

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTON CANES HIGH SCHOOL

Cannock, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124395

Headteacher: Mr Paul Fell

Reporting inspector: Mr David Klemm
2049

Dates of inspection: 4 – 7 February 2002

Inspection number: 221260

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11-18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Norton Canes
Cannock
Staffordshire

Postcode: WS11 3SP

Telephone number: 01543 514400

Fax number: 01543 514430

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Christine Williams

Date of previous inspection: Staffordshire

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2049	D Klemm	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>School's results and achievements.</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9649	J Smith	Lay inspector		<p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p> <p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development.</p>
32077	A Edwards	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19056	G W Leech	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
7602	E D Milroy	Team inspector	Science	
31096	J Thornill	Team inspector	Information and Communication technology	
23418	R Yates	Team inspector	Art and design	
4698	M Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology	
31008	P M Rourke	Team inspector	Geography Religious Education	
30794	G M Murray	Team inspector	History	

28178	J F Connor	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
20490	P W Wilson	Team inspector	Music	
12985	S H Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical Education	
11044	J N Hedge	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services

Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Norton Canes is a small comprehensive of 624 students with 333 boys and 291 girls. There are 68 students in the sixth form which works in partnership with two neighbouring schools to provide a range of courses. When students enter the school, their attainment is below average. There are 112 students with special educational needs which is an increase since the last inspection and is around the national average. There are 27 students with statements, which is below the national average. Eight students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and three students have English as an additional language. Fifty-seven students are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average. A new headteacher started at the school in September 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education for its students. Teaching is good. Standards are around the national average although there are variations from year to year. Most students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, although in comparison with schools with a similar number of free school meals standards are below average. Behaviour is good and students have positive attitudes to school. Their attendance at school is satisfactory. The school runs well on a day-to-day basis and students receive good pastoral support. The management of the school, including the governing body, has a clear vision for the school and recent plans for school improvement are being implemented by a capable and hardworking headteacher. The school uses its relatively low levels of funding appropriately and considering the progress students are making in the school the school is providing satisfactory value for money. The school now has more strengths than weaknesses.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good in most subjects including very good teaching in religious education and art and design.
- Most students are making satisfactory progress and many are achieving well.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior team is very good.
- Students receive good care and attention.
- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to school.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good and there is very good support for students with physical disabilities.
- There are clear and costed plans for appropriate school developments.
- Careers advice and guidance are good.

What could be improved

- Teaching in some modern foreign languages and personal social and health education lessons and geography in Years 7 to 9.
- The management of the geography and music departments.
- Curriculum provision for modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11, performing arts and information communications technology across the school.
- Opportunities for students to take responsibility in and around the school and for independent learning in lessons.
- The provision for literacy and numeracy work in Years 7 to 9.
- Learning resources are unsatisfactory both with regard to books and computers.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is narrow.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 2000 the school has made satisfactory progress. Standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE and teaching is now good throughout the school. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching is small and students are making good progress in most subjects. Behaviour continues to be good and has improved over the last two years. Timetabling arrangements have been reviewed and the size of low attaining groups has been reduced. Management has improved and there is a clearer focus on monitoring performance and using assessment information to improve students' learning. Some middle managers are still insufficiently involved in monitoring teaching. The quality and

amount of provision for students with special educational needs have improved significantly and provision for students' cultural development is now satisfactory. Homework is set appropriately. Progress has been made in improving resources but there are weaknesses in the number of books in some subjects and although the number of computers has increased overall, it is still inadequate. Music provision continues to be inadequate and the number of students doing full courses in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 is very low. Statutory requirements with regard to a daily act of collective worship are not being met.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	C	D	E
A-levels/AS-levels	E*	E	NA	

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

In 2001 results in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average, having been below in 2000. Results in English are stronger than in mathematics and science results are the weakest of the three. When compared with similar schools (based on free school meals) in 2001 English results were average and mathematics and science well below average. Results in these tests over the last few years have improved more than in most schools nationally.

