Year 10 but there was insufficient take-up for the course to run. Pupils are able to take GCSE examinations in other home languages, for example German, Japanese and Arabic. Ramadan and Eid are observed in religious education and in form periods when Muslim pupils have led class assemblies.

84. The school's strong ethos of inclusion and support for those pupils identified as having special educational needs has a positive impact on the social development of these pupils as well as the social development of all other pupils in the school. The school meets fully the curricular requirements as outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs.
85. Provision for pupils' personal and social education, one of the key issues in the previous inspection report, has improved considerably and is now very good in Years 7 to 11. Instead of being taught by tutors during registration periods, there is now a one-hour lesson each fortnight for all pupils, taught by specialist staff. The programme is planned very well and is appropriate for pupils' changing needs as they move through the school. It includes sex and relationships education, drugs education, health education and citizenship. The programme is sensitive to the cultural communities represented within the school and makes effective use of outside visitors, including theatre groups.

Sixth form

86. The range and quality of the curriculum in the sixth form are satisfactory. The range of courses offered has improved since the previous inspection, but choices remain limited. Students have access to GNVQ courses in two subjects; AVCE (advanced vocational certificate of education) in four subjects; AS or A-Level in five subjects; and a BTEC diploma in technical theatre and performance studies. Key skills are compulsory for all students and include the opportunity to study ICT, communication and number to levels 1,2 or 3. Timetabling clashes reduce some students' access to enrichment activities. In many subjects, students have insufficient opportunities to practise and use their ICT and numeracy skills. The limited range of opportunities in the sixth form leads to some pupils, who have achieved good results in GCSE, moving to other schools and colleges.
87. Provision for personal and social education is satisfactory and similar in form to that for the rest of the school. In addition, there are special days when appropriate social and ethical topics are discussed. The school makes effective use of outside speakers and is sensitive to the students' cultural background.
88. Careers guidance in the sixth form is satisfactory and not as good as it is for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Students cover the usual topics such as applications for higher education and applying for jobs. The careers service enables students to receive individual advice and representatives from local businesses give talks explaining the various career paths available within their organisations. Arrangements are made with High Wycombe Education Business Partnership for students from the two-year advanced courses to undertake work experience. Students from the foundation and intermediate vocational courses in Years 12 and 13 do not have such experiences.
89. All students in Year 12 set up a company with assistance from the Young Enterprise Scheme. This forms part of their course and they are assessed on the work

produced. It is given added significance for students and their learning by being part of the formal timetable. The scheme also gives access to additional accreditation and most students take advantage of this.

90. The school continues to foster links with the local providers of further and higher education. Visits are arranged to a number of universities' open days and speakers from such establishments visit the school.
91. The programme of enrichment activities makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, social moral and cultural development. The sixth form makes good provision for extra-curricular activities in sport. These are very effective in helping students to enhance their social development. In art, students increase their cultural awareness through work about Asian art. The provision of out-of-class enrichment activities in other subjects is satisfactory. Spiritual development is promoted through students' attendance at day-conferences that consider religious, moral and spiritual aspects. The curriculum in Year 12 is enhanced by the opportunity in physical education for students to follow the CSLA (community sports leader award) course, now in its second year of provision. Last year, students went into primary schools to coach pupils. In the summer they were successful in hosting games for 400 primary pupils in Year 6. The sixth form curriculum is enriched by the weekly provision of recreational games. Some students provide valuable assistance in paired reading with pupils of Year 7. Other subjects provide cultural enrichment activities. These include visits to theatres, museums and galleries. The BTEC performing arts group put on a performance with excerpts from *Blood Brothers* that received a good review in the local press. Most students on the vocational courses in business have insufficient contact with the world of business outside the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

92. The quality of care has improved since the previous inspection and is good. The school looks after pupils well and provides good support and guidance for them.
93. Procedures to ensure pupils' health and welfare are generally good. The school places a high priority on the way in which it looks after its pupils and students and cares well for them. The head of Year 7 has developed effective procedures to help the new pupils settle smoothly into Year 7. A different head of year takes over in Year 8, which then stays with pupils as they move up the school into Year 11. This system helps pupils to adjust to life in the secondary school and also gives continuity during their time at the school. The year teams get to know pupils well, and use their knowledge, backed up well by careful records, to give good, personal support and guidance. A few safety hazards were drawn to the school's attention, including that created by movement of traffic around the school site during school hours. The school has yet to address issues arising from the Disability Act. There is no disabled access for the library.
94. Procedures for child protection are now good. All members of staff have received appropriate guidance and briefing. The designated teacher is now trained. Procedures to monitor academic progress and personal development are better because of the use of academic reviews twice a term and the two academic review days each year. Procedures to promote good behaviour and discipline have been strengthened. The recording and monitoring of attendance have greatly improved, having been identified as a key issue at the previous inspection. There have been important and effective changes, principally the appointment of an attendance

manager with responsibility for contacting parents on the first day of absence and for analysing registers. Monitoring of attendance is now very good. It is carried out in a meticulous and thorough fashion. Information is based on reliable figures. Rates of attendance are getting better, though they have yet to reach a satisfactory level over a whole year. The amount of unauthorised absence is now the same as the national average.

95. Procedures to promote behaviour and discipline are good. The system of rewards to encourage good work and behaviour is clear and understood well by pupils. They receive points if they misbehave. These lead to sanctions of increasing severity according to the number of points accumulated by pupils. A new isolation room is part of this process and its use is intended to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions. It is too soon to judge if this has been successful. Members of staff have had good training in the management of behaviour. In July, the school surveyed pupils to obtain their views on the types and extent of bullying. Procedures to counteract bullying have been modified suitably to take account of pupils' opinions.
96. Heads of year, helped by their teams of tutors, have overall responsibility for giving pupils the educational and personal support they need. They do so effectively. Academic progress is tracked through the academic reviews twice a term. Pupils and their parents also see these reviews and can discuss them at review days. Personal development is noted and recorded to complete the picture. Efficient use of computerised systems makes this process easier. Heads of year make good use of the range of useful information about pupils that is available to them and give good guidance to pupils to help them to make progress and do well. The school carefully monitors attainment and achievement in all subjects by gender and ethnicity. It has sought to address the issue of boys' underachievement through the purchase of books for the English department, of special appeal to boys, and a reading scheme involving sixth form students to support mostly boys in Year 7.
97. A deputy head has overall responsibility for equal opportunities. The draft policy for equal opportunities incorporates the school's approach to social inclusion. The school has taken on the McPherson report's recommendations for education and keeps a log of exclusions and racist incidents by ethnicity. It accepts the report's definition of a racist incident. The school has effective procedures in place to respond to racist incidents through heads of year and form tutors. Responses include support for the victim as well as sanctions.
98. The school makes suitable provision for asylum seekers through an induction programme for new arrivals. Strong links have been established with social services and through a programme of home visits. The school has appointed more bilingual staff and provided additional time and funding for them to attend departmental meetings.
99. Procedures for the assessment of pupils who have special educational needs are very good. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils at stages 2 to 5 of the special needs Code of Practice. Targets set for pupils are generally clear, concise and challenging yet attainable. The annual review of statements of special educational needs draws upon a wide range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers and pupils. The learning support department has effective relationships with outside specialist agencies that enhance the quality of care for pupils with special educational needs.

100. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are good. They have been strengthened since the previous inspection in three particular ways. Firstly, an efficient central system of assessment comprehensively tracks pupils' progress and achievement. This records and makes available all the appropriate information about pupils' prior attainment, stage of language-acquisition and any particular learning needs. The record includes teachers' changing predictions of GCSE grades and, ultimately, the actual results. It gives all subject teachers, tutors, and others concerned with pastoral responsibilities, a clear picture of pupils' attainment and achievement as they progress through the school.
101. The school also makes effective use of commercially devised systems to predict realistic targets for pupils, based on the levels they have reached already. These predictions are valuable in alerting teachers to signs of underachievement by pupils, particularly in the approach to external examinations taken at the ages of 14 and 16. The use of target grades derived from these systems and from teachers' predictions has a clear and positive effect in raising pupils' awareness of what is expected of them. Pupils in Year 10 were given their GCSE target grades during a tutorial period in the inspection week and were very animated in discussions with friends about the targets and the prospect of discussing them at home.
102. Subject teachers now scrutinise assessment data from the national tests taken by pupils at the age of 11, and from scores obtained in reading and verbal reasoning tests carried out in school, to assist their own procedures of assessment. They make more regular assessments of pupils' work to keep a continuous record of attainment in relation to the levels of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and to GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. This information provides teachers with the data necessary to complete the new progress and effort sheets which are sent to parents five times each year. It helps also in the compilation of the recently revised, annual, written reports to parents. All permanent teachers now have a sound basis against which to judge attainment and progress.
103. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory in most subjects. They are unsatisfactory in Urdu because they do not ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment receive appropriately difficult work. Within the larger departments, there are differences of practice among different teachers. In English, for example, in which pupils' National Curriculum levels are recorded each half term during Years 7 to 9, some teachers assess speaking and listening, reading and writing from each completed piece of work as a continuous process. Other teachers of English make only an overall judgement at the end of the half term. The method of continuous grading is much more helpful to pupils.
104. In subjects such as English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education, teachers' assessments of what pupils had understood led to modifications to the next stage of teaching. Pupils clearly benefit from teachers' close monitoring of what has been learned.

Sixth form

Assessment

105. The use of assessment to promote students' learning is satisfactory in the sixth form. Recent improvements, including the introduction of entry requirements to subjects, have enabled both teachers and students to set realistic targets for attainment. Most

teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the examination boards and keep the students informed about their progress in relation to key aspects of the syllabuses. The use of continuous assessment in the vocational courses and the use of short modules of work, which are quickly assessed, help to maintain students' motivation and interest. Teachers and students now have a good knowledge of students' prior attainment and a satisfactory awareness of potential achievement. Although academic reviews chart students' progress and achievement twice a term, as in the main part of the school, tutors do not always have enough time for individual discussions with students about their progress. Targets for students are set and reviewed regularly and in a consistent manner by most of the subject teachers. Many teachers in the sixth form take careful note of the information gathered in assessment of work to determine what and how they should teach next. This enables students to achieve well in several subjects. Reports on students' achievements and progress are satisfactory and sent to students and parents or carers. Reports are not always explicit enough about how a student can improve her or his work.

Advice, support and guidance

106. On balance, the advice, support and guidance given to students in the sixth form are satisfactory. Students receive satisfactory support on personal issues from their form tutors. Suitable arrangements are in place to promote the health and safety of students, apart from the circulation of traffic around the site during the school day. Students receive clear information about options and courses. The school arranges a taster day to help prospective students decide their options. Students have a short and helpful induction to the sixth form before courses start. Attendance has been an issue and was unsatisfactory last year. Students are now aware of the importance of good attendance and its effect on their results. Attendance so far this year is much better because it is monitored well. Close links with local ethnic community organisations are an important factor in the personal support and development of students. Students receive appropriate guidance on their future career choices, though this guidance is not always provided before students have to take action. An example of this is the late completion of documentation and associated advice relating to applications for higher education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

107. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. At the previous inspection the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents did not include all the information that is required. They now do.
108. Parents' views of the school are positive. Most feel comfortable about bringing any problems to the school's attention. Many correctly think that their children make good progress and achieve well. They feel comfortable approaching the school with problems or concerns. They feel welcome at the school. Parents value the school's good procedures for ensuring an easy transfer for pupils from Year 6 to Year 7. These procedures include a good range of activities for pupils while they are still in the primary school. Appropriate arrangements are in place for parents to visit the school before pupils arrive in Year 7.
109. The school's involvement with parents has improved and is satisfactory. Members of staff contact parents very promptly when concerns arise and make themselves available should parents want to contact them. The school is working to increase the links it has with parents by improving the information it provides. Information for

parents is routinely provided in English only, although it will be translated if parents ask for this to be done. At times, the school makes appropriate use of the bilingual teachers and support assistants to discuss issues with parents. Parents are generally satisfied with the amount and quality of homework set. They do not often raise matters about the curriculum directly with the school. A few parents are concerned about the negative impact on standards of the short-term teachers and have raised these concerns with the school. Parents support the school's policy on uniform. This has a positive influence on the school's ability to ensure that pupils are neatly dressed. Most parents do not actively become involved in the general life of the school.

110. The information that the school provides for parents is satisfactory. There is good information about the school itself, through the prospectus, governors' annual report, questionnaires and information on courses. The half-termly reviews give parents a regular check on the progress their children are making and they can discuss these with tutors on the academic review days. However, information in the annual reports is inconsistent. Some subjects use the format well to give parents a clear picture of what their children can and cannot do and what pupils need to do to improve in that subject. Other reports say very little. Such inconsistency is unsatisfactory.
111. The effect of parents' involvement with the school is satisfactory. The school provides good information for parents of pupils in Year 6 in the primary schools. Parents come to the academic review days. Attendance at these and at the school productions is good. Other events are not supported well.
112. Parents and cares are suitably involved in the annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The reviews keep parents involved and informed as to their child's progress towards the targets set or learning. The annual governors' report to parents contains a very good section that reports on the school's policy for special educational needs. This keeps parents and careers very well informed.
113. Students' hold generally positive views about the school and life in the sixth form. A few expressed concerns about the school's inability to recruit teachers in some subjects. They feel that the curriculum generally matches their needs and aspirations though the range of courses is narrow, particularly at A-level and AS-level. Many say that the systems of assessment give them a good understanding of how well they are doing in most subjects. Arrangements for induction of students into the sixth form are appropriate and effective. The common room does not allow for privacy of study but in the context of the current accommodation available to the school is adequate. Students receive satisfactory advice about future options through the careers service and increasingly through the school's improved and good programme of personal, social and health education. Arrangements for private study are not particularly effective and, until recently, students have received insufficient teaching of study skills

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

114. The school's leadership and management are good. The leadership of the head teacher is very good. It is a most important factor in the school's good improvement since its previous inspection in 1999, when the school was identified as having serious weaknesses. The school is effectively managed. It is succeeding in its main aim of 'creating challenging yet achievable targets for all areas of the school' by

involving staff more closely in making decisions about the school's policies and in seeking consistency in the implementation of the agreed policies.

115. The quality of leadership and management is good in most subjects. The English department, for example, is well organised and well led. It was successful in minimising the disruption to pupils' and students' education resulting from the loss of two key members of staff in the previous school year. This was because the head of department taught additional classes, and teachers ran lunchtime and after-school workshops for pupils to improve their standards in English. The department provides effective support for new teachers that helps newcomers to work well from the beginning of term.
116. The leadership and managerial skills of the head teacher and the governing body have passed a severe test during the short period since the appointment of the head teacher in 2000, during which time the school has encountered significant difficulties in recruiting sufficient teachers and has had to manage a very large budgetary deficit incurred by the previous management of the school. Despite these considerable difficulties, pupils' achievement by the end of Year 11 is good in relation to their prior attainment and students' achievement in the sixth form is also generally good. The quality of teaching and learning has improved; it is now satisfactory, and is often good or better. Progress on the key issues for action identified in the previous report is good overall. Pupils and students of all backgrounds mix easily with one another. The morale of staff and pupils is satisfactory. The school's reputation locally is gradually improving. This view is confirmed by the many representatives of the local community who talked with inspectors about their work with the school. The number of pupils entering the school at the age of 11 is increasing. In 2001, it exceeded the school's official number for admission by 20 pupils.
117. The head teacher sets a very good personal example to pupils and staff. She knows the pupils well and is readily available to discuss personal matters with them. Pupils, students, staff and governors respect the strong commitment and drive of the head teacher and for the most part respond very positively to the very clear and firm direction she sets for the school's work. The deputy heads and assistant heads provide good support. Although they have been in post for a short time, they are proving to be an effective senior management team because they have clear lines of responsibility, share good practice effectively and want the school to succeed. There is a shared commitment among the large majority of staff to raise standards further. Most pupils who attend regularly enjoy school, work well and participate willingly in all aspects of school life.
118. The school's commitment to its policy for equal opportunities ensures that all pupils, regardless of background or attainment are equally valued. As a result, racial harmony is good. The feeling of inclusion is a positive factor that assists the good progress made by the large number of pupils who have special educational needs. It also enables pupils of ethnic minority background and those for whom English is an additional language to make at least satisfactory progress. The school is aware of a shortcoming in its attempts to ensure social inclusion. The level of fixed-term exclusions is too high. The school is working hard to improve its work in this area and is developing strategies to meet the targets in its successful bid for inclusion in the government's Excellence in Cities initiative.
119. The work of the governing body has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now good. The governors were very upset at the revelation of

serious weaknesses in the quality of education provided by the school in the previous report. Their surprise was because they had been for the most part passive recipients of information, which they took on trust from the school, and did not call the professional staff sufficiently to account. Matters have changed substantially. After a period of soul-searching, senior governors decided that they would have to roll their sleeves up, become more skilled in their roles and work hard in a spirit of togetherness to pull the school around. Over the last two years, governors have received good training in how to carry out their responsibilities. They have now struck a good balance between allowing the head teacher and senior staff to manage the school without undue interference and calling staff to account. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and work effectively with the head teacher and other staff in making policies. They are successful in helping the school to improve its standards and quality of education. The chair of the governing body has a strong sense of commitment to the school and devotes a considerable amount of time and energy to help the school move forward. Other governors share this commitment and have loyalty to the school. Governors and senior staff have the commitment and capacity to continue the school's improvement at a good pace.