Results at GCSE in 2001 were below the national average and well below average for similar schools. The standards achieved by students in relationship to their prior attainment were below expectations. In 2000 results were in line with the national average and were well above expectations in relationship to prior attainment. Over the last few years results have improved more than in most schools nationally.

Results in the sixth form have been well below average over the last three years. There has been an improvement over this period but the numbers entered for examinations are so small that comparisons with national figures need to be treated carefully. The progress made by students compared with what they achieved in their GCSE examinations has been below expectations.

Attainment in lessons is in line with national standards across the school. Students make good progress in most lessons. Girls do better than boys in some subjects and worse in others and the difference in attainment is less than in many schools nationally. Students with special educational needs make good progress and many are now entered for GCSE and achieve well. Gifted and talented students achieve well in most subjects although more needs to be done to raise their aspirations. Standards in literacy and numeracy are average. The school did not achieve its GCSE targets for 2001 but is confident that the challenging targets set for 2002 which are based on prior attainment are capable of being achieved.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students are positive about school life and the subjects they study. Boys support extra-curricular sports activities well but would appreciate a wider range of other activities. Extra-curricular provision for girls is weaker and they are less enthusiastic about being involved.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall both in lessons and around the school. Movement around the school is calm and orderly.
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships amongst all members of the school community are a particular strength. There is little evidence of bullying, racism or other forms of oppressive behaviour. When given the chance students do take responsibility willingly and this needs to be developed.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory overall. Some absence is due to holidays and medical reasons but there are a small number of persistent truants.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In the main school teaching is good and is better than at the last inspection especially in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is good in English and in mathematics in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 and in science across the school. Teaching is very good in art and religious education and is good in design and technology, physical education, information communication technology and in history in the lower school. In other subjects teaching is satisfactory except in geography in the lower school.

The teaching of literacy is good in most subjects but numeracy is less well developed. Students with special needs are taught well and make good progress although their targets are unevenly applied across the curriculum. There are more strengths in teaching and learning than weaknesses. Most teachers plan their work well and have good subject knowledge. Their management of students is good and students work hard and learn well. In most lessons students improve their knowledge and skills and are prepared to persevere even when the work is difficult. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in the sixth form is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range and variety of learning opportunities are satisfactory although statutory requirements are not met with regard to provision for modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. There are considerable strengths in child development and the Youth Award scheme. ICT provision needs further improvement and provision for performing arts is poor. Extra curricular activities are unsatisfactory.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Provision is good. Students follow the same curriculum as other students. More students are now being entered for GCSE examinations.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The three students whose first language is not English have well-developed English skills and no additional provision has been made for them.

Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision for students' personal development is satisfactory. Careers education is good. Moral development is good and spiritual education is satisfactory. Social development is unsatisfactory because students are not given sufficient opportunities to take responsibilities and make decisions.
How well the school cares for its students	Pastoral support is good. Staff know students well and provide firm yet sympathetic care. Procedures for ensuring students' well-being are good. Progress is being made in assessing and monitoring academic progress but more work is needed in Years 7 to 9.

The school provides parents with a sound range of information about the school and they are kept well informed about any concerns and good news about their children. Reports do not indicate in sufficient detail what can be done to improve attainment. Parents are not involved enough about any changes the school intends to make.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by his deputy. The school runs smoothly with the support of the assistant heads and there is a clear sense of direction. The work-load of senior staff is heavy in light of their teaching commitments. Pastoral care is good and heads of department overall provide satisfactory leadership although in evaluating teaching and learning are under-developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are now monitoring the work of the school and are more involved in shaping policies. The school breaches statutory requirements in modern languages provision in the upper school and providing a daily act of worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Detailed analysis of test and examination results and the monitoring of students' attainment are helping staff to set realistic targets for students. There are, however, weaknesses in some subjects. The school is implementing classroom evaluation but not all heads of department are involved.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are managed effectively but provision is inadequate. There are not enough computers and book provision is unsatisfactory in a number of areas and is especially weak in geography. Staffing is used effectively although there are serious weaknesses in geography. Accommodation is satisfactory and is well cared for by students and cleaning staff. The school uses wisely the monies it receives.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School is approachable.• Students are expected to work hard.• Their children are making good progress.• Teaching is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra-curricular activities.• Homework.• More information about their children's education.• Links with parents are not strong enough.

Parents are not sufficiently involved in school life. Only 15 per cent returned the questionnaires and 9 attended the consultation meeting. The inspection team agrees with parents' views about the school's strengths and weaknesses. It considers homework is satisfactory, although there are some weaknesses. There are sufficient reports but they do not explain to parents how they can help in improving their children's attainment.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Norton Canes High School sixth form is smaller than most. At the time of the inspection there were sixty-eight students in Years 12 and 13. The school works in collaboration with two other high schools in the area to provide a range of academic and vocational courses. The overall size of the sixth form in the consortium fluctuates from year to year, although about a third of students stay on to Year 12. The number of students in the sixth form is increasing. Norton Canes is the smallest school in the consortium. Very few students leave once they are established on courses. In the last five years only nine students have left part way through the year— four of these students left in 1999. There are few students of ethnic minority heritage in the sixth form. More than half of students have part-time jobs. The background of sixth form students is similar to that of the rest of the school. In the last three years well under half of students went on to higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is cost-effective and as a result of the consortium arrangements provides an enhanced range of courses. Most students were learning effectively in the lessons seen by inspectors. Past results represent satisfactory achievement given students' attainment on entry to the sixth form, which, although improving, is still below average. Teaching in the sixth form is good in mathematics, geography and English literature, and very good in biology and art and design. The small number of students entering for examinations makes comparisons with national averages unreliable and although there is some improvement over the last three years, standards overall are well below average. Monitoring of students' academic progress is very good but there is little time available for tutors to offer wider support and guidance. Planning and provision for the personal, academic and careers support of students, particularly in Year 13, are unsatisfactory. Enrichment opportunities are very limited and as a consequence there is little opportunity for students' personal development. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is very good in biology and in art and design.
- The monitoring and support of students' academic progress by their teachers are good.
- The range of courses offered to students as a result of the consortium arrangements is good.
- The sixth form is cost effective.

What could be improved

- The time available for and the quality of support and guidance for students, especially in Year 13.
- Advice and help with careers and applications to higher education.
- Provision for students' personal development through enrichment activities.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure consistently high quality across the consortium schools.
- Procedures for monitoring attendance across the consortium.

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	Good. The quality of teaching is good. Achievement is good.
Biology	Good. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Students' achievement is good.

Art	Very good. Teaching is very good and students achieve well, given their prior attainment. Planning is good and theory and practical work are well integrated.
Geography	Good. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Students are achieving in line with their potential.
English Literature	Good. The quality of teaching is good. Achievement is at least satisfactory.

Work was sampled in other subjects including physics, business studies, physical education, health and social care, psychology and media studies. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good in physics, business studies, health and social care and media studies. It is satisfactory in psychology. A very good lesson on the history of sport was observed. Attainment in business studies is above average. Three students attained A grades at AS level but in most subjects standards are average. All students achieved grades in A level and AS level examinations last year in physical education, psychology, and media studies.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Information about courses is good. Students feel they are helped to settle into the sixth form and there is some opportunity for them to test out courses before committing themselves. Significant numbers of students, however, do not feel they are well advised on what to study. The monitoring of students' academic progress by subject teachers is good; students feel well supported and say that teachers will help if they have problems. Students have too little time with their tutors to establish good relationships or to seek advice. The personal and social education programme is not well planned. Students do not feel they are well advised about careers or get enough help with application to higher education. Provision for students' care and guidance, in particular of students in Year 13, is unsatisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Overall leadership of the sixth form is good. The consortium arrangements enhance the range of courses the school can offer at sixth form level. There is a good relationship with partners in the consortium. Teachers now meet regularly to discuss curriculum issues. There is currently no monitoring of the quality of teaching in consortium schools. Day-to-day management of the sixth form in the school is satisfactory. Procedures for recording and monitoring attendance across the consortium are unsatisfactory.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is good. Students feel encouraged. • Teachers are accessible and will help readily. • They are helped to settle into the sixth form. • There is choice of appropriate courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutorial support and guidance, especially in Year 13. • Help with careers and applications to higher education. • The range of enrichment activities. • Students do not enjoy general studies and key skills.