120. Governors and senior staff have worked closely and effectively with appropriate officers of the local education authority to tackle shortcomings identified in the school's work. They have produced a good plan for the school's future development. This plan sets out the school's priorities and targets for the next few years. The educational priorities are appropriate and based on a firm desire to raise standards and improve further the quality of teaching and learning, and to increase pupils' attendance. Departmental improvement plans are closely linked to the priorities of the whole-school plan and contain suitable objectives.
121. The school has suitable arrangements in place to meet all except one of its statutory requirements, including those for special educational needs. Despite progress since the previous inspection, the school does not meet the statutory requirement for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
122. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are good. Governors and staff are well aware of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. The process of sharing good practice in teaching and learning has developed well and is largely responsible for pupils' good achievement. Through a good programme of training, governors and senior staff have improved the school's procedures for self-evaluation. They set suitably challenging but realistic targets for improvement by staff and pupils. The critical reviews conducted by the head teacher and senior staff, often supported by the local authority's advisory service, provide middle managers with a good understanding of how well their departments are doing and what they should do to improve. Systems for the continuous assessment of the performance of pupils and of subject departments by the senior management team are in place. In nearly all subjects, monitoring by heads of department is effective in improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The school has a good amount of very useful and informative data relating to pupils' attainments and potential achievements. The data is analysed carefully to set targets for improvement. The school sets suitably ambitious targets for pupils' achievements in the national tests for 14 year olds and for GCSE examinations.
123. The leadership and management of the learning support department, which co-ordinates the learning of pupils with special educational needs, are good. The school carefully follows the Code of Practice for special needs. The register of special needs

is effectively organised and up to date. The amount of staffing in the department has greatly improved since the last inspection. Staff are deployed effectively to provide the maximum level of support possible. Documentation of very good quality, for example the handbook, supports very well the day-to-day organisation and guides the work of the learning support department.

124. The leadership and management, of the department that caters for the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language, are good. The department plays a pivotal role within the school. Effective records are kept. Pupils' attainments and capabilities are assessed when they join the school and throughout their time in school. Teachers and support staff in the department have a clear understanding of the language-learning needs of these pupils. These are clearly communicated to subject teachers. The department's action plan gives clear direction for its teachers. The department receives good support from the senior management of the school.
125. Since the previous inspection, the use of funding of the ethnic minority achievement grant has been completely reorganised and results in a better deal for pupils for whom English is an additional language. . Appointments are now made within the school, giving it greater autonomy over the use of staff. The team of bilingual staff has been extended and enhanced. The leadership of the department has been strengthened to give a greater influence in school. Specialist teachers and bilingual staff are attached to subject departments and ensure that curricular provision for language learners is appropriate. The monitoring of progress and achievement of these pupils and target setting are now more effective.
126. The present arrangements for planning the strategic use of the school's resources are good. Following the previous inspection, the governing body produced a comprehensive action plan designed to overcome those weaknesses identified in the report. However, their flexibility in tackling school priorities has been, and still is, restricted by the discovery that the school had a deficit of around £400,000. This was caused partly by an agreed loan of £150,000 from the local authority, but in addition there had been an overstatement of the number of pupils on roll, and the school therefore has to repay the resulting excess of funding which it had received. This is an unsatisfactory position for any school to inherit. The governing body has agreed a recovery plan with the local authority, so that over the next four years this deficit will be repaid. This plan, of necessity, is heavily dependent upon forecasts for increases in the number of pupils on roll, and will therefore require very close monitoring, and annual reviews.
127. The school budget is now firmly under control, with annual expenditure broadly matching income, and with economy measures in place to combat unnecessary expenditure. There is a sensible arrangement that limits the financial authority of the head teacher. Regular meetings between the head teacher, finance officer, and members of the finance committee help them to maintain close control of expenditure. The governing body has accepted the most recent auditor's report. The only recommendation yet to be implemented is that of an audit of private school funds.
128. The extent to which the school's educational priorities are supported through its financial planning is good. Procedures for planning and setting the budget are thorough and effective. The school has devised a detailed improvement plan, and the budget reflects the priorities outlined in this plan, such as the expenditure authorised to encourage improvement in teaching and learning. Departmental planning links in

with the school's priorities. Plans include details of resource implications and timescales. There are regular reviews at both school and departmental level to monitor expenditure and progress towards achieving intended aims. Although the monitoring statements provided by the local authority for the governing body include a helpful commitments column, they do not at present contain an indication for each budget heading of the percentage of budget spent. This limits their usefulness. The finance committee suitably undertakes an evaluation at the end of each financial year of the effectiveness of the school's expenditure, using national guidelines.

129. The total funding allocated to the school includes grants intended for specific purposes, such as staff development and special educational needs. The school's accounts indicate that these grants are being effectively used as intended. Funds for staff training are delegated to departments, increasing the likelihood of obtaining value for money.
130. Financial procedures in the school are efficiently administered through the school's finance officer. There is an efficient system for the collection and banking of cash. Orders and payments are carefully controlled. The school takes particular care to obtain best value when placing orders, or issuing contracts. For example, the lease taken out for computer hardware was not the cheapest estimate, but that which was perceived to give the best value for money in terms of quality and reliability as against the cost of installation.
131. The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The Buckinghamshire allocation of funding per pupil is below average for 11 to 16 year olds, and above average for students in the sixth form. This is to the disadvantage of schools such as Cressex with relatively small sixth forms. Nevertheless, the school receives annual funding broadly similar to the national average. Pupils enter the school with standards well below average, and they are generally well below average at the ages of 14 and 16. Their attitudes and achievements while in the school, however, are good, since the quality of education is also generally good. The socio-economic circumstances of the school are below average. Taking these factors into account, the school is now providing satisfactory value for money.
132. The recruitment and retention of teaching staff are unsatisfactory. The school finds great difficulty in recruiting teachers of high quality even though their procedures for doing so are good. At the time of inspection the school had been unable to fill a considerable number of posts. Supply teachers and teachers on part-time contracts have been used to fill the vacancies but often they provide neither the required expertise in a subject nor the quality of teaching that the school requires. The school has tried hard to overcome its difficulties in recruiting staff. It has placed many advertisements in a wide range of publications and used a number of employment agencies. However, it has been let down by some of these agencies who have supplied temporary teachers whose work did not match expectations based on the reports the school had received prior to their appointment.
133. The quality of the permanent teaching staff in terms of their experience and qualifications is good. Other aspects of the school's staffing procedures are also good. There is good support for teachers who are new to the profession both at departmental level and from the senior staff. Training for teachers and administrative staff is organised and monitored well. All training is clearly linked to the school improvement plan, with teaching and learning being the central focus.

134. Accommodation in the school is satisfactory. Provision for physical education is excellent in terms of the range of facilities but the quality of the changing rooms is poor. The theatre is very well equipped and extensively used by the sixth form and GCSE classes. Most subjects have sufficient rooms of satisfactory quality to ensure that teaching and learning can operate successfully.
135. The provision of resources for learning is satisfactory. Resources for music have improved considerably since the previous inspection, as has access to ICT in subject areas such as geography and mathematics. Resources of books are good in most subjects. In some ICT lessons, however, there are insufficient computers for all pupils to use independently. The need to share computers in some large classes restricts pupils' progress.
136. The school library is a valuable resource for the support of the development of literacy. It also serves as an important resource for supporting wider learning. The library is organised efficiently and is fully available to pupils, students and staff from before school starts until after the end of school. Pupils have access to networked computers, an adequate book stock, some of which is changed frequently within the local authority's circulating scheme, and fictional books for all levels of reading. Three daily newspapers, magazines reflecting pupils' sporting interests, and two weekly papers of local interest to pupils are provided to encourage general reading.
137. The deficiencies in library provision are insufficient books in Urdu, poor provision of mathematics books and some elderly books of fiction that are unlikely to be read by pupils. The difficulty of access to the main part of the library for disabled pupils and staff is also a shortcoming.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

138. The sixth form is led and managed well. The school has made satisfactory progress in tackling the shortcomings identified in the previous inspection. There is a clear sense of direction and purpose in the work of the sixth form. Results in external examinations have started to improve. The quality of teaching and learning has improved with the result that the large majority of students achieve well, relative to their prior attainment. Curricular provision has improved and is satisfactory. The school has responded to the needs of the students by introducing new courses at AS-level and in some vocational areas.
139. The governing body works closely and effectively with the school to assist the development of the sixth form. Governors are acutely aware that the financial viability of the whole school over the next few years depends greatly upon a steady growth in numbers of pupils choosing to stay on into the sixth form. They are keen to provide as wide a range of courses as possible to meet the needs of all students. The sixth form is cost effective. The proportion of funds spent on teaching the sixth form students matches the proportion of the budget that is provided for the sixth form.
140. Governors have approved an appropriate improvement plan for the sixth form as part of its plans for whole-school improvement. They review the plan annually. Progress in meeting the targets for development is good. The curriculum now provides better balance and breadth than previously. The development of vocational courses is good and is popular among students. However, there is still an insufficient availability of

AS-level and A-level courses to encourage more of the higher attaining pupils in Year 11 to continue their studies at the school. Governors have sensibly introduced suitable criteria for entry to courses in the sixth form so that they more closely match students' needs and avoid the inappropriate entry to external examinations that are well beyond an individual's competence. The better provision of courses in personal, social and health education has helped students' all-round development. Governors have approved funding for better facilities in ICT to encourage students to use ICT to overcome a weakness in their study skills, apparent in the reluctance of many students to work independently.

141. Governors and senior staff keep the provision for the sixth form constantly under review. They have introduced sharper monitoring procedures that, for example, have improved attendance considerably and assess students' work more effectively. A shortcoming in the provision in the sixth form is the limited amount of activities to enrich students' experiences outside the classroom. Insufficient consideration has been given to using partnerships with other institutions to broaden students' experiences.

Resources

142. The school makes satisfactory use of its generally adequate staffing, accommodation and learning resources to promote students' learning in the sixth form. Although the school experiences difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers of appropriate qualifications and quality, nearly all of the current teaching in the sixth form is performed by teachers who are suitably qualified and effective. However, timetabling constraints affect the deployment of staff so that some students do not have easy access to some enrichment activities. Resources in the sixth form are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. However, there is insufficient use of ICT to extend students' learning in many subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

143. In order to raise standards and to make further improvements to the quality of education the school should include the following key issues in its action plan.

- (1) Reduce the amount of unsatisfactory or poor teaching by recruiting teachers of suitable qualifications and experience. (Paras: 4,132,162,173,182,184,221, 233,238,255,256,258).
- (2) Help pupils to improve their work in many subjects through the development and use of their skills in ICT and numeracy. (Paras: 28,29,56,57,68,158,167, 168,176,177,192,198,217,231,234,240,261).
- (3) Raise achievement in modern foreign languages by improving the curricular provision for French in Years 7 to 9 and for Urdu in Years 10 and 11. (Paras: 15,62,64,83,218-221,226,233,234,236).
- (4) Improve attendance further in all years. (Paras: 5,13,34,38,166,258).
- (5) Improve arrangements for health and safety by more effective control of traffic using the site during time when the school is open for pupils. (Paras: 93,106).

Sixth form

- (1) Raise students' achievement in courses in mathematics and science. (Paras: 25,26,267-269,272).
- (2) Improve students' study skills so that they make more effective use of the time set aside for private study and are more confident and competent about using their own initiative to solve problems. (Paras: 25,61,140,271,272,274,275,288, 290,295,296,329).
- (3) Ensure that students receive sufficient teaching of key skills, particularly of numeracy and ICT, and that they make effective use these skills to enhance their learning in subjects. (Paras: 25,38,59,86,142,269,279,283,293,300,309).
- (4) Improve attendance further. (Paras: 269,324).

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship. (Para: 121).
- Increase opportunities for sixth form students to enrich their learning through participation in a wider range of extra-curricular experiences. (Paras: 86,88,91, 141,284,286,292).
- Introduce further strategies to raise the achievement of boys of black Caribbean heritage. (Paras: 20,53).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	151
	Sixth form	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		61

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	1	30	63	46	9	2	0
Percentage	0.7	19.9	41.7	30.5	6.0	1.3	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	9	20	10	0	0	0
Percentage	2.5	22.5	50	25	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	801	99
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	334	40

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	197	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	469

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	42
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	62

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.6
National comparative data	8.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.07
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	72	73	145

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	24	36	27
	Girls	29	23	20
	Total	53	59	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	37 (39)	41 (35)	32 (35)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (3)	17 (13)	9 (5)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	37	28
	Girls	37	34	20
	Total	64	71	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	44 (41)	49 (37)	33 (39)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	8 (6)	20 (16)	5 (5)
	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	85	87	172

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	20	72	77
	Girls	27	80	83
	Total	47	152	160
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	27 (30)	88 (91)	93 (98)
	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	29.7 (31.4)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	5	9	14

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	4.0	8.0	6.0 (6.7)	1.5	1.0	1.2 (2.2)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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	78
	National	N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	54
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	10
Indian	9
Pakistani	555
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	252
Any other minority ethnic group	12

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	4	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	7	1
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	58	1
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	25	1
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	105

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	88
---	----

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.26
Key Stage 4	19.27

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

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

	£
Total income	2 691 351
Total expenditure	2 902 680
Expenditure per pupil	3159
Balance brought forward from previous year	-182 346
Balance carried forward to next year	-393 675

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	48*
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	51*

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	12
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	10
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent

* Includes teachers on temporary contracts.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	900
Number of questionnaires returned	544

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	54	7	4	4
My child is making good progress in school.	29	57	8	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	43	14	5	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	44	12	4	4
The teaching is good.	33	49	8	4	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	44	13	5	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	44	7	3	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	37	3	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	32	42	15	5	6
The school is well led and managed.	34	46	8	5	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	48	7	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	41	8	4	11

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement in English is better than that of pupils in most similar schools.
- The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE results at grades A*-C passes in English literature in 2000 was similar to the national average for all schools.
- The English department has worked hard in the last nine months to minimise the impact upon pupils of the loss of key teachers and the school's difficulty in replacing them.
- Good progress has been made in introducing the National Literary Strategy into the English curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in English are well below the national average for pupils aged 14 and below average for pupils aged 16.
- Ensure that all teachers of English are aware of what pupils have learned and how they are taught within the literacy hour in local primary schools.
- Create more opportunities for the use of ICT within English lessons.
- Develop further the valuable practice of teachers' observing and discussing lessons taught by colleagues so that good teaching methods are shared by all.

144. Attainment in English is well below the national average for pupils at the end of Year 9 and below average at the end of Year 11. Pupils' attainment in English literature, however, is at the national average by the end of Year 11. Achievement in relation to pupils' starting points is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and is good by the end of Year 11.

145. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000, pupils at the end of Year 9 achieved results that were well below the national average for both boys and girls. Attainment was slightly better in English than it was in mathematics and science and was below average compared with results obtained by pupils in similar schools. Comparison with the pupils' test scores prior to joining the school, however, shows that most pupils make satisfactory progress. This includes pupils on the register of special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language.

146. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results in English at grades A*-C are well below the national average. In English literature they are marginally above the national average. The results in 2000 indicate a good level of achievement when they are compared with those of similar schools and when compared with the pupils' National Curriculum levels two years previously. Pupils' results in English are not so close to the national average as those achieved in mathematics but they are higher than those achieved in science. Boys and girls achieve well in GCSE examinations in both English and English literature compared with their achievements in other school subjects. Girls achieve more highly than boys as they do nationally.

147. Pupils' standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 reflect the levels of the results in national tests recently. The reading and writing skills of pupils in the

higher attaining groups are at levels expected of the age group nationally, whereas those in lower attaining groups are below and sometimes well below the national average. The quality of finished writing seen in a sample of notebooks reflects the wide levels of pupils' skills and also indicates some considerable differences of teaching approaches used by different teachers. At the time of the inspection, for example, some pupils in Year 7 had completed at least six well-constructed pieces of writing of different types, whereas other pupils in Year 9 had written only one piece of continuous prose and brief notes about *Macbeth*. The most successful writing seen in all year groups was personal and autobiographical writing. The most confident writing, relative to pupils' ages, was from the newest entrants in Year 7. Pupils clearly benefit from the regular practice of reading individually or from shared books at the beginnings of lessons. This encourages the continuation of regular reading habits brought from primary schools. All pupils in Year 7 have a book from the school's library, or a book of their own, available for the regular ten minutes of reading practice. Pupils' skills in speaking and discussion are relatively low for many pupils in this age group, particularly so for those for whom English is an additional language. Teachers encourage regular, whole-class discussion and discussion in pairs to encourage all pupils to contribute and improve speaking skills. Valuable support by classroom assistants, working closely with teachers, helps to improve the speaking, reading and writing skills of pupils with special educational needs and of those who are learning English. The school's assessments and the national tests show that by the end of Year 9, pupils are making satisfactory progress.

148. By the end of Year 11, pupils are much more confident in speaking in different situations. This is encouraged by good teaching directed towards a challenging examination course that makes demands on pupils of all levels of prior attainment. A class in Year 10, for example, was able to discuss with thoughtfulness and maturity, as a whole class and in pairs, which audiences to target for advertising campaigns. Pupils had sufficient confidence to present effectively their own analysis of an advertisement to the whole class. Pupils' writing matures considerably in Years 10 and 11 under the careful guidance of teachers, who mark written work helpfully. By the end of the course, pupils are writing with greater accuracy and perception than at the end of Year 9. Some Year 11 pupils writing about the terrorist attacks within the United States and the subsequent reactions have produced particularly sensitive work recently. A small sample seen shows the ability of students to analyse issues and express opinions maturely from a moral standpoint. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment respond well to the poems, novels and plays read and studied at this stage. This includes pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Completed essays for coursework show that pupils have a good understanding of texts, such as *Macbeth* and *Of Mice and Men*. In many cases they are interpreting well the motives of central characters. Achievement for pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities is good in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 and in comparison with the attainment of pupils in similar schools.
149. Teaching in English is generally good. This helps pupils to achieve well by the end of Year 11. There is some difference, however, in the quality of lessons observed and in pupils' learning. The lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 were, on balance, satisfactory. Those observed in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form were good. Only one lesson had unsatisfactory outcomes. Most of the lessons seen showed signs of very careful planning to make best use of the available time. Plans often include time for silent or shared reading at the outset followed by sequences of activities allowing time for the development of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills around a central theme.

A particularly successful lesson with a lower attaining group in Year 10, including some early stage English language learners, was broken into a series of related activities, as pupils examined in detail a speech of Martin Luther King to identify the many rhetorical devices contained within it. Good use was made of music, a sorting exercise and projected slides, as well as individual, paired and whole-class reading and writing exercises. The teacher and support assistants worked together well to maximise the learning for all pupils.

150. An important development in teaching in the last two years has been the linking of pupils' work to national attainment levels in Years 7 to 9 and to GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. This helps pupils to have a clearer picture of what they need to improve to reach the targets set. Teachers do this well with GCSE groups but there is again some difference in practice among teachers of groups in Years 7 to 9. Similarly, there is considerable difference between teachers of Years 7 and 8 in their degree of familiarity with what pupils entering the school have been taught and what skills they may possess. It is important for the continuity of pupils' learning that all teachers should be aware of the ground covered in the primary schools' literacy hour sessions.
151. The English department is well organised and well led. A particularly notable feature has been the determination of the department to minimise the disruption to pupils' and students' education by the loss of two key members of staff in the previous school year. This was achieved by the head of department taking on additional classes, and by the creation of lunchtime and after-school workshops for pupils. Support for new teachers is strong. This helps newcomers to function effectively from the beginning of term. The monitoring of teaching and the filming of specimen lessons, have been helpful in developing more uniform practice in planning and improving pupils' language and literary skills. Good progress has been made with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy into the department and with the revisions of schemes of work to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum.
152. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection despite the staffing difficulties experienced last year. The written suggestion to circulate individual education plans has been met. The department has concentrated on assisting in whole-school issues such as the initiative to implement a literacy policy. In particular, development has focused on raising pupils' attainment in conjunction with learning support teachers and through the use of the school's improved database about pupils' achievement.

Drama

153. Drama is taught as a discrete subject and provides enrichment and depth to the school's curriculum. Standards are satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to develop communicative skills. They made good progress in a lesson in Year 7 in which they acted in role, discussed their performance and worked collaboratively. Standards were not as high in a lesson in Year 8 in which some pupils lacked concentration and commitment. Pupils have not opted for GCSE drama course for the past two years although a small number study for GCSE in expressive arts. Many pupils enhance their social and personal development through participation in the school's productions of drama. They also improve their performing and technical skills.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good
- There is increasing use of ICT to support learning.
- Positive leadership and management enable pupils' standards to improve, so that pupils achieve well compared with their standard on entry to the school

Areas for improvement

- Owing to recruitment difficulties, there are too many part-time teachers of mathematics.
- Inconsistency in the use of policies, for example in the marking of pupils' work
- There is insufficient progress in the implementation of a whole-school numeracy policy.

154. Pupils' standards in mathematics on entry to the school are well below average. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000 for pupils at the end of Year 9, standards were well below the national average for all schools. When compared with results gained by pupils in similar schools, standards are still well below average, but the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels compare more favourably with national figures. Results in mathematics across the year group were similar to those in science, but below those in English, though the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades was better in mathematics than in the other core subjects. The reported trend in results over the last four years follows the national trend. The average points' score gained by boys was higher than that of girls. In 2001, the proportion of the year group achieving the expected Level 5 increased. There was no significant difference between the attainments of boys and girls.

155. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average. In general, pupils did not do as well in mathematics as they did in other subjects. There are no consistent differences between boys and girls at this level. Results in 2001 are similar to those obtained in 2000.

156. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the end of Year 9 is well below average. Nevertheless, comparison of pupils' results in Year 9 with their standards on entry to the school indicates that their achievements are good. In a lesson in Year 7, pupils became very involved in their work in predicting whether the two-dimensional nets provided by their teacher would make up into three-dimensional cubes. They enjoyed the practical nature of the work. Lower attaining pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. In a lesson in Year 8, they were able to convert tally charts into bar graphs. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils are able to predict the gradients and intercepts of linear graphs, and calculate the areas of composite shapes. In most lessons, teachers assist pupils' learning well through regular and effective use of individual whiteboards to reinforce number bonds and key concepts. Pupils of all levels of attainment make generally good progress in the use and application of the National Curriculum's attainment targets of number, algebra, shapes and data handling.

157. Work seen in Year 11 is below average. It is better than suggested by recent GCSE results. It also indicates that pupils make significant improvement during Years 10 and 11, across all parts of the syllabus and that, on balance, their achievements are good. Higher attaining pupils achieve particularly well. Their work is above average, as observed in lessons on the use of graphical calculators, and on calculating co-ordinates for the graphs of quadratic equations. They enjoy the challenge posed by negative numbers. In a lower attaining group, a number of pupils forgot the formula

for the area of a triangle, but they persisted with their work. They had better understanding when converting percentages to decimals. The quality of pupils' investigations is satisfactory, but they often fail to include sufficient detail in the evaluation of their results. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. Their specific weaknesses are well known by their teachers. These pupils normally concentrate well and are receptive to the additional help provided by support assistants. For instance, in a lesson in Year 10 on number bonds, pupils played mathematical games to improve their ability to handle number. They used computers and mathematical software of good quality to develop their numeracy. They showed confidence and competence when selecting programs. The work added interest and reinforced pupils' prior knowledge. The help provided by the class teacher and support assistants, including the correct use of mathematical language, ensured that good learning took place.

158. The integration of ICT into the teaching of mathematics is increasing and is enhanced by the number and quality of the computers in one of the mathematics rooms. The department uses a number of strategies to improve pupils' levels of literacy. Key words are displayed and repeatedly used in a number of mathematics rooms. Teachers encourage pupils to use accurate spelling of mathematical terms. Most lessons begin with a numeracy session. Teachers and pupils enjoy these. In the best practice, the sessions are related to the main topic of the lesson, so that there is consolidation of the processes used. Links with other departments to encourage consistency in numeracy across the school are under way. The application of a whole-school policy for numeracy lags behind similar developments in literacy.
159. Teaching and learning overall are good across Years 7 to 11 and represent a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching varies, however, from unsatisfactory to very good. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They prepare lessons thoroughly. In the best lessons, it is clear that teachers have planned specifically for the way that pupils will learn, as well as for the topics to be covered. In most lessons, a good learning atmosphere develops because of the mutual respect that is evident between teachers and pupils. Teachers' management of pupils is very good. Minor lapses in concentration or behaviour by pupils are normally dealt with quietly and effectively. An exception was in a lesson in Year 10 for higher attaining pupils dealing with percentages. In this lesson, a minority of boys failed to concentrate on their work. Their teacher did not reprimand them quickly enough or effectively enough. Accordingly, they did not consolidate their work, or move on to more difficult challenges as others in the class did. Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils being on task. This results in good pace and purpose, as in a lesson in Year 10 on the angles in a triangle and a quadrilateral. The teacher showed that he appreciated the value of silence while pupils were working. Pupils concentrated well and good learning occurred as a result. In the one lesson graded as unsatisfactory, there was too much input from the teacher and little opportunity for the pupils to learn by doing, or by using their initiative. A lack of concentration resulted.
160. The quality of marking is inconsistent. On balance it is satisfactory. The department's policy for grading work is not always followed, for instance, in the marking of homework. In the best examples of marking seen, the teacher always makes some positive comment about the work, and gives each pupil targets by which to improve their standards. The longer-term assessment of work is more thorough. Most pupils are aware of their previous result in national tests, and their targeted grade for the next round of tests, especially in Years 10 and 11. This gives purpose to their work.

Pupils' generally good attitudes to their work contribute to their good achievements. In a large majority of lessons, they behave well, clearly expect to work and show enjoyment of mathematics. Teachers often miss opportunities to stress the magic of mathematics, including number patterns, and make insufficient use of mathematical models to demonstrate learning points.

161. The leadership and management of the mathematics department are good. In spite of the increasing difficulties in the recruitment of appropriately qualified teachers, the head of department is positive about her role, clearly enjoys teaching, and provides good educational direction for the work of the team. The scheme of work is very good for Years 7 and 8. It provides very good direction for teachers. The work of the remaining years is under review. The very good analysis of examination results assists the head of department in monitoring the work of each teacher. Observations of lessons provide further evidence of the quality of teaching and learning. The department's plan for improvement is detailed and relevant. It outlines the immediate needs of the department well. An effective programme of staff development assists teachers new to the department, including those teachers who are part-time and non-specialist. This helps to counter the potential inconsistency caused by the high proportion of part-time teachers in the department. These teachers are mostly experienced practitioners. They are providing very good support for the work of the department while the school seeks to recruit specialist mathematicians. Resources are generally good, but the number of mathematics books in the school library is very low.
162. Since the previous inspection, the mathematics department has made good progress. The quality of teaching and of learning has shown significant improvement. This trend is set to continue because of the increased monitoring of classroom practice and the time devoted to discussing techniques of teaching. As a result, pupils' standards are improving and their learning is good. However, teachers do not encourage pupils to ask questions often enough in order that they can check their understanding. Homework is set regularly, though it is often routine and lacking in challenge for the higher attaining pupils in the class. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved, but their education plans rarely contain numeracy targets. In spite of the improvements since the previous inspection, the capacity for further improvement is only satisfactory because of continuing difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified teachers.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good relationships with teachers in some classes lead to enthusiasm for science.
- Teachers are academically qualified and have a good knowledge of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- A minority of teaching is unsatisfactory and sometimes poor.
- Standards are low, particularly at the end of Year 9.
- Pupils' have inadequate practical and investigative skills.
- The accommodation is insufficient. Some resources are limited. The use of ICT is rare.

163. Results in the national tests for pupils aged 14 in 2000 were very low in comparison with the national average and well below the average for similar schools. In the past

few years, boys have achieved much better results than girls at this stage. Between 1996 and 2000, the reported test results improved steadily until 1999, but then dropped sharply in 2000. During this period results were consistently well below the national average. Results in science were not as good as those for English and mathematics. Results for 2001 indicate an improvement to a position similar to those in 1999, although still remaining well below national averages.

164. GCSE results in 2000 were well below the national average for all schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher A*-C grades was significantly below the national average. When compared with similar schools, these results are below the national average. Pupils' results in science were lower than their results in most other subjects that they took. Girls' performance was only slightly below that of the boys overall. Results for 2001 indicate a good improvement from those in 2000.
165. From lessons and work seen in Years 7 to 9, standards are well below those expected nationally. However, they are better than those indicated by pupils' results in the national tests in 2000. There has been a slight improvement in standards since the previous inspection. Pupils' practical and investigative skills are not as strong as their knowledge of science. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions, or to define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding. They seldom plan their own investigations and evaluate their results. Pupils are generally good at carrying out experiments planned by their own teacher. They are able to record observations, take accurate measurements and present data in the form of charts and graphs.
166. A number of other factors restrict pupils' progress. These include a high rate of absenteeism amongst pupils and inadequate planning by some teachers. The latter provides too few opportunities for pupils to think in the abstract and to relate their science to everyday applications. Progress is good when pupils understand the relevance of what they are doing. For example, in a lesson in Year 7 on solubility, pupils knew that a solute dissolves in water. They could explain how the particles in the solute move apart and mix with the particles in the solvent. However, even in this good lesson, pupils were not applying their knowledge of solubility to everyday applications and could not think in terms of solutes other than water.
167. Many pupils lack confidence in using basic scientific terminology. Although teachers help pupils to develop their literacy skills appropriately, this is often not done rigorously enough. Pupils' numeracy skills are below average. Their ICT skills, although improving, are not developed well because of a lack of opportunities to use computers as a tool in science, particularly for data logging. By the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment in the subject, which, when they joined the school as 11 year olds, was below average. Most lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress because of the good level of support that they receive. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve satisfactory progress overall. Though many are proficient English speakers, a significant number are not, and their level of fluency inhibits their learning in science.
168. Standards in the work seen in Years 10 and 11 are well below those expected nationally, although better than those suggested by the results in recent examinations. Pupils are learning new work, but at a fairly low level. For example, in a lesson in Year 11 on the factors affecting the rate of a reaction, most pupils displayed an understanding of the collision theory using the model provided by the

teacher. However, they found the concept difficult to understand when applying the theory to real situations. Weak numeracy and graphical skills often hinder their progress in analysing and interpreting the data they collect through experiment. Pupils attain satisfactorily across two of the four attainment targets; 'life processes and living things' and 'materials and their properties'. Attainment is weaker in 'experimental and investigative science' and 'physical processes', because less emphasis is placed on these aspects. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, receive good support that enables them to make the most of the opportunities provided and they generally make good progress. However, as in Years 7 to 9, a large number of higher attaining pupils achieve less well than they should, because the tasks they are given are often insufficiently difficult. Pupils' practical and investigative skills improve, but are below their attainment in other areas of science. In many lessons pupils do not express themselves clearly when answering spoken or written questions. Spelling and construction of sentences are often weak, particularly amongst boys.