Students are generally positive about the sixth form. They speak well of the teaching they receive and their relationship with teachers. They are loyal to and supportive of the school. They are concerned to improve the quality of provision in the sixth form. Inspectors agree with the views expressed by students.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. When students enter the school their standards of attainment as measured by national tests are well below average and have declined since the last inspection. They are well below the standards of the average comprehensive school and in the present Years 7,9 and 10 there are relatively few high attaining students. Standards in English and mathematics are especially weak. Standardised tests taken in Year 7 confirm these results. The results of boys and girls fluctuate from year to year and in the current Year 7 boys did better in English than girls. The number of students with special educational needs has increased since the last inspection.
2. In English results in the Year 9 tests were close to the national average in 2000 and above in 2001. Girls do better than boys although boys' results in 2001 were stronger than those of boys nationally. Mathematics results were below average in 2000 and close to the national average in 2001. Boys reach higher standards than girls. In science standards were well below average in 2000 and close to the national average in 2001. Boys reach higher standards than girls. Over the last few years the improvement in results has been above the national trend in these tests. In comparison with similar schools (based on students' eligibility for free school meals) performance in English is average and is well below in science and mathematics. Teacher assessments in other curricular areas indicate standards around the national average.
3. In 2000 47 per cent of students achieved at least five GCSE passes at A*-C grades. This was close to the national average and indicated very good achievement in relationship to students' attainment at 14. The percentage of students gaining five or more passes at A*-G grades was also close to the national average as was the average points score. The percentage of students achieving at least 1 A*-G grade was below average. In 2001 standards were not as high with the percentage of 5 A*-C grades and average points score below the national average and below expectations based on their results at 14. The percentage of students achieving 5 A*-G grades was in line with 2000 results although the percentage of 1 A*-G grades was below average. Overall higher attaining students did not achieve as well as might have been expected although middle attainers achieved satisfactorily. In comparison with similar schools the school's attainment is below average except for the percentage of students achieving 5 A*- G grades. Over the last four years results have improved more than those nationally and in 2001 the school was awarded an Achievement Award from the DfES for its improvement in performance in the 2000 GCSE examinations.
4. Over the last two years subject results at GCSE have been strongest in art and design and religious studies. They have been relatively weaker in English, science and physical education. In 2001 results were better than average in home economics and computer studies. Results in English in 2001 were below the national average for grades A*-C but were above average for grades A*-G. Girls did much better than boys compared to the national difference. In science A*-C grades are below average but the number attaining 5 A*-G grades is closer to the national average. Results in mathematics were around the national average and stronger than in English and science for A*-C grades. All students who were entered achieved an A*-G grade. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. For the last

few years girls' attainment has been significantly stronger than boys at GCSE. In 2001 the school did not meet its target for 5 A*-C grades although the average points score and percentage of A*-G grades were nearly achieved. Targets for 2002 are very challenging but are based on prior attainment and are capable of being achieved.

5. In work seen during the inspection attainment towards the end of Year 9 is well above average in art and above average in mathematics and information and communication technology. It is below average in geography. In all other subjects it is around the national average. Towards the end of Year 11 attainment continues to be well above average in art and design and above average in religious studies and information communication technology. It is below average in music and geography and around the national average in other subjects. Girls do better than boys in Years 10 and 11 in modern foreign languages, information and communications technology and English but boys do better than girls in English in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in science and physical education in Years 10 and 11.
6. In English towards the end of Year 9 high attaining students can listen attentively and respond articulately to questions. Middle and low attaining students respond well to questions although their contributions are limited in scope. Students' reading skills are around average. Middle and low attainers can read and extract information from *Macbeth* and high attainers can read and appreciate the comic and romantic elements of *Twelfth Night*. High attaining students can take notes independently and produce extended and well planned writing. Middle and low attainers can produce good written work although their vocabulary is limited and there are weaknesses in spelling and punctuation. In Years 10 and 11 high attaining students respond well to the poetry of Wordsworth and Blake, Middle attainers can produce extended writing with support and low attainers can write simply and legibly. Achievement in English is good throughout the school. In mathematics Year 9 high attaining students can use data handling and graphs well and middle and low attainers use number and calculators effectively. By the end of Year 11 high attainers produce very good work in algebra and shape and low attainers can use fractions and percentages. Some middle attaining students are not achieving their potential. The achievement of students is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In science students have a sound knowledge of the subject at the end of Year 9 and have developed good practical skills. By the end of Year 11 their work shows a good understanding of a range of difficult topics. Students make satisfactory progress throughout the school.
7. In art and design standards are above the national average in Years 7 to 9 and well above in Years 10 and 11. Good progress is made in Years 7 to 9 in students' use of a variety of skills and in Years 10 and 11 progress is very good in developing artistic knowledge and practical work. Standards in design technology are average across the school. Students make good progress and by the end of Year 11 have a good understanding of the design process and their practical work is good. In geography standards are below average throughout the school and students are underachieving. Standards in history are average across the school with students making good progress in Years 7 to 9 especially with regard to developing problem solving skills. In French and German standards are around the national average in the lower school and progress is satisfactory as it is in Years 10 and 11 for students following accredited courses. There is insufficient teaching time for them to make progress in the modular French course. Standards in music are average and progress is satisfactory in the lower school but is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 where there are weaknesses in students' appraisal of music. Boys and girls make good progress in physical education in Years 7 to 9 and boys in Years 10 and 11. A minority of girls

in Years 10 and 11 do not make satisfactory progress. Standards are average across the school. In religious education standards are above average and students make very good progress. They acquire good knowledge of world faiths including Christianity and in the upper school can relate religious belief to current social and ethical issues. Attainment in information and communication technology is above average and progress is good across the school. Students develop good skills in using spreadsheets and in the upper school can use effectively a range of software to assist in projects involving survey work.

8. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress in lessons. In 2001 five students, four with statements of special educational need, attained at least five GCSE's. Lower attaining students, including students with special educational needs are able to develop important skills through the Youth Award programme in years 10 and 11. Students in Year 10 confidently conducted a survey on local leisure facilities by means of a questionnaire they had devised. The progress of gifted and talented students is generally good although the school has no policy as yet to identify and strengthen provision for them and there are weaknesses in music and geography. There is a need to raise the aspirations of these students.
9. On entry to the school literacy and numeracy standards are below average. By the end of Year 9 speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. Reading is less well developed at both key stages and although writing skills are satisfactory there are weaknesses in spelling and punctuation in Years 10 and 11. Numeracy skills are satisfactory in mathematics but less well developed across the curriculum. Standards in information communication technology are above average in information communication technology lessons and progress is good. It is less well developed across the curriculum.
10. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in standards throughout the school although attainment on entry is now weaker. Attainment was strong in the GCSE results for 2000 and the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001. In most subjects standards have been maintained or have improved. There have been improvements in mathematics and science but there are still weaknesses in music and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. Geography is now an area of weakness in all year groups.

Sixth form

11. Results in the sixth form have been well below average over the last three years. There has been an improvement over this period but the numbers entered for examinations are so small that comparisons with national figures need to be treated carefully. School evidence of the prior attainment of students at GCSE indicates that their progress has been below expectations.
12. The present cohort of students is achieving higher standards in the subjects inspected during the inspection week. In English literature seventeen students obtained a grade at AS level in 2001, almost all gained at least a C grade and over a half gained B or A grades. This represents good achievement. Students are able to respond to set texts using appropriate specialist vocabulary and can support their evaluations with reference to literary criticism. In Year 12 they show a good knowledge of Shakespearean texts and can discuss their ideas fluently. By Year 13 their commentaries on 'Measure for Measure' are perceptive and show good understanding although some students find this text difficult to understand and interpret. In mathematics, up to and including the 2000 examinations, students have