169. The majority of pupils have a satisfactory, and often good, attitude to work. They carry out practical experiments safely. In a few classes a small number of pupils behave poorly, in a disruptive, and sometimes unsafe, manner. When teachers provide challenging tasks and have a good relationship with pupils, the pupils respond well, use their initiative, and show commitment. For example, a lower attaining group in Year 11 applied their knowledge of the structure of the atom, not only to calculate mass number, but also to manipulate the formula and to arrive at the number of protons and neutrons in a given atom. They showed interest in their work and concentrated well for sustained periods of time.
170. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. It ranges from very good to poor and is the main reason that pupils' achievement overall in science is satisfactory rather than good at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. There is more good teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The differences in the quality of teaching in lessons produce marked differences in the pupils' responses. As a result, not all pupils have the same experience as they move through the school. In the most effective lessons, teachers' good knowledge and expertise are combined with high expectations, enthusiasm and effective planning. These give pupils confidence so that they respond positively and try hard. In the better lessons, teachers challenge the pupils with carefully constructed questions to make them reflect and think critically. Through such questioning, teachers verify how well pupils understand the work.
171. This happened in a single science lesson Year 10, in which the pace was quick, so that learning was effective. Pupils made good progress in their understanding of the composition of blood and the functions of the various components. They considered the bi-concave shape of the red cells using plasticine models. They were able to explain how this increased the surface area for the take-up of oxygen. The teacher's expectations for the pupils' achievements in this lower set were far higher than those observed in many top groups. In many of the top and middle sets, teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements focused on the upper-middle through to lower levels of attainment, so that the higher attainers in these classes were not stretched enough. When teaching was unsatisfactory, time was wasted in trying to control the class, the pace was slow, and insufficient learning of any depth took place.
172. In satisfactory lessons, some of the pupils, particularly girls, were far too passive, so that they did not learn through experience, and their progress was slow. On balance, learning is satisfactory in all years because teachers' expectations are not always

sufficiently high for pupils of all attainment levels, and so pupils only put a satisfactory rather than a good effort into their work.

173. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Some changes have taken place recently, which indicate that further improvements can be made. The head of department has a fair understanding of the department's strengths and weaknesses and is working hard in difficult circumstances to overcome most of them. The department has experienced difficulty in recruiting suitably trained science teachers. This has a detrimental effect on teaching and learning. The department lacks a sufficiently enthusiastic physics specialist to share responsibilities with the head of department and to assist in developmental work. There has been some movement towards monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance, but with insufficient rigour to result in the necessary improvements in standard, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
174. The day-to-day management of the department runs smoothly, assisted by an effective service from technicians. Basic equipment for science is adequate, but there is insufficient data logging equipment, and a lack of textbooks in all years. This undermines standards for some pupils. Accommodation is inadequate, with about one in 14 lessons not being taught in laboratories. Some groups, particularly in Years 7 and 8, are too large for the size of laboratory they are in. This restricts the range of practical activities that can be attempted by those classes. The quality and quantity of pupils' work on display enhance the learning environment.
175. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Attainment, though remaining broadly similar by the end of Year 9, has improved by the end of Year 11. Procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' work have improved, though there is insufficiently rigorous monitoring and evaluation of these to bring about the necessary improvements required in standards. Schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 are incomplete. All schemes of work, including the new one adopted in Years 7 to 9, lack enough specific references to assessment, to provision for higher attainers and lower attainers, and to opportunities for the use of ICT to promote pupils' learning.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in all years. Good quality teaching at all key stages.
- GCSE results are improving.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Years 7 to 9.
- Stability of staffing.
- Class sizes in Years 7 to 9.

176. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average in terms of national comparisons. Pupils achieve well and develop good skills in drawing from observation. They are able to judge proportion accurately in their work in drawing. In painting, they show good skill in mixing and applying paint. Painting is imaginative and confident. There is very little use of ICT to enhance pupils' creative work. Work in three-dimensional design is good. Pupils are able to prepare and model clay effectively in the

construction of pinch-pots and coil pots. They make appropriate use of basic skills in literacy and numeracy to develop their knowledge and understanding of art and design. Pupils understand specialist terms of art, though there is some limitation of understanding in the case of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Numeracy skills are used and developed by the use of measuring in work on proportion and by perspective drawing. Pupils with special educational needs and those with special talent achieve well owing to the practical nature of the course and sensitive teaching. Assessments show that attainment is better than expected in relation to pupils' prior attainment.

177. At the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment in work seen in class and in scrutiny of folders and display is below average and matches that of attainment in similar schools. In GCSE examinations, in 2000, pupils gained grades below the average for all secondary schools. Results show an improvement, however, over recent years and also an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' GCSE results in art were better than their results in most other subjects that they sat and represent good achievement. Pupils produce good work in imaginative composition and make bold use of colour. They enhance their understanding of art and design and improve their creative skills through the study of the history of art. For example, a study of the work of Cézanne led to some particularly strong compositions in which colour and relief work were used imaginatively. This constitutes a further improvement since the time of the previous inspection when pupils' work in line and tone and colour was found to be immature. As at the earlier years, pupils make little use of ICT in their creative work.
178. Pupils continue to develop their basic skills in literacy and numeracy through the analysis of specialised terms used in the subject and by work in perspective and pattern involving measurement. Achievement by pupils with special educational needs is good because teachers have high expectations for pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities and supply work of appropriate difficulty and interest. Gifted pupils likewise benefit from the high expectations of teachers and the stimulating work they receive.
179. The quality of teaching in the department is good in all years. Work is thoroughly and imaginatively prepared with full consideration given to the needs and interests of all pupils. Strong features are teachers' sensitivity to pupils' individual needs and the good pace of lessons. These mark an improvement since the previous inspection. The cultural background of pupils is used effectively as a good source of ideas for design in the eastern tradition. The paintings on silk reflect vividly the cultural heritage of many pupils. The aims of lesson are differentiated well to provide for the varied needs of pupils. This is evident in the wide range of targets set. Pupils enhance their achievement through completion of homework that is set regularly and is suitably related to ongoing work.
180. There have been staffing difficulties in recent years. Currently, the department has been unable to recruit a full-time second teacher. This does not, however, adversely affect achievement at the present time owing to the appointment of a long-term, appropriately qualified, supply teacher. Assessment is generally good. Pupils' work is assessed in accordance with the whole-school policy for assessment. However, the procedures for assessing National Curriculum work at the end of Year 9 are not fully developed. The subject is led well and has clear policies complementing the school's aims. The curriculum provides for good continuity of experience from the time pupils enter the school. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' work benefits because the syllabus is broad,

challenging and varied with work in two and three dimensions, including ceramics. GCSE options allow for the continuation of interests developed earlier. Pupils achieve well because they enjoy good relationships with the teachers and learn from the informative displays of work in the department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Provision of ICT is good and helps pupils to achieve satisfactorily.
- Good teaching in food technology and textiles ensures good progress in these areas.
- Improved schemes of work and assessment enhance the quality of learning.
- Strong and effective leadership is raising standards in the department.

Areas for improvement

- Performance of boys in GCSE examinations.
- Teaching in resistant materials is less effective than that of other parts of the subject.
- Drawing is not used well as a means of generating ideas for design.
- Insufficient opportunities exist for staff training and development.

181. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average and varies between very good and unsatisfactory across different activities within the subject. Compared with levels of attainment expected in similar secondary schools, pupils' work is at an average level in resistant materials and above average in textiles and food technology.
182. In food technology, pupils show the ability to mix and prepare ingredients and to process their work well to produce completed dishes. They have a good awareness of the need for economy and safety in the preparation of food. Pupils have good skills in textiles and, prompted by imaginative teaching, produce imaginative work as seen in the making of textile 'humbugs', for example. They have very good basic skills in cutting and sewing materials. Work in resistant materials and graphics is comparatively weak. Pupils' low levels of drawing skills limit the scope of their designing in resistant materials. This was noted in the report of the previous inspection and still persists. In graphics, many pupils' attainment has been severely affected by staffing problems because for some time after their entry to the school, no graphics specialist was in post. Skills in ICT are average and developing well as a consequence of the good quality of ICT resources available to, and used by, the department.
183. Achievement in relation to prior attainment is satisfactory. Pupils make steady progress generally but the development of skills in resistant materials and graphics is poor. Pupils with special educational needs are able to make good progress at an appropriate rate, in response to well-designed and differentiated projects. Although pupils for whom English is an additional language experience comparative difficulty, they are helped to make satisfactory progress by the practical nature of tasks set.
184. At the end of Year 11, attainment is well below average in all of the GCSE options taken as shown by the results in 2000. Results in design and technology in 2000 were lower than in nearly all other subjects taken by these pupils. However, in 2001, results in textiles improved to near the average. Results overall are depressed by the

very poor performance by boys. Results in graphics are particularly poor, severely affected because the department has had no graphics specialist until recently.

185. In work seen, pupils achieve good standards in textiles. They have good skills in design and make effective good use of computer control in embroidery. In resistant materials, however, though there is some evidence of pupils using good skills to cut and shape materials, design is weak. Pupils have little understanding of ways in which drawing may be used to develop design.
186. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory on balance, in relation to pupils' prior attainment, but is occasionally unsatisfactory in the case of boys. The largely practical nature of projects helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Pupils for whom English as an additional language also benefit from the practical, non-discursive nature of tasks.
187. The teaching in design and technology is satisfactory overall. Sometimes it is very good, though one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in which pupils underachieved. In Years 7 to 9, teachers prepare their lessons well and provide pace and challenge. The quality of teaching is better in food technology and textiles than it is in resistant materials.
188. In Years 10 and 11, teachers again prepare lessons well in the main and set clear objectives. In one unsatisfactory lesson, however, the pace was very slow and the amount of progress made by pupils was small in relation to the time spent on the activity. Practical work in food technology and textiles is better than in other aspects of the subject. There is little work of good quality in graphics. This weakness is apparent in project folders, particularly in resistant materials. The best teaching takes place in the sixth form as a result of a strong sense of commitment and very thorough preparation of lessons. The atmosphere generated for students is one of concentration and deep interest.
189. Procedures for assessment are thoroughly worked out and considerable importance is attached to them. In Years 7 to 9, National Curriculum levels are displayed in classrooms and used effectively as motivators to increase achievement and progress. The system builds upon baseline assessments carried out in the early months after joining the school that are used as a benchmark for progress subsequently. Marking of ongoing work is regular and informative. Pupils are kept fully aware of their progress. In Years 10 and 11, the system is supplemented by reference to the assessment objectives of the GCSE options, which are specified by the examining board. Marking is regularly carried out and is thorough.
190. The generally good behaviour of pupils enables pupils in Years 7 to 11 to make suitable progress. Pupils keep a good level of interest, commitment and concentration during most lessons.
191. A large number of major changes, including the total reorganisation of staffing, have been introduced since the previous inspection. These changes are beginning to show signs of success in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The teaching and support staff are very committed to the work of the department and are united in a shared aim to raise standards.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching by the permanent staff helps students to achieve well.
- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour assist learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Effective leadership ensures that pupils' quality of learning is good.
- Fieldwork is of high standard and greatly enriches the curriculum in geography.

Areas for improvement

- Deployment of specialist subject staff is unsatisfactory. The provision of replacement non-qualified staff has an adverse effect on standards.
- Inadequate writing skills in Years 7 and 8 hinder the progress of many pupils.
- There is no coherent programme for the use of ICT in geography in Years 7 to 11.
- Inadequate skills in spatial patterns result because teachers make insufficient use of local maps and examples based on the pupils' own experiences.
- The teaching rooms lack suitable learning resources.

192. Standards of work seen are well below the national average at the end of Year 9. However, pupils' standards of work at the start of Year 7 are also well below average and pupils generally make satisfactory progress over Years 7 to 9. Achievement over this time is hindered because a large proportion of pupils have severe literacy problems. The result is that written work is completed very slowly, thus reducing the coverage in depth of topics taught. The school's problems in recruiting enough suitably qualified staff have required much teaching to be undertaken by temporary, non-qualified teachers. By the end of Year 9, pupils have an adequate grounding in geographical skills. Most, except for a few low attainers, are able to use and interpret Ordnance Survey maps satisfactorily. Presentation and analyses of statistical data graphically are satisfactory but pupils in Years 7 and 8 lack accuracy in plotting data. Higher and average attainers' knowledge of location is satisfactory. All pupils have an inadequate understanding of spatial patterns. There is often insufficient challenge for higher attainers in developing higher-level subject and writing skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when provided with specialist support. At other times progress varies as in some classes tasks are not adequately simplified and manageable to meet pupils' needs.

193. Standards of work seen are below the national average in Years 10 and 11. This shows good achievement for most pupils, over the two years, as they were performing at well below the national position at the end of Year 9. This good progress is due to the subject being taught by experienced, specialist teachers and because pupils work hard and enjoy their studies. High attaining pupils can describe a range of physical and human processes well and have some understanding of the linkages involved and their geographical significance. Average attaining pupils generally have a competent, basic knowledge of the processes studied. This knowledge is not matched by their level of understanding of the importance of these processes within the systems. Low attainers are able to identify some processes but cannot explain them fully. The best projects of independent study for GCSE are of good quality. Most pupils perform to their potential. In Years 10 and 11, some low attainers do not always receive manageable tasks and do not have a sustained programme of revision and examination skills.

194. Recent GCSE results at grades A*-C have varied from average to well below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the highest grades is well below

that nationally but this is to be expected given the secondary modern intake to the school. Boys' performance in most years lags behind that of girls more than is the case nationally. When compared with other GCSE subjects, geography results were close to the average in 2000.

195. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Many display a real interest and enjoyment in their work. Pupils are attentive, work conscientiously and concentrate well on tasks set. However, a small number of pupils in Years 7 to 9, in some classes in which the teacher lacks experience at the school, seek attention and reduce the pace of lessons by constant interruptions and disruptive behaviour. Nevertheless, in many lessons behaviour is very good and it is good overall. Relationships with teachers generally are constructive. A real rapport is evident in classes in Years 10 and 11. This contributes significantly to pupils' progress. Boys and girls relate well to each other when working in groups. Relationships across ethnic groups are harmonious. Pupils' individual responses to questions vary considerably. They are often good, but occasionally unsatisfactory in a few classes.
196. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Some very good teaching was observed. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in Years 7 and 9 when an unqualified teacher undertook teaching. Teaching by qualified subject specialists was always good or very good. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of pupils within their charge. Regular teachers manage and control their classes well and build on a foundation of very good relationships. The best teaching is firmly grounded in the context of previous learning and very good testing of prior knowledge. These lessons have clear and manageable aims that are shared with pupils at the start and tested at the end of lessons to ensure that learning is effective. There is detailed and imaginative planning that encourages interest and offers a variety of suitable learning opportunities. In these lessons teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and have appropriately high expectations. Teaching is challenging and the pace is good. There is a strong element of practical activity and enquiry that involves pupils in their own learning and helps them to gain a good understanding of the subject. This was very well exemplified in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils working on computers consolidated their learning by drawing a table and by identifying the push and pull factors that help to explain the uneven spread of population between the north and south of Italy. This lesson enabled pupils to develop their computing skills and their knowledge and understanding of the geographical issues involved. Similarly when teachers use visual aids such as maps, photographs, graphs and diagrams they invariably clarify the aims of the lesson and have a positive influence on the quality of learning. This was evident in a lesson in Year 9 when pupils, having undertaken an independent project in fieldwork, were considering how their hypotheses relating to the sphere of influence of High Wycombe could be mapped and how the data collected could be suitably presented in graphical form.
197. The unsatisfactory teaching was mainly due to the teacher's inability to manage and control the class, resulting in the progression and continuity of learning being badly interrupted. At times, there was also a deficiency in knowledge and understanding of the subject matter taught. This caused confusion among pupils about the information provided in the textbook on calculating grid references and that taught by the teacher. In these instances, pupils' learning was unsatisfactory and there was noticeable underachievement.