not done well. There has been improvement in the 2001 results with students starting to achieve in line with their prior attainment. The attainment of the present group of students is average and they are making good progress. In Year 12 students have made good progress in using and understanding differentiation and integration. By Year 13 work in algebra and trigonometry is satisfactory and students can use graphs appropriately. Some lower attaining students find it difficult to apply their knowledge to solve problems. Biology results in the 2001 AS examination were below average although one student gained a C grade and the others D grades. Attainment in the current Year 13 is above average and has improved during the year. Students demonstrate good knowledge of biological processes and demonstrate good ICT skills. The quality of assignment work is very good and they do well in practical work. Standards in art vary from year to year and the numbers entered are very small. Achievement is good in relationship to students' prior attainment. Students talk fluently about their work and some demonstrate exceptional flair in, for example, large scale conceptual work. No students from Norton Canes are taking geography in Year 13 and 2000 was the last year students were entered for A level. In Year 12 standards are average and students are making satisfactory progress. They can analyse and interpret a range of materials and use a variety of geographical techniques to carry out investigations. Some students' work is poorly presented and is incomplete.

13. In most other subjects the standards in lessons seen by inspectors were average and students' achievement given their starting point is satisfactory. A small number of students, all boys, take A level computing and results have improved since last the inspection. Last year the number taking business studies was also small but students did well achieving an above average points score. In the first year of the AS course attainment in the physics lesson seen was above average. In 2001 all students were graded in the physical education, psychology, and media studies AS and A level examinations. Three students attained the higher grades in psychology at A level and four students gained grade A in AS media studies.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

14. A strength of the school is the very good attitudes students display towards their work. Students behave well, and relationships and personal development are good. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection.
15. In most lessons students are attentive and well behaved. They are co-operative with each other and with teachers, concentrate well, show interest and are keen to do their best. Students are particularly highly motivated and enthused by art and religious education lessons but in many other lessons they also display very positive attitudes. For example in a design and technology lesson Year 11 students were totally focused on the product packaging and board games they are producing for their GCSE coursework and were able to explain very politely and clearly the processes they were using. In a French lesson about weather expressions Year 7 students responded very well to the teacher's active approach and sense of humour and to the variety of challenging activities including a guessing game conducted in French. However in some lessons a few students, mainly boys, behave in an immature and inconsiderate manner calling out and disrupting lessons in other ways. This behaviour slows progress for all.
16. Students with special needs are generally positive about their work. They are keen to do well and succeed. Students who are withdrawn for one-to one support are very positive. Some older students go to the special needs base voluntarily for additional

support. Students on the Youth Award programme worked well. Some found approaching the public difficult but were developing confidence as a result of the exercise.

17. There is good support from boys for extra-curricular sports activities. Many students mentioned how they enjoy school trips and the youth club but said they wished there was more extra-curricular activities they could do at lunch-time and after school. The limited provision and poor take-up of extra-curricular sports activities for girls contributes to the lack of motivation which some older girls display in their sports lessons.
18. Behaviour is generally good. Movement around the school is calm and orderly. There is little sign of bullying, racism or other anti-social behaviour and students are confident that any occurrences would be dealt with effectively. Students take good care of school property and there is very little graffiti or litter. There were two permanent exclusions last year and the level of fixed term exclusions was higher than average for a school of this size. Most of these exclusions were for a period of three days and were given for behaviour that the school does not tolerate such as verbal abuse to staff.
19. Good relationships amongst all members of the community are one of the school's strengths. Students show respect for each other's views, and in religious education classes they display a reflective and tolerant attitude to different religious beliefs. Students are supportive of each other. For example in a ceramics lesson a Year 9 student told a student who had become discouraged "you're not hopeless - you're really good with clay". Relationships between students and those in wheelchairs are natural and easy. Students are keen to be helpful and show that they can be trusted. They arrange furniture in the foyer, help with open days, take it in turns to be reception monitor and help out in the design and technology workrooms. They show good responsibility in the running of the toddler group. However there are too few opportunities for them to take on real responsibilities. There is no school council and students have little sense of ownership of the school. The school recognises this and one target within the school improvement plan is to increase opportunities for taking responsibility. Some steps have already been taken. In response to students' requests the school has obtained funding to set up a peer mentoring scheme and twenty four students from Years 10 and 11 have begun a counselling course.
20. Attendance is satisfactory overall. Although the attendance rate in the last school year was below the national average the school's strategies to improve attendance appear to be working and attendance in the autumn term preceding the inspection was slightly above 90 per cent. At present the worst attendance is in Years 9 to 11 where attendance is under 90 per cent. A proportion of this absence is due to holidays or to medical reasons but a significant amount is due to the very low attendance of a small number of students, some of whom are truants and others are being educated elsewhere. Punctuality to lessons is good and punctuality to school in the morning is satisfactory.