198. In some classes there is not enough consolidation and reinforcement of the main teaching points, visually on the board or by means of overhead projector. Teachers do not make sufficient use of local Ordnance Survey maps and local examples, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory. Key words are used well in lessons. However, there is insufficient emphasis on the development of writing skills in Years 7 and 8, given the low standards of pupils at entry. There is a good programme of fieldwork over Years 7 to 11, covering studies of both the local area and the Isle of Purbeck. However, not all pupils undertake the day's fieldwork at Swanage in Year 9 though it is an essential part of the assessed curriculum. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection with a planned programme of study established. The department now has excellent facilities for ICT but not all pupils have enough opportunities to use ICT to develop their work.
199. Leadership of the subject is good. The department is effectively run and managed with curricular planning of good quality. Departmental documentation is of good quality. There is no formal evaluation of the impact of teaching and training on learning. Competent subject specialists teach the subject in Years 10 and 11. However, in Years 7 to 9 a non-specialist and temporary unqualified member of staff undertakes much teaching. The school has problems in recruiting suitable replacement staff and this accounts for the appointment of non-qualified teachers. Although both the present and the previous heads of department have significant expertise and are talented teachers of the subject, they have substantial teaching loads in other subjects. This is not the best deployment of the teaching resource in geography, although the mathematics department feels the benefit of these arrangements. The assessment policy is good. There is some very detailed and helpful marking with targets for improvement. However, in some books comments are 'thin' and incorrect spellings of key words and grammar are not corrected. The accommodation in one of the specialist rooms is excellent with attractive displays, including pupils' work, providing a stimulating environment. The second specialist room is very restrictive for independent, resource-based learning with large classes. Resources overall are good. However, there is no large standing world map that could be used to improve pupils' skills in spatial patterns and there is no budget for fieldwork.
200. Issues identified in the previous report have been successfully tackled apart from the full implementation of an ICT policy. There is good capacity to develop further the work of the department to meet the points identified in this report.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching takes good account of the needs of all pupils.
- The department is developing effective methods of working with more able pupils.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Work in Years 7 to 9 lacks balance across the units of study of the National Curriculum.
- Insufficient attention to emphasising key historical themes and ideas in Years 7 to 9.

201. Standards of work of pupils at the end of Year 9 are below average. Pupils' oral work is better than their written work. They need considerable help in selecting and organising information to produce structured historical writing. However, higher attaining pupils in Year 8 do complete some good extended writing, for example on aspects of the Slave Trade. Pupils work quite successfully with historical sources, as seen in a lesson in Year 7 when they studied a series of pictures to find out about the medieval church. They have more difficulty in recalling previous work and making links between different parts of their work.
202. Results at GCSE for A*-C grades have been below or slightly below national averages in recent years. In 2000, pupils' GCSE results in history were slightly better than their results in most other subjects. In 2001, the results were not as good as in previous years, although pupils achieved grades that were either better or close to predictions based on their previous attainment. Standards of work seen of pupils in Year 11 are higher and are at the national average. Pupils are mastering the content of the course successfully and use historical sources effectively. Higher attaining pupils produce detailed and thoughtful written work, for example when analysing those who voted for Franklin Roosevelt as President in 1932. However, lower attaining pupils have difficulty in providing sufficient written detail to support their arguments.
203. The achievement of pupils is good, both in Years 7 to 9 and on the GCSE course. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve equally well. Pupils extend their knowledge of different historical periods and develop relevant skills. They make particularly good progress in developing their literacy skills, which enable them to undertake increasingly effective historical writing. Teachers manage pupils well in the classroom. This ensures good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils enjoy their history lessons.
204. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is often very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and knowledge of the topics taught are used well to engage pupils' interests and extend their learning. Teachers plan the lessons carefully and match the work well to the wide range of attainment within classes. They are working effectively, for example, with the more able pupils through the use of challenging questions and harder texts, as in a lesson in Year 7 on Henry II and Becket. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods and are particularly skilled at actively involving pupils in their work. Pupils made very good progress in a lesson in Year 9, when they researched information in groups about the Defence of the Realm Act during the First World War, and then presented role-plays to the rest of the class illustrating the impact of the Act on the lives of ordinary people. Support staff are used well in the classroom. They make an important contribution to improving the quality of pupils' learning. Effective methods are used to improve literacy levels, such as highlighting key words and giving pupils help in structuring their writing. Teachers are increasingly using ICT to enhance pupils' research skills, as in some work in Year 10 on General Haig and the battle of the Somme.
205. The department is well led and managed. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching is now consistently good. The careful monitoring of teaching and learning has helped to raise pupils' levels of attainment and achievement. New and more effective procedures for assessment are now in place, and pupils are aware of the standards they are achieving and of ways in which they can improve. A good programme of educational visits raises interest in the subject and extends pupils' understanding. Although the department has a helpful scheme of work, the marked

imbalance between the lengths of time spent on different units of study in Years 7 to 9 adversely affects pupils' knowledge and understanding. The department does not place enough emphasis on key historical themes and ideas to enable pupils to make clearer links between different parts of their work in Years 7 to 9.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching.
- The good teaching and good access to modern equipment motivate pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Few opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in all subjects.
- Having to share computers among pupils in some large classes hinders learning.

206. No pupils were entered for GCSE examinations in 2000. Standards seen in lessons indicate that attainment is below average at the end of Year 11. Attainment is also below average at the end of Year 9. Teachers' assessments in 2000 showed that very few pupils reached the nationally expected level. Teachers' assessments in 2001 indicate a good increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level by the end of Year 9, though it remains well below average.
207. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average. As they move through the school, their progress in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT is good. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
208. By the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement is good because of good teaching and improved access to modern equipment. Pupils can manipulate the *Windows* environment successfully in terms of being able to access their files on the network and to save their work. They can import images from *Clip Art* and from pictures they have scanned. They are less confident in their understanding of how their presentations would appear to an audience, as many presentations are too complex in terms of the colours and amount of text and graphics used.
209. By the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress. This is an improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils now have a basic understanding of how to present information and how to use the computer for analysing data. Higher attaining pupils can use ICT to draw accurate graphs after inputting a range of figures. However, those of lower attainment have an inadequate understanding of the concept of axes on graphs. In GCSE lessons in Year 10, pupils make good progress in designing web pages. Higher attaining pupils can import images from a wide variety of sources, including a digital camera. They insert hyperlinks to other pages and web sites. Their work is designed well and is suitable for its purpose. Lower attaining pupils understand the processes but their designs show low literary skills and less clarity.
210. Pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those of differing racial heritage, make good progress, as do those of different levels of attainment.
211. Many pupils do not have a sufficiently independent and discriminating approach in their use of ICT. They are very dependent upon the teacher's input and support. For

example, pupils rarely use ICT on their own initiative for independent research. Although pupils can access the Internet with confidence they are indiscriminate in its use. Teachers do provide suggested sites but there is no resource in school through an Intranet that would enable pupils to find materials that are relevant to specific subjects. The use of e-mail is not fully developed. Extra-curricular provision is good and helps many pupils to use and develop their ICT skills.

212. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers plan their lessons well to ensure that pupils are aware of what is to be learned and reinforce the main points of learning at the end of the lesson. They question pupils well to check understanding of the main learning points. Teachers give clear demonstrations on how to use the software through good use of a centrally-controlled computer. This helps to clarify the sequence of commands for the pupils to follow. A major aid to learning is the active, enthusiastic support given to the pupils by the teachers and support staff. This support for individuals is one of the main reasons for the good levels of achievement by all pupils. Pupils respond to this approach well, are interested and motivated.
213. Teachers place considerable emphasis upon the development of literacy skills. They explain the meanings of words clearly and review ICT terminology with the pupils regularly to ensure that the words are understood. Pupils are encouraged to monitor their own learning by the use of checklists. For example, a list of features of a good design for a web is provided for the pupils to use to check their design against and to amend as necessary. Pupils' behaviour is managed well which ensures that pupils focus closely on the work in hand. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and include useful comments for improvement. Homework is used well, mainly to give pupils opportunity to design or research a topic in preparation for their lesson.
214. Occasionally, the number of pupils is too large for each to have individual access to a computer. This inhibits their learning in spite of the efforts of the teachers to manage this successfully. Behaviour is usually good, although there is a minority of pupils who are less willing to conform and whose attitude is unsatisfactory. The skilled management of these pupils means that any negative influence on the learning of the group is minimised.
215. The management of ICT is good. All members of the department follow the comprehensive schemes of work carefully. The quality of teaching and learning is well monitored. Teachers learn from each other. The resources are well maintained by the technician who ensures that any problems are quickly resolved so that pupils' learning is not adversely affected. The use of ICT for administration is good, a particularly strong feature being its use for tracking pupils' progress. There is a good vision for the future development of ICT both from the head of department and from the senior management of the school.
216. Improvement since the last inspection is good. National Curriculum requirements are now met in Years 10 and 11. The number of computers, mostly with Internet access, has been greatly increased and software of a quality used in business is used. Training for staff has begun.
217. Not all subjects use ICT to support pupils' learning although there has been an improvement in this area since the previous inspection. Mathematics, technology and modern foreign languages offer particularly good experiences for pupils. However, insufficient use of ICT takes place in other subjects to enhance pupils' learning. No

clear audit of each subject's contribution to the National Curriculum's programmes of study has been undertaken.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

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

Strengths

- Consistency of teachers' good planning of lessons.
- Good management of pupils in the classroom promotes learning.
- Good use of assessment helps pupils to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 11.
- Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Insufficient curricular provision in Years 7 to 11 to complete the syllabus in depth.
- Pupils' oral skills and pronunciation, and greater accuracy in written work.
- Better provision of in-class support for pupils with special educational needs.

218. In 2000, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in French was substantially below the national average for similar schools and for all maintained schools. Girls performed better than boys, but only by the same margin nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-G was close to the national average. Compared with all other subjects in the school, pupils' achievement was weakest in French. The GCSE results in French in 2001 show a marked decline when compared with the previous year. No boys and only one girl obtained a grade C. More pupils obtained the lower grades of F and G than in 2000. However, more pupils had been entered for the examination and pupils had suffered from disruption caused by the frequent changes of teachers, some of whom were non-specialists. The amount of time for teaching the subject in Years 10 and 11 was less than at present.

219. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is well below average. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is generally satisfactory, because of the amount of French spoken by the teachers. Pupils in Year 7 in a lesson in the ICT room followed brief commands in French to click on certain commands and to print out their work. In another lesson in Year 7, pupils were drilled in the foreign language commands and responded correctly, with appropriate gestures for listening, looking and keeping quiet. In a lesson in Year 9, however, pupils understood the basic commands, but then had difficulty in noting times of the clock from a cassette. In oral work, pupils can ask and answer questions, but many pupils lack oral confidence. Pronunciation varies from satisfactory to approximate, and can be improved. Pupils are too dependent on prompts rather than on memory. In their written work, higher attainers in Years 8 and 9 are working at appropriate levels. In Year 8, they write about places they visit with friends and family, using adverbs of time. In Year 9, they can write short sentences and questions relating to daily routine, using reflexive verbs. Generally, however, pupils' written work shows many inaccuracies, particularly with the use of accents, and even in copying words from the board, few pupils complete corrections to improve their accuracy.

220. Pupils' overall standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 are well below average. In most lessons, tasks are set in French, and pupils usually understand them. In oral work, higher attainers in Year 11 worked with a partner in a role-play and, with reasonable accents, booked tickets for the cinema, replacing blanks on the prompt sheet with the appropriate phrases. Pronunciation in a class with the lowest attainers was very approximate, with confusion between *je vais* and *je veux*. Higher attainers in Year 10 delivered short presentations to the class about a survey of pupils' leisure activities. Pupils were not very audible, and the class agreed that pronunciation could be improved. Lower attainers in Year 10 worked well to improve their pronunciation of characteristics. Two boys, working individually with the inspector, showed an improvement after a few minutes' practice. In their written work, higher attainers in Year 11 can write short sentences using the perfect tense, the immediate future and the future tenses. In general, although pupils retain useful phrases, such as adverbs of time, they are not consistently accurate in the use of verbs. In Year 10, pupils have to acquire these tenses in a very short time because of the lack of coverage in Years 7 to 9.
221. Pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are underachieving. Reasons for this are disaffection with the subject because of the high turnover in teachers and the lack of continuity resulting from this. Departmental assessments, however, show an improvement in points' scores for the current Year 11 pupils from the first module to the second module. The two top sets in Year 10 are achieving well. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve similarly to others in the class. Teachers prepare work adapted to their needs. Support in the classroom for pupils is effective when it is present, but it is limited in Years 7 to 9 and there is none in Years 10 and 11.
222. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory. Often they are good. They were unsatisfactory in a group in Year 8 of lower attainers. Some pupils had failed to bring books to the lesson and they did not listen to each other's responses. However, in two classes, one in Year 7 and one in Year 10, pupils responded very well to lively teaching. In a lesson for Year 7 in the ICT room, pupils worked well and enjoyed being able to work at their own pace. In the lower attaining groups, some pupils can be slow to settle down, or have to be kept on task during the lesson. The response to teachers' questions is limited and pupils remain passive, unless they are challenged. In a class in Year 11 of lower attaining pupils, girls applied themselves better to the tasks than boys. Pupils generally work well in a one-to-one situation with the teacher or support assistant.
223. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In some lessons it is good or very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good. Two of the three teachers are native speakers. They make good use of the foreign language in the classroom to challenge pupils to think. Pupils therefore have good opportunities to hear French during the lesson. Basic skills are used well to help pupils to improve their pronunciation and to acquire better understanding of verbs and their endings. Teachers make good use of choral work to help pupils to improve their pronunciation. They try hard to plug gaps in knowledge, such as the use of correct, possessive adjectives to accord with the gender of the noun. In an outstanding lesson on characteristics in Year 10 with higher attaining pupils, for example, the teacher started with some basic work on the verbs of *être* and *avoir*. Work was further developed as pupils used the present tense of *pouvoir* and extended, to their own appropriate levels, statements about relationships with parents and siblings. This was then

consolidated in work in pairs, with pupils asking each other questions and answering them.

224. Teachers make good use of resources to introduce new vocabulary or to consolidate past work. Expectations are high. Teachers are eager to move pupils on. However, in Years 10 and 11 this sometimes results in insufficient challenge to individual pupils, because the teacher does too much and pupils remain passive. The strength of the department is the consistency of teachers' planning, so that all pupils experience an identical teaching format. Each lesson starts with revision, so that pupils have to think back to previous lessons. Teachers then share the lesson's objectives with pupils, so that the latter are focused on the lesson. Different activities and skills help to keep the pupils on tasks, so that they work at a satisfactory pace and are productive. Limits on time are set for most tasks. Good management of classes ensures that pupils are kept on task and that they maintain their concentration. Homework is set regularly. Marking is satisfactory. Pupils do not have enough short-term targets to help them improve their accuracy in written work.
225. The management of the department is satisfactory. There is a good direction for the department to improve. All three teachers are committed to raising standards. Good use is made of assessment to track pupils' progress. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 now have targets in their exercise books for the levels they are expected to reach. Lessons for ICT are timetabled for the term. Teachers also have the opportunity to observe each other teach and are effective in sharing good practice.
226. Improvements have taken place since the last inspection two years ago. There are now two new teachers in post under a new head of department. The schemes of work meet the requirements of the new orders for modern foreign languages, which came into force last year. Liaison has been established with the primary feeder schools and the local grammar school. All pupils following the course are now entered for GCSE. More time has been allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11. Monitoring has improved the quality of teaching. However, progress has been unsatisfactory in two key areas. Pupils' overall standards of attainment are too low. The allocation of time for the subject in Years 7 to 9 is insufficient to cover the work in enough depth. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 are now *well* below the national average, both for similar schools and for all maintained schools. The average level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is now *well* below average. The amount of time allocated to the subject in Years 7 to 9 is well below the average nationally and has not been improved to help the department meet the requirements of the new syllabuses.

Urdu

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

Strengths

- GCSE results were well above average in 2001 and represent good achievement.
- Pupils are highly motivated to learn and behave well.
- Speaking and listening skills are advanced because Urdu is used well in lessons.
- Pupils who are less proficient make good progress when there is effective support.