Sixth form

21. Students are generally positive about the sixth form and most are mature and independent workers. Relationships with teachers and between students are very good. Students relate in a mature and good-humoured way that encourages the exchange of ideas. Relationships between students from different schools in the consortium and with teachers from both schools are good, although a minority of

students reported that they had experienced some problems. Students are very focused in lessons and want to do their best. They enjoy lessons and work hard. They feel confident in attempting challenging work and are not deterred when they make mistakes. They support each other and share ideas, talking and listening sensibly. In English literature, for example, students enjoy open discussion and opportunities to participate actively in lessons. This helps them to acquire independent study skills.

22. Most students are polite and willing to discuss their concerns. They feel that they are well taught and speak highly of the support, advice and encouragement they receive from their subject teachers. They value the enhanced opportunities created by the consortium and do not feel that the travelling involved is a problem. They cope well with the more complex personal organisation required as a result of the cross-school teaching arrangements. Significant numbers of students, however, expressed the view through the questionnaire and in discussion with inspectors, that they are not treated as young adults and do not feel that the school listens and responds to their views – students felt demotivated as a result. They feel there is little sense of community in the sixth form at present. Students' attendance at lessons during the inspection was satisfactory.
23. A number of students serve the school through the sixth form council, which initiates social events. There are, however, very few opportunities beyond students' examination work which contribute to their personal development. In response to the questionnaire over seventy per cent of students feel the school does not offer a good range of worthwhile activities. A significant number of students have part-time jobs in the evenings and at weekends.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. Over two thirds is good or better and there is some good teaching in all subjects. Since the last inspection there has been considerable improvement, especially in Years 7 to 9. The amount of unsatisfactory and poor teaching has been reduced but there are weaknesses in some personal social and health education and languages lessons, and teaching in geography is unsatisfactory in the lower school. Although senior staff now monitor teaching not all subject leaders see this as an essential part of their roles. Learning is good across the school, and a particular strength is the efforts made by students to learn as much as they can in lessons.
25. Teaching is very good in art and religious education throughout the school. It is good in all year groups in English, design technology, information communication technology, physical education and in history and mathematics in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is satisfactory in other subject areas except for geography in the lower school.
26. Literacy skills are taught well in English, and the national strategy, including the use of progress units, is being implemented by the department. Speaking and listening activities are used in most subjects and there are opportunities for reading aloud in history, modern foreign languages and especially in religious education but there are fewer opportunities in other areas of the curriculum. Writing is well supported in a number of subject areas. Numeracy skills are taught effectively in mathematics but are not well used across the curriculum.