Areas for improvement

- Curricular provision for Urdu is unsatisfactory as it is taught in Year 11 only.
- There is no provision for pupils to use ICT in lessons

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is no dedicated teaching room for Urdu.
- Teaching and learning styles and assessment procedures for Urdu do not reflect best practice within the modern languages department

227. GCSE results in 2000 were below average at the age of 16 with four out ten pupils attaining A*-C grades at GCSE, compared with five out of ten the previous year. Pupils' results in Urdu were slightly better than the results they gained in most other subjects. Provisional results for 2001 show that eight out ten pupils attained A*-C grades. This was a good achievement but was based on a greatly reduced number of candidates. All pupils entered for GCSE in 2000 achieved A*-G grades which is above the national average. There is little difference in attainment between boys and girls.
228. In the work seen during the inspection the standards that pupils achieve by the end of Year 11 are well above average. A number of pupils have entered the subject with considerable prior attainment and in some cases they are mother-tongue speakers of Urdu. Others are Punjabi speakers with a good command of Urdu already.
229. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. Talented pupils, already proficient in the language, are not sufficiently challenged and receive the same work as other pupils. Lower attaining pupils make good progress in lessons. Pupils are fluent and confident readers in class. They can sustain extended conversations in Urdu but often give short replies to questions when not pressed. Pupils understand nearly everything that is said at normal conversational speed. Higher attaining pupils can produce passages of extended independent writing in which they develop their own ideas and express opinions, for example, in an essay on 'Am I fit?'
230. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Planning and the pace of lessons are good. Lessons are well controlled with effective support. This enables pupils to work in a good learning environment. The teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and makes full use of Urdu in lessons, which enables pupils to hear the language spoken well and to develop their listening skills.
231. A narrow range of teaching and learning styles is used in lessons. This restricts pupils' active involvement in their own learning and makes them too dependent upon the teacher. There is too much reliance on photocopied worksheets, which are read aloud, and extensive use of copied lists of words. There is no work in pairs or groups. Audio-visual equipment is not used. There are no opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons. Mother-tongue speakers and higher attaining pupils do not receive sufficiently challenging work and therefore their progress is impeded. The lesson's objectives are not communicated to pupils. There are no targets set for improvement. Consequently pupils do not know the purpose of the lesson and how well they are doing.
232. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are generally good. Scrutiny of work reveals that a number of pupils, mostly boys, have a careless attitude to written work. Too often this work is scruffy, contains numerous crossings out, is not dated, has unruled lines and is unfinished. However, pupils are keen in lessons, highly motivated and want to learn. They show an enthusiastic interest in the subject even when for some they have become bored with undemanding work. Pupils work well together although there is little opportunity for pair or group work.

233. Leadership and management of Urdu are unsatisfactory. There have been difficulties in recruiting a qualified teacher. An unqualified teacher currently teaches the subject. Numbers of pupils taking the subject have diminished since 2000 when 55 pupils were entered for GCSE examinations. In 2001, only 27 candidates were entered. In the current Year 11, the number taking the GCSE course in Urdu has fallen to 16 pupils. This is despite the outstanding GCSE results in 2001. The lack of take-up in Year 10 was a result of French being made compulsory and Urdu being placed in an extended option choice of subjects. Only two pupils opted for Urdu and the class did not run.
234. Urdu has lower status than French within the department despite its good GCSE results. There is no dedicated teaching room. Some lessons are not taught in modern language teaching rooms. There is no training programme in place for the unqualified teacher. There are no opportunities for pupils to use ICT. There are no Urdu displays around the school.
235. There are no extra-curricular activities to reflect pupils' cultural heritage. Most references in the handbook for modern languages are to French only. Links within the department are hampered by the part-time nature of the post. Resources are stored in various areas within the department. Provision for teaching the subject does not take sufficient account of the higher attaining pupils who do not need to pursue a full two-year course to achieve a high GCSE grade.
236. Progress since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. The GCSE results in 2001 have significantly increased. From a limited sample of lessons seen there is no unsatisfactory teaching. However, in many ways the subject has declined. The number of pupils studying the subject has fallen sharply. It is now taught in Year 11 only. Many of the issues raised in the last report have not been addressed. Teaching styles are still narrow, opportunities for extended talk are few, there is no role-play or work in groups, differing needs are not fully taken into account, little attention is paid to pupils' previous schooling, cultural awareness is underdeveloped, and information from assessment is not systematically analysed to set specific targets.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Pupils' standards are slowly improving and are closer to average by the end of Year 9.
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- More effective use of ICT by pupils.
- Continuity of pupils' learning has been disrupted by several changes of teachers.

237. Standards in music are low, but most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Facilities for computer-aided learning have improved, but are underused. Instrumental learning and extra-curricular groups support and extend classroom music for a minority of pupils.
238. Results in the GCSE examination in the last three years have been well below the national average with no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. The small sample of work of current pupils in Years 10 and 11 indicates careful

taking of notes and an ability to identify, from listening to music, those features that indicate style and origin. Pupils learn satisfactorily through composing in imitation of music heard. They have started to use computers for this work. In class, when listening to music new to them, they recognise devices such as decoration, but struggle to describe this. Most develop their performing ability through instrumental tuition, starting from a low level. Staff changes have adversely affected the continuity of learning of current GCSE pupils.

239. Information about standards of attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 is available only for 2001. Teachers' assessments show about one pupil in four reaching the standard expected, well below the national average for previous years. From the evidence of observed lessons of pupils in Years 7 to 9, and from work seen and heard, standards are improving and are now closer to the national average. Pupils in Year 7 are learning stave notation and beginning to apply it in playing keyboards. By Year 8, some are able to perform two-part pieces in pairs, though keeping in time and playing fluently remains a problem for many. Pupils in Year 9 can choose appropriate electronic sounds to express moods in devising music for imagined cartoons. These pupils do not yet have experience of making music by using computers, though some learn to record their tunes on the keyboards. Pupils listen attentively to music, both recorded and live. Their regular, written evaluations show understanding of what they have learned and how they might do better. The many pupils with learning difficulties almost always participate and achieve as well as expected. A few pupils lapse into inattentive behaviour, which slows the pace of learning of all pupils. A minority of pupils benefit from extra-curricular activities, such as the steel bands and staged shows. There is evident enthusiasm from groups of friends to form their own performing groups, seeking the support of the music teacher.
240. Teaching in music is satisfactory. Good features include the prompt and orderly starts to lessons with intentions made clear to pupils, which help them to keep on task. Plans provide for a variety of learning activities in each lesson. Teachers expect and usually get a good response. Teaching includes the effective use of praise and sanctions. It uses strategies to support literacy, including the learning of musical terms. The particular needs of those pupils with learning difficulties are known well by teachers. Different materials for these, and for more able pupils, are sometimes provided. However, there is some underachievement: more should be expected of some abler pupils. There are some important lapses in the generally good use of time. For example, time for composition in GCSE lessons is not always sufficient to be worthwhile. The tape-recording of pupils' work during lessons should be more efficiently done. In some lessons, too much time is spent in talking about music before listening to it or making it. Many of the limitations of teaching currently are through lack of experience. The main teacher has good qualifications for using computers for music, but use of ICT is currently restricted to pupils on the GCSE course. There are plans for younger pupils to use the existing facilities soon.
241. Management of music has changed very recently and is satisfactory. Support for the newly qualified main teacher, is good. Specialist advice, from outside school, is helpful. However two of the other teachers who contribute to the teaching of music, one unqualified and one non-specialist, also need this support if the standards of teaching, of attainment and of achievement are to be raised. The newly established head of creative arts provides appropriate support in pastoral and administrative matters. In the place of an experienced music teacher, he oversees developments in schemes and assessment for music. Visiting instrumental teachers currently report to him. There is some inefficiency in the deployment of these teachers, whose work is

subsidised by the school. The opportunity for planning the curriculum jointly in this faculty has not yet been taken. Accordingly, pupils do not have a good awareness of the commonality among creative arts of such concepts as form, texture and climax.

242. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Aspects of teaching are better. Pupils now respond well to listening activities. There is an increased provision of resources. While keyboards are sometimes shared, headphones are paired and used to minimise noise distraction. Time for a technician to maintain musical facilities is about to be allocated. However, there remains a dearth of instruments of Africa and Asia and a shortage of keyboards with a recording facility.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and results in effective learning for all groups of pupils.
- GCSE results in physical education are better than in most of pupils' other subjects.
- Very good extra-curricular provision broadens pupils' learning experiences.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour enable them to make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of girls by the end of Year 9 is not as high as that of the boys.
- Progress in lessons is slower in physical education than in games.
- There is limited time for pupils to experience aesthetic activities such as dance.

243. In lessons, standards are average for pupils at the end of Year 9. Most pupils attain appropriate levels for their age. However, standards for girls are not as high as those of boys in games. In the course that all pupils take in Years 10 and 11, standards at the age of 16 are typical for their age. On the whole, standards since the previous inspection have been maintained.

244. By the end of Year 9, achievement is, on balance, good for all groups of pupils in relation to their physical capabilities. For example, in dance, pupils plan, choreograph, perform and evaluate with confidence. In association football, boys are developing well their heading skills in attacking play. However, in hockey, some basic skills and techniques of girls are not yet developed sufficiently. The accuracy of passing, for instance, is limited because they are not looking up and the range of passing techniques is limited. By the end of Year 11, achievement is good. In badminton, for example, both boys and girls are developing the quality of their stroke play well but this could be even better if the use of footwork for a significant number was improved. In association football, boys are continuing to refine and develop their skills in work as individuals and teams in small-sided games.

245. Across Years 7 to 11, pupils have a good grasp of the principles and procedures of preparing for physical activity. Younger pupils suggest appropriate stretches and name the groups of muscles being used in warm-up. Older pupils take responsibility for leading their own warm-ups. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language receive good support that helps them to integrate well and to make good progress. Physically talented pupils achieve well in lessons and are provided with further opportunities through taking part in school teams.

246. GCSE physical education is an optional subject taken by some pupils. Although the trend is upwards, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grade passes in 2000 was below the national average and was similar in 2001. However, most pupils did better in GCSE physical education than in their other subjects. They also achieved above expectations based on their prior attainment in the subject. Only a small number of girls take the course. In both their theory and practical lessons, pupils in Year 11 are learning well and making good progress. In their theory lessons, for example, they are developing a competent knowledge and understanding of the use of different types of drugs in sport. In their practical lessons, they are improving their use of the flick serve in badminton as well as their knowledge of tactical play.
247. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good. Sometimes it is very good. This results in effective learning and is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. All lessons start promptly and efficiently. As a result, pupils are actively involved very quickly. Teachers have suitably high expectations in terms of pupils' discipline and behaviour and in the ability of pupils to work to their best. Pupils respond well, which helps to promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. For example, they work well in pairs and small groups and show clear respect for the capabilities of one another. In a mixed dance lesson in Year 9, for example, pupils worked well together. Their evaluative comments of others' work were both sensitive and developmental. In all lessons, pupils are told the learning objectives and receive clear instructions. Teachers give an effective breakdown and demonstration of required skills, which ensure that all pupils are aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do to make progress. This illustrates teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the activities being taught and shows pupils how to adapt, refine and improve their own practice.
248. A wide variety of activities in lessons ensures that pupils stay motivated and provides progression and challenge. In a boys' football lesson in Year 9, for example, the teacher successfully developed pupils' confidence in heading, through a good sequence of activities. Pupils were encouraged to assess their own work and to set targets for improvement. In indoor lessons, teachers make effective use of the white boards to write up key words. This, along with effective questioning by teachers, enhances pupils' literacy skills. Pupils are made aware of their capabilities because teachers circulate well and offer praise and constructive criticism. On a few occasions, though, there is a tendency for the teacher to give all the evaluation at the end of lessons rather than to ask pupils for their responses as to what they feel they have achieved. Although GCSE theory work is marked consistently, comments about pupils' missing work are not always followed up.
249. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has been extended in Years 10 and 11 with a GCSE course and the junior sports leaders' course in Year 10. Schemes of work have been improved since the previous inspection. The length of modules of work has been increased for games lessons but in other lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, the short length of modules limits the progress pupils can make from year to year. This also restricts pupils' experience of aesthetic activities such as dance. Shower arrangements do not provide the privacy expected by boys and girls because there are no cubicles. This has a negative impact on standards of personal hygiene.
250. A very good range of extra-curricular provision continues to extend opportunities for pupils. These include matches against other schools as well as inter-form and recreational activities. As a result of the continuing enthusiasm of teachers, some

from other departments, the Year 7 and Year 8 football teams have been promoted to the local 'A' division league this season and two boys have achieved county representative honours at Under 16 hockey.

251. Since his appointment in September, the acting head of department has provided sound leadership and management of the department and is focusing the development of the subject on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE have been above average and pupils have achieved well.
- Pupils' positive attitudes promote good achievement in the subject.
- Good leadership and management have helped to overcome staffing difficulties.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent because of difficulties in recruitment.
- Teachers' questions are not always sufficiently focused to promote effective learning.
- Resources are insufficient to enhance the quality of pupils' learning.

252. Standards of work of pupils at the end of Year 9 are below the level expected by the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' knowledge of different religious traditions is still at a basic level. Pupils have difficulty in giving an account of what it means to belong to a faith community. Oral work is better than written work. Many pupils are able to draw successfully on their community backgrounds, as in a lesson in Year 8 when some pupils were able to talk about the importance of the Qur'an to Muslims. Written work tends to be brief. It lacks detail because pupils have difficulty in explaining their understanding and expressing their views. However, higher attaining pupils produce some good explanatory writing, for example, on initiation rites and ceremonies in different traditions.
253. Pupils achieve well at GCSE and gain results at A*-C grades that are consistently above national averages. During the last two years most candidates have done better in religious education than in their other subjects and have gained higher grades than predicted. Standards of work seen of pupils in Year 11 taking the GCSE course are also above national averages. They have a sure grasp of the main practices of Islam, and increasingly of Judaism and Christianity. They can produce well-structured and clearly argued essays. Standards of work of pupils in the general course of religious education in Year 11, taken by all pupils, are broadly similar to the level expected by the agreed syllabus. Pupils have a thoughtful appreciation of moral and social issues, such as those related to crime and punishment, but they have more difficulty in understanding relevant religious perspectives in the different faith traditions.
254. The achievement of pupils is good, both in Years 7 to 9 and in the two courses in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve equally well. Pupils make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of different religious traditions and become more confident in expressing views on religious and ethical issues. Pupils' attitudes to religious education are good in all years and make an important contribution to their good achievement in the subject.

255. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Often the quality of teaching and learning is good or better, but there is some inconsistency in the teaching of the subject owing to current staffing difficulties and the large number of non-specialists who teach a few lessons each. The large proportion of good or better teaching ensures that pupils' overall achievement is good. Teachers' understanding of the subject is generally satisfactory. When it is insecure, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' understanding, as in a lesson in Year 8 on aspects of Islam. The planning of lessons is thorough, structured well, and is based on a good scheme of work. Teachers use a wide range of methods, which help pupils acquire new knowledge and understanding, as well as exploring new ideas. Effective use of video with classes in Year 9, for example, enabled pupils to extend their understanding of rites of initiation and ceremonies, drawing on an example from Peru. However, teachers' use of questioning is not always matched well to pupils' levels of understanding. This slows down learning, as in a lesson on war and peace in Year 10. Pupils are usually managed well. Senior staff provide very good support when teachers are unfamiliar with the class or inexperienced in teaching the subject. Effective methods are used to improve literacy levels. Good attention is given to developing pupils' religious language. Teachers are increasingly making effective use of ICT to enhance pupils' skills in research and presentation, as seen in lessons on crime and punishment in Year 11 and on the festival of Diwali in Year 7.
256. Appropriate curricular provision is made for religious education throughout the school, including the sixth form, in which termly conferences are held on religious and ethical issues. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. However, at the moment the staffing situation is unsatisfactory because of the school's difficulty in finding a replacement for the full-time specialist teacher of the subject who left at the end of the summer term. The department benefits from being part of the humanities faculty. The acting head of faculty has provided very good leadership during the period of staffing difficulties and worked hard to minimise the disruption to teaching. The absence of educational visits, insufficient visual material and the lack of religious artefacts make it more difficult for pupils to appreciate some aspects of religion.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Pupils make appropriate progress because teaching is satisfactory and is sometimes good.
- Good use of assessment ensures pupils know what they have to do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Raise the attainment of girls.
- Use of ICT to improve pupils' investigative skills and understanding of business.
- Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum to deepen knowledge and learning.

257. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average. Pupils' results in business studies were slightly below those pupils gained in most other subjects that they took.

258. Results in 2001 fell sharply. This decline is largely attributable to unsatisfactory staffing and recruitment difficulties. There are big differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Boys achieved better grades than girls in both 2000 and 2001. The department is aware of this disparity but has not yet developed and implemented a comprehensive strategy for improving girls' attainment. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 11 in the work seen are slightly below average. These are indicated for current pupils in the good assessment and value-added data held by the department. These standards represent satisfactory achievement, both in relation to earlier work and more especially the levels of attainment on entry to the course. Achievement for some pupils is restricted by poor attendance in both Years 10 and 11.
259. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory rather than good progress, because they receive only a small amount of additional support in class. Pupils for whom English is an additional language often make good progress as a result of teachers' good focus on basic skills and literacy.
260. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Occasionally it is good. Lessons are planned effectively and teachers' expectations are appropriate. The lesson's objectives are consistently stated. Better lessons make good use of plenary sessions in which pupils can reflect on the learning that has occurred, for example, in a lesson dealing with industrial trends in Year 10. Questioning of pupils is inclusive. In lessons observed, teachers targeted diffident girls for special help and attention. In the good lessons, pupils are reminded of the necessity of taking responsibility for their own learning, as seen in a lesson dealing with types of business enterprise in Year 10. However, teachers do not enhance pupils' learning by the use of displays or use pupils' annotated work in activities in lessons.
261. Teaching methods are satisfactory. They make insufficient use of experiences outside the classroom. This limits the pace of pupils' learning, particularly in Year 10. There are only occasional visits, for example to a local employer. Links with the local business community are modest and insufficiently used to improve pupils' understanding of the world of business. The use of ICT is not used well to challenge pupils or to improve their skills in analysing business data or modelling of related, economic activities. There is a good emphasis on key words and vocabulary, for example, 'franchise' and 'liability' in Year 10. Teachers cater well for the literacy needs of pupils well, especially those for whom English is an additional language.
262. By the end of Year 11, pupils are more competent in their knowledge and understanding of concepts in business. These include those relating to types of organisational structure and aspects of motivation and reward. Oral skills in discussing the classification of businesses as primary, secondary and tertiary enterprises are better than pupils' recording skills. They can see more fully the business and legal implications of different types of concern, for example 'sole trader' businesses and 'companies limited by guarantee'. Confidence to undertake extended writing, for example in work on factors that can influence the location of business, is weaker. Pupils are less confident in applying their knowledge to situations in which understanding how topics integrate with each other is important. Basic literacy skills, particularly in technical vocabulary, remain a barrier to learning for some pupils. The department is suitably considering the introduction of specialist dictionaries tailored to the needs of such pupils. Pupils have few opportunities to gain insight into the values of enterprise in business such as considering the merits of 'for profit' and 'not for profit' organisations.

263. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. Induction arrangements are effective. They have enabled a recently appointed member of staff to make good progress in whole-class teaching. The monitoring and supervision of teaching are good and have improved the consistency of teaching despite staffing difficulties, for example in Year 10. They have helped pupils to have good attitudes to the subject, though some immature behaviour was observed during group work in a Year 11 class assessing the relative merits of advertising products. Information from assessment is promptly and regularly communicated to pupils and their parents. It shows clearly what progress is being made but departmental analyses have yet to produce strategies for improving the performance of particular groups of pupils.
264. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection, particularly in developing schemes of work and analysing pupils' performances. Strategies to address the relative underachievement of girls are not effective.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Other Social Studies	9	56	70	0	18	0.7	1.7

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
Art and Design	3	100	96	0	45	2.7	6.4
English / Language	3	67	92	0	31	1.33	5.4
Other Social Studies	3	100	88	0	35	2.7	5.3

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	23	13	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Health and Social Care	8	12.5	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

265. Mathematics courses in the sixth form contribute to students' development of key skills through lessons in Application of Number, and enable students to re-take their GCSE examinations in mathematics.
266. In science, the focus was on AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education). The course was introduced for the first time in September 2001, for the current Year 12. There are no previous examination results so a comparison of attainment over time could not be carried out.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students taking the key skills course receive clear information about the skills to develop in order to gain a pass.
- Students know their individual targets.

Areas for improvement

- Irregular attendance through timetable clashes restricts students' achievements
- Results have been below average in Application of Number and low in GCSE.
- Teaching is satisfactory, but lacks flair.
- There is insufficient monitoring of students' work in their folders.
- Insufficient priority is given to the development of mathematics courses in the sixth form.

267. Results in 2001 in the examinations taken by sixth form students in GCSE and in the key skills course in Application of Number were below average. Only one of five candidates in GCSE gained a C grade and only one in seven entrants gained a pass in Application of Number. Teachers paid insufficient attention to ensuring that students were entered at the correct level in the key skills course. Students' performance in relation to their previous GCSE grades was satisfactory. Nearly all the students who started the course stayed to complete it.
268. The standards of work of current students are below average and represent satisfactory achievement. A large proportion of students, however, lack confidence in their mathematical prowess, having achieved relatively low grades in their GCSE examinations. They are over-dependent on the use of a calculator for basic work involving number and receive insufficient practice in numeracy to help them to overcome this. In lessons, students have not always had teaching that was targeted closely enough to their individual needs to help them to gain pass grades.
269. Teaching is satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers have satisfactory knowledge of the subject and courses studied. The details of the course of study that is provided for students indicate that planning is sound. However, the learning objectives for each lesson in the GCSE course, and the specific activities through which students will learn, are too vague. In the Application of Number course, differentiated work is provided in lessons for students working at the different levels. There are insufficient

model answers to encourage students to raise their standards. The marking and monitoring of students' work in their folders are not sufficiently rigorous. As a consequence, students' pride in presentation of their work is reduced, particularly so with the boys. Teachers make little use of computers to increase students' interest and to raise standards. Though teaching overall is satisfactory, students' irregular attendance through timetable clashes restricts their achievements which are accordingly unsatisfactory.

270. Students' attitudes to their work vary from good to unsatisfactory, but generally they lack application. A number of students arrive late for lessons, particularly boys. Their powers of concentration in lessons also vary from good to unsatisfactory. Learning is therefore unsatisfactory at times though it is satisfactory overall.
271. Leadership and management of the implementation of sixth form courses in mathematics are unsatisfactory. The scheme of work provides an outline of the requirements of the courses, but there has been a lack of induction and training for teachers who teach the courses. The monitoring of teaching and of students' work is irregular. Some lessons take place in inappropriately small rooms.

Science

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good qualifications and have a good knowledge of the subject.
- Students have positive attitudes to their work and do what is expected of them.

Areas for improvement

- The number of students taking up the course is low.
- Schemes of work are not fully developed.
- The teaching of theory lacks stimulation and interest and is not effective enough.

272. The quality of students' work seen in Year 12 was below national expectations. It indicates satisfactory achievement based on students' attainment at the end of Year 11. Because this is a new course there are no previous examination results to evaluate. Students are only a little way into this new course, but their knowledge and understanding of introductory organic chemistry and basic concepts such as atomic structure and bonding are weak. In the biological module, students demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the structure and function of the heart and blood circulatory systems. Their knowledge and understanding of the biochemical pathways through cellular respiration were very insecure. Practical and investigative work in science, such as that in organic chemistry is generally below the standard expected for such a group. A few students lack pride in their written work so that much of it is untidy and presented poorly. Attention to basic skills, for example the writing up of experimental data, is weak, with little care over structure and content.

273. Teaching is satisfactory, but only just. Whilst individual teachers plan their programmes effectively to provide a suitable introduction to the subject and to cover the syllabus, and whilst practical lessons provide effective development of practical skills, the teaching of theory is narrow in its approach, lacking stimulus and excitement. There is little variety of method, so that in many cases the learning approach is not well suited to the needs of the students. There is evidence in some

students' files of copious taking of notes. In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate their good knowledge through their questions and explanations, and in the tasks they perform. For example, in a lesson about scientists working in industry, the teacher was able to draw on students' prior learning of extraction of chalk, to work through and develop a cost and benefit analysis of the industry.

274. Marking is unsatisfactory. There is no clear schedule for assessment. Teachers do not all annotate work with corrections and identification of omissions. There is insufficient assessed work to enable effective monitoring of progress. Many students are unaware of how they can improve their work. The principal features observed of good teaching were clear objectives, sharp planning, that included relevant practical work of a high standard and application of knowledge, a brisk pace, and a range of approaches which encouraged learning. These features are areas for improvement in the classes in which teaching was less than good.
275. Students' learning is satisfactory. They take a keen interest in the practical aspects and are developing sound practical skills. They are becoming more familiar with the use of the Internet but need more support to use it in a more constructive, enlightened and mature manner. There is, however, an inadequate development of their understanding in theory lessons. Some students have poorly organised notes, insufficient depth of knowledge and insufficient assessed work to support effective preparation for examinations. Students support each other effectively. They talk and listen to each other in a mature way, as opportunities arise. However, they are more passive during lessons and rarely ask questions using their own initiative and to show that they are thinking.
276. Leadership and co-ordination are satisfactory, but lack real drive and purpose. Teachers and pupils know what is expected of them. Sixth form teachers are suitably qualified and have a shared commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning in science. Good use is made of the available resources, apart from ICT. The schemes of work are incomplete and make insufficient references to assessment, key skills including ICT, and, especially, data logging. The monitoring of teaching in the sixth form in science is satisfactory but at times is insufficiently rigorous and effective.

BUSINESS

277. In business, the focus was the three GNVQ courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The foundation option was offered for the first time in 2001 and no previous attainment data is available.

Business studies at foundation and intermediate levels

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

Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to achieve well at GNVQ intermediate level.
- Positive attitudes and behaviour assist students' learning.
- Good use of assessment ensures students know what they have to do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Students have insufficient work experience opportunities to support their learning.
- Strategies to raise the relative attainment of girls are not effective enough.
- Information from assessment is not used well to influence what is taught.

278. Results in the GNVQ intermediate course were well below the national average in 2000. Results in 2001 indicate that students' attainment was below the national average. Of the 33 who studied the course, 21 achieved the GNVQ intermediate qualification in business. These results represent good achievement based on students' levels of attainment on entry. Although results for intermediate students are improving, there are significant gender differences. Boys' achievements are much better than those of girls. The department is aware of this and is reviewing the content of the course to raise motivation among girls. This review has not had a noticeable effect on standards. Nearly all students who start the course complete it.
279. There are no previous results for the qualification at foundation level since this option has been introduced in 2001. In the standards of work seen, most students following the GNVQ foundation course are well below the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' previous attainment on entry to the sixth form. Students are at a relatively early stage in their studies and are slightly behind the appropriate point in the scheme of work. Oral skills are generally better than written ones, particularly in extended writing. Inadequate skills in literacy are a barrier to learning. For example, in a lesson dealing with the requirements of correspondence in business, some students were unaware of the meaning of the word 'enclosed'. Foundation students take too long to acquire the critical mass of technical vocabulary and concepts necessary to comprehend processes of business. Basic numeracy skills are well below average for foundation students and below average for intermediate students. For example, in work undertaken on invoicing, many students lacked both confidence and ability in completing financial calculations. Intermediate students have standards around the national average. They indicate good achievement in relation to students' prior attainment. By the end of the relevant module, the majority of boys and some girls are able to cite the flow of financial documents used to make a business purchase. They are also aware of the employer's responsibility to the individual employee.
280. The quality of teaching and of learning is good for intermediate students and satisfactory for those pursuing the foundation course. Lessons have clearly stated objectives and are closely linked to the requirements for external assessment. Lessons are structured well. The pace of learning is generally good, especially for intermediate groups. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject that they use effectively to provide helpful hints for students and to guide them through coursework, such as dealing with industrial location. There is good progression in teachers' questions, such as in a lesson for students on the intermediate course dealing with decisive factors affecting industrial and business location. There is careful checking to see that learning is being consolidated, for example, in preparation for research into local business in Year 12. The effective use of plenary sessions to revise and reinforce learning points helps students to make suitable progress, particularly at intermediate level.
281. Marking is prompt. However, the quantity of assessed work for foundation students is unsatisfactory and such students seldom have clear written targets annotated to their work.
282. Attitudes to learning are good. Students readily engage in discussion with only limited prompting, as seen in a lesson at intermediate level dealing with stakeholders in business. Students participate well in brainstorming activities, such as generating material on contrasting companies. These factors have a positive effect on self-

esteem and encourage students to accept new intellectual challenges. Girls tend to be diffident. Teachers are beginning to acknowledge this, for example, in the balancing of a question and answer session addressing internal and external stakeholders to ensure the participation of girls.

283. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work are good and ensure the respective syllabuses are covered suitably. The department has a realistic plan for improvement. Progress towards achieving specific objectives in raising the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There are good induction arrangements for new and temporary staff. Although teachers provide opportunities for students to use ICT in their work through links with other sixth form programmes for key skills, the topics covered do not pay sufficient regard to students' development of more advanced skills of investigation and testing of hypotheses. The quality of teaching quality is monitored effectively. The head of department is vigilant in maintaining consistency of learning in lessons.
284. An important deficiency is the lack of access to work experience or exposure to input from those working in the business sector. The students passed this comment also. Although there is limited enrichment of the curriculum in Year 12, there is virtually none in Year 13. Students are rightly critical of this shortcoming in provision.
285. Much teaching takes place in non-specialist rooms with limited ICT facilities. However, the booking of access to a computing suite supports learning. Displays of work on walls are limited and rarely support specific lessons in the subject. Poorly fitting doors create distractions to teaching and learning in a number of rooms within the sixth form teaching area.
286. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Textbooks are now provided by the school and do not have to be purchased by students. Teaching is more considered. Curricular enrichment has improved with the opportunity to participate in Young Enterprise activities in Year 12, but the department is not maximising its links with the local business community. This has a negative effect on learning because students, particularly the girls, often do not have many of their own experiences of business to count on. The number of students failing to complete intermediate level in 2000 was a cause for concern, but the department is making a determined effort to strengthen its teaching arrangements to avoid this happening again.

Business studies at GNVQ advanced / AVCE

Overall, the quality of provision in advanced business studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Achievement is good, and sometimes very good, as a result of good teaching.
- Students' positive attitudes to learning ensure good progress.

Areas for improvement

- More use of ICT to enhance learning.

287. Results for 2001 show a big improvement on the previous year with the proportion of merit and distinction grades above the national average. A high proportion of students completed the course. Of the 26 students who completed the course, 23 obtained the advanced GNVQ qualification in business. There were no notable differences in the performance of boys and girls or particular ethnic groups. Such

results indicate that achievement in relation to attainment on commencing the course at 16 is good overall and for some students is very good.

288. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 13 are at least at the national average and sometimes above it. Achievement remains very good for the majority of students. They show a good understanding of previous work with regard to setting and analysing budgets. Numeracy is satisfactory, though girls are less confident, for example in assessing cash flow statements, than boys. Girls do not refrain from requesting guidance when in difficulty, as is the case for girls in the courses in business at lower levels. There are no significant literacy difficulties for the majority of students, even acknowledging that for many, English is an additional language. By the end of Year 13, students can discuss and write incisively about all of the key topics including the competitive business environment, human resources and business planning. Standards of presentation of written work are mainly satisfactory; for some students they are good. Students' skills in ICT, though satisfactory, are not developed as well as might be expected. Students are less confident in the areas of modelling and interrogating statistical data and testing hypotheses.
289. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to support individual students well. Lessons are well prepared. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and help students to maintain the momentum in working through the prescribed modules. There is careful chaining of questions with no hiding place for any students reluctant to participate. This approach helps to deepen learning as seen in a Year 12 class in which students acquired a good understanding of credit arrangements for sole traders. Expectation is invariably set high. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace with many timed challenges built into activities of study. Work is promptly marked and is usually well annotated. Homework is set regularly but was only briefly drawn upon in the lessons observed. Students receive appropriate targets for raising future attainment. These are set out clearly, for example in work scrutinised dealing with marketing. There is good consolidation of learning as a result of teachers carefully checking on comprehension of both vocabulary and concepts, as in a lesson dealing with budgetary analysis. Students have few opportunities to learn from each other as they lack confidence about working in teams, as seen in a Young Enterprise enrichment activity.
290. Attitudes to the subject in Years 12 and 13 are good, often very good, and support learning. Students are keen to do well and many are focused on taking their study of the subject further on leaving school. Students show interest and enthusiasm, for example in budget forecasting. When challenged to analyse more complex financial data in a Year 12 class, students responded well and were willing to collaborate and share their learning, though opportunities for this are rare in most classes.
291. Leadership and management in the subject are good. Good monitoring of teaching and sharing of good practice ensures consistency of good learning and helps students to achieve well. The match of teaching staff to the curriculum is satisfactory and has been improved by the recent appointment of a member of staff with current marketing experience. The reporting of students' progress to both students and their parents is good and ensures that students know what they have to do to improve at regular intervals during each academic year.
292. Curriculum enrichment is satisfactory. It is planned with local business contacts embracing retail and service sectors. Students in Year 12 are able to participate in

Young Enterprise activities. Access to such opportunity is uneven and students in Year 13 have not taken part in such valuable simulations of business.

293. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Criticism was made of the relative isolation in which students studied this option. More attention is now being given to enhancing students' experiences through more input from the business sector and more focused arrangements for work experience. These initiatives need to be maintained over a sustained period because many students do not have direct knowledge of either the 'for profit' or 'not for profit' sectors. Schemes of work need to be revisited to ensure that more advanced skills in ICT are appropriately addressed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on ICT. No examinations have yet taken place at advanced level. Key skills in ICT are taught but results have been poor. Five lessons were observed. One was satisfactory, one very good and three good. In the very good lesson, the active and energetic support from the teacher enabled the students, from a variety of groups who were working on different topics, to gain in understanding and to progress at a good pace.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Improved range of sixth form courses allows good progression from Year 11.
- Good teaching enables students to make good progress.
- Positive attitudes of students enhance good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT in other subjects to enhance students' skills, knowledge and understanding.

294. Students' attainment in the sixth form is below average. A-level courses have yet to be completed so statistical comparisons cannot be made. However, the results for the key skills examination in 2001 were well below average. Observations of lessons and scrutiny of work indicate below average standards.

295. Students enter the sixth form with below average standards of attainment but are achieving more than their previous attainment would indicate in the development of their ICT skills. At A-level, for example, students are competent users of word-processing software. Their work shows good understanding of the process of design in the production of logos and letterheads for businesses. With good guidance from their teachers they can produce formal letters from a business to a customer. Students following the key skills course show good progress in producing a report that incorporates the use of tables. They can import and export images and text between packages of software. Some can use a spreadsheet to enter data but their knowledge of how to sort by different fields is limited. All students can search the Internet for information. However, their use of this facility lacks discrimination in that, although they use references provided by teachers, they have not developed an independent, critical view of how to use the Internet.

296. A-level students find most difficulty with the theoretical aspects of the course. Their teachers are aware of this and adapt the teaching methods they use accordingly. For example, discussion is encouraged so that understanding is secure. In a lesson on

the use of communications within businesses, the students' personal experiences of working within organisations were used to give a practical basis for their learning. Reinforcement of the main points was then applied by making notes using ICT. In this way, students' learning was improved. The relatively low level of literary skills is a major reason for students' difficulty with the theoretical aspects of the course. Their spelling, punctuation and immature phraseology indicate below average standards, especially by the boys in the group. Teachers use effective strategies to support the development of better literacy skills. For example, students were asked to evaluate each other's work for both content and use of ICT. This enabled them to experience different styles and emphasised the importance of accuracy in their writing.

297. Students' attitudes towards the ICT courses are good. Most like the subject and find it relevant. Some girls, however, display an immature attitude towards their key skills lessons that inhibits their learning. In most lessons the students work together co-operatively. They willingly give assistance to each other and have good relationships with their teachers.
298. Students feel that the increased provision of ICT courses in the sixth form is a major improvement to the range of courses offered by the school.
299. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. Teachers use their very good knowledge of their subject to amplify and illustrate points, giving students differing perspectives in order to help them to understand. They support the students unstintingly, both in lessons and in offering other times at which students can access advice. Their management of lessons in which students are following more than one course is excellent. They move around unceasingly to help and advise. Their use of questioning makes the students think. The questions are often open-ended and develop the students' abilities to phrase an argument. Students' work is regularly marked and contains suitable advice on how to improve. Homework is an integral part of the good teaching. It is set to enhance students' research skills. The best lessons have plenty of pace. Students are encouraged to move on within a specified time. This helps to encourage concentration on the work in hand.
300. The management of ICT in the sixth form is good. The recent improvement in the number of computers for sixth form use has helped to improve teaching and learning. However, the use of ICT by sixth formers in other subjects varies from good to unsatisfactory. This aspect of the curriculum is in need of improvement.
301. Organisation of the new A-level course is thorough. All the ICT teachers have had training from the examination board on the standards expected. The work and progress of the students are regularly reviewed and the staff work very much as a team. The positive and enthusiastic attitude of the head of department is a major factor in the good progress that has been made by the department.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

302. The focus of the inspection was on both intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses in health and social care. As the number of students is relatively small, they are taught within mixed-year groups.

Health and social care

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching encourages students to take responsibility for their learning.
- Good information and advice help students to know what they need to do to improve.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour positively affect students' progress in learning.
- Good enrichment opportunities deepen students' knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement

- That take-up of courses more closely reflects the gender balance of the sixth form.
- Use of performance data to influence the method and content of teaching.

303. Results in 2000 and those for 2001 are well below national expectations for both the intermediate and advanced courses. The numbers of entrants for the past two years are too small for detailed statistical analysis. The groups studying this subject area are exclusively female. The school has yet to consider how classes could be more representative of the gender balance of the sixth form as a whole.
304. On the basis of lesson observation and scrutiny of work, students' standards are improving and are around the national average as a result of some very good teaching. This represents very good achievement when set against the attainment of pupils on entry to the sixth form. There was relatively little recorded and assessed work for Year 12 students, who are at an early stage in their study. A satisfactory platform has been established to assist learning through students' acquisition of appropriate technical vocabulary and clarification of the standards required in the modules studied.
305. Classes are of mixed age but this does not have any measurable effect on either standards or progress. By the end of modules, students are generally confident in their oral discussions. They are able to assess critically such implications as that of government policy on society. Writing skills, particularly in extended writing, remain below average, particularly in Year 12.
306. Teaching is very good. Learning is good; sometimes it is very good. Lessons observed were well prepared and used a focused, small steps approach, as observed in a lesson dealing with the evaluation of observation of behaviour. This enabled students to identify quickly the key issues relating to the developmental milestones in young children. The majority of students make good progress and benefit from individual attention and encouragement. The department is developing links with key skills. It promotes the more effective use of students' time for private study. Teachers help students to consolidate their conceptual understanding, for example in understanding the influences on governmental social policy. In lessons, students were prepared to collaborate and share learning, for example in discussing ethical issues relating to conjoined twins. This enabled them to increase their awareness of the dilemmas facing parents and the medical profession as well as makers of policy.
307. There are very good enrichment opportunities. For example, in the module on child development, students have ready access to the observation of pre-school children at nurseries both on and off site.
308. Attitudes are very good; often they are excellent. Students enjoy their work, which is often conceptually challenging such as when discussing the merits of utilitarianism as a social philosophy. Those interviewed recognise the importance of the subject to their future career intentions and a number of them are focused on opportunities for

work within the caring profession. These perceptions are reinforced by the relevance and clarity of advice offered to students by teachers. For example, students looking at early childhood were reminded of the critical significance of being able to apply the correct technical and conceptual vocabulary to recording observations of pre-school behaviour.

309. Leadership and management are good. A recent staff appointment has already had a positive impact on work in this area and is implementing a range of ideas to raise students' standards in health and social care. A good working environment, which emphasises the significance of the subject, has been created and has had a positive effect on attitudes for students in Year 12 and Year 13. The use of ICT is appropriately planned but does not give sufficient focus on numeracy and the opportunities for students to broaden their learning skills, for example in analysing statistical trends and aggregating data. Staffing is well matched to the requirements of the curriculum in both courses of health and social care.
310. Provision for assessment is satisfactory. Marking is prompt. Teachers' comments are supportive but written annotation places insufficient emphasis on setting targets to reinforce the oral feedback on what students need to do to improve their attainment. Little use is made of wall displays or exemplars of students' work to help students make comparisons about their relative progress in the subject.
311. There was no specific comment on health and social care in the previous inspection but there has been satisfactory progress in the quality of teaching and in relation to the advice and support to students. There have been interim staffing difficulties that the school has now resolved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

312. The focus of the inspection in art and design was the provision for courses at A-level and AS-level. The focus of the inspection in technical theatre was a specific, vocationally-applied course that represents efforts to broaden the sixth form curriculum and reflect the interests of the local community.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Achievement is high relative to students' prior attainment.
- Teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- Drawing skills are insufficiently developed for AS-level work.

313. In work seen, students were attaining average standards in drawing and design. Progress in design was particularly good and was built largely upon the Asian cultural background of most of the students. In AS-level and A-level examinations, all students attained passes at grades A-E in 2000 and again in 2001. The four students entered for the A-level examination in 2000, gained one grade B, one grade C and two grade D passes. Students who begin the A-level or AS-level courses in art and design usually complete the particular course.

314. Achievement is good in relation to students' prior attainment. All students make good progress aided by good one-to-one teaching and the very good working atmosphere in studios that reflects the excellent behaviour at this level. The work in students' folders indicates good achievement. Their work is colourful and imaginative. Students acquire satisfactory skills in drawing. Designs using pencil are intricate and form a good basis for subsequent painting. However, students' skills in drawing lack the strength and authority needed for success at AS-level examinations in art.
315. The present group comprises nine students drawn from Year 12 and Year 13, whose prior attainment in GCSE examinations is mainly grades C and D. Students pursue practical work enthusiastically. They carry out research earnestly and respond well to the good teaching that they receive. The teaching makes appropriate demands and shows that teachers have a good level of expertise in the subject that is used well to encourage and motivate students to do well. The good relationships between teachers and students create an effective environment for positive learning. Teachers make effective use of the procedures for assessment specified by the external examinations board and relate them to the school's own policy. This enables students to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
316. Attitudes to the subject are positive. Students have a strong commitment to their work in this subject that greatly assists their learning. Students enjoy working creatively. They have chosen to study the subject for many different reasons, including for career, interest and enjoyment.
317. The good leadership and good expertise of the teaching staff in the sixth form ensure that the learning resources are used well to promote students' learning. The allocation of teaching time is sufficient to ensure good coverage of the requirements of the examinations' syllabuses.

Technical theatre

Overall, the quality of provision in technical theatre is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to achieve good standards.
- Students' positive attitudes help to create a very effective environment for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Occasional absences of some students hinder continuity of learning.

318. The BTEC diploma in technical theatre is a new course studied in comparatively few schools. On a small sample, national comparisons are unreliable. However, results achieved and work seen indicate above average attainment. The students' achievement is very good because they enter the course with attainment in drama that is below average when compared with national standards. In 2001, one student who had special educational needs achieved very well and obtained a pass grade.
319. The teaching of technical theatre in the sixth form is good and provides a depth and breadth to the curriculum. It incorporates a good range of teaching styles, which clearly develop the learning of the students. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the students. At the same time, requirements for students to develop their own portfolios of work, to visit theatres and to empathise with others develop their independence.

320. Students spend as much as their lesson time again working in the community, at other primary and secondary schools and with local theatre groups. This arrangement extends their understanding of the subject and develops their practical skills. Specialists who are committed to the subject teach drama and contribute to the wider education it affords the pupils. They have status as qualified teachers in addition to professional experience, which is used well to extend students' involvement and practical experience.
321. Teaching ensures good pace control in lessons. It concentrates on the achievements of the students and is celebratory. Much of the teaching is very good. It combines the verve and enthusiasm of the staff and students. Teachers use their detailed knowledge and understanding to develop students' personal and academic achievement. In a class of students from Years 12 and 13, students spoke authoritatively, using specialist vocabulary, about lighting, staging and marketing. Their work was presented well and organised exceptionally well. They developed their skills in research and independent learning. All students on the course gain a very good insight into the subject as well as acquiring a wide range of sophisticated skills in drama. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the standards of students are above average and that students are building self-confidence, improving their ability to work independently and developing their literacy skills. The progress of a few students is hindered as a result of occasional absences from school.
322. The leadership and management of the subject are good in the sixth form. Students' performance is monitored well and they know what they need to do to improve. Resources for learning are carefully managed.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focus was on GCE A-level English and English literature. These courses have been in place for a number of years. Students' attainment in A-level examinations is consistently well below the national average, reflecting the levels of attainment students had on entry to the sixth form.

English and English literature

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

Strengths

- Good teaching helps students to make satisfactory progress.
- Good relationships between staff and students assist learning.

Areas for improvement

- A coherent assessment strategy to match students to the most suitable courses.
- Acquisition of independent learning skills and development of literacy skills.

323. In 2000, results in the GCE A-level English and English literature examinations were well below the national average and below the average for schools taking students from similar backgrounds. Only a small number of students sit A-level examinations. Results in 2001 indicate attainment that is well below average.
324. In the work seen during the inspection, students' attainment in the sixth form is below average. This indicates an improvement on the results in A-level and AS-level

examinations in recent years and represents at least satisfactory achievement. Most students have a competent knowledge and understanding of their work. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion but falter when speaking in formal situations. Students make valid and cogent observations and use technical vocabulary accurately in their writing. Students' progress is often satisfactory rather than good, because they lack confidence in their literacy skills. Extended writing is a problem for many students as their skills in independent research are generally unsatisfactory. Students cannot make sophisticated inferences from texts or sustain detailed textual analysis. Recent initiatives are beginning to redress writing problems by careful selection of reading texts, more variety in writing assignments and increased use of ICT to aid the presentation of work. The present syllabus, which includes English and English literature, does not target the strengths of students who perform better in English literature. There is no group in Year 12 currently because students did not opt for it, mainly because of anticipated staffing difficulties. The department is sensibly changing to an English literature course, which should motivate the students and enhance performance.

325. Students for whom English is an additional language make similar, satisfactory progress to that of the other students. They receive good support from their class teachers who work together in planning lessons and devising strategies for success. The study of multicultural texts deepens students' understanding of literature. Sensitive planning of lessons ensures that all students receive the opportunity to air their views in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Good relationships are evident in all sixth form lessons. Students respond positively to their teacher and each other.
326. The quality of teaching and learning is good but much is satisfactory. In lessons there is a brisk pace, pupils are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy their work with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. In a Year 13 lesson on linguistic analysis, the students thoroughly enjoyed using specialist vocabulary to analyse the texts and then discussed issues enthusiastically. When the teacher tried to extend and deepen the discussion, students floundered and relied on the teacher for illumination. The use of relaxing music in the background provided an atmosphere of peace, which the students described as helping them concentrate. In a less good but still satisfactory lesson, students learnt marginally less because of a more pedestrian pace. Related extra-curricular activities celebrate pupils' achievement and increase their involvement and participation. Students' work is marked regularly. The department now makes good use of assessment data. Previously students were not correctly assessed for the rigours of A-level study and so the number of students who dropped out of the course was high and results suffered. Similarly, in the GCSE re-sit groups, it was not clear whether students were aiming for an improved grade or to achieve grade C and above. This resulted in a class lacking cohesion and clear aims.
327. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work, which encourages equality for the students, and promotes the professional development of staff. A system of mutual observation of lessons, begun recently, is developing teaching styles, classroom management and maximising the learning of pupils. Assessment procedures are clear and are now used more rigorously to influence what and how teachers teach.
328. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are satisfactory. The resources of staffing, accommodation and learning materials are adequate.

329. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The use of ICT has helped to improve standards. Results in national tests are well below the national trend but current initiatives indicate improvement. Students are still insufficiently active in their own learning and rely too much on their teachers.