27. In English teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, regular homework is set and classroom discipline is secure. Students learn well; they enjoy their lessons and work hard. They are made aware of the progress they are making. Mathematics teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 with thorough lesson planning a particular strength with work being set which is appropriate for the needs of all students. Teaching is satisfactory in the upper school. In a small number of lessons the amount of work set was insufficient, classroom management was weak and the pace of learning was slow. In science teaching is satisfactory with strengths in teachers' subject expertise and knowledge and the quality of lesson planning. Learning is satisfactory and could be improved if more homework was set to consolidate work done in lessons.
28. Teaching in art and design is very good with particular strengths being the wide range of strategies used by staff and the detailed feedback to students. Students work very hard to produce the best work they can. Teaching in design technology is good and lessons are enjoyed by students. Teachers give very good individual support to students who work hard individually to improve their skills. Students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills but they should be set more work to do at home. In geography teaching is satisfactory in the upper school but is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, where teachers' subject knowledge is insecure, work does not meet the needs of individual students and it is not marked effectively. Learning is weak and students do not develop appropriate knowledge and skills. History teaching is always satisfactory and usually good especially in Years 10 and 11. Classroom management is good and students develop good thinking and analytical skills. Students are not given enough opportunities for independent work. Information communication technology teaching is good and sometimes very good. It is well organised and planned with a brisk pace and students improve their knowledge and skills at a good rate. In French and German some teaching is good and students learn well. There is some unsatisfactory teaching when there are few opportunities for students to work co-operatively and learn from each other. Music teaching is satisfactory with strengths in singing and practical work. Lesson planning is weak and students are not given opportunities to learn independently and develop individual skills. Physical education teaching is good and most students, except for a minority of girls, learn well. Learning in religious education is very good and gifted and talented students develop very good thinking skills. Teaching is well organised, and students enjoy their lessons and develop very good study skills.
29. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress. Students are often in low attaining sets where approaches to students' needs are carefully structured and adapted. In mathematics in Year 7, for example, materials were at the right level for students and the teacher worked with individual students who needed additional help. In science, there is some very well structured teaching of concepts in Year 7. In English students read more easily accessible texts and use writing frames to support their written work. Practice is particularly strong in religious education where special need students achieve very well. In physical education students are generally well integrated and make progress at the same rate as other students. However, although teachers are aware of students' individual needs the information does not always lead to consistent targeting of these needs.
30. At the time of the last inspection there were large classes of lower attaining students. Although the school has improved arrangements since last time, the progress in one low attaining Year 7 class where there was a large proportion of special needs students was unsatisfactory. The school has increased the number of teaching assistants since the last inspection. In the main they support individual or groups of special needs students in the classroom. The quality of support they provide is

generally good but in some lessons there is limited opportunity for teaching assistants to make a good contribution. There is not enough forward planning of in-class support by teachers and assistants.

Sixth form

31. Overall the quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In biology and art and design it is very good. In eighty per cent of lessons teaching was good or better. Teachers generally have very high expectations of students. Very challenging and stimulating work is set in art to which students respond enthusiastically - teachers draw well on cultural diversity to stimulate creative ideas. Lessons are thoroughly planned and teachers use very effective teaching methods. Students work in pairs and in groups and in English there is good emphasis on active learning which enables students to acquire independent study skills. In art project briefs are well designed and include clear aims and objectives, as well as well-defined assessment criteria and deadlines for progress. Knowledge of the subject is good and in biology is appropriately modified to ensure that students have access to new knowledge at the right level of challenge. Good use is made of questioning in mathematics where it is pitched at an appropriate level for each student and understanding is always tested so that students have to justify their thinking. Relationships amongst students from different schools in the consortium and with teachers from both schools are good.
32. Marking is generally good and students have very good understanding of how well they are doing and what needs to be done to improve. Teachers' marking and students' assignments in biology show very thorough assessment of progress, which helps students set realistic and challenging targets. There is very good practice in art. Students' work is thoroughly monitored. Assignments and assessments are discussed and students receive regular support and feedback on their progress. All students speak highly of the support provided by teachers. In mathematics, however, there is not enough target setting. The quality of teaching in geography is affected by resources that provide insufficient challenge for students. The marking and grading of work in geography are sometimes too generous and some Year 12 students are uncertain about the standards of work required to achieve well.

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

33. In Years 7 to 9 the school provides a satisfactory curriculum which meets statutory requirements. It includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and personal social and health education. There are weaknesses in the provision for performing arts with few opportunities for drama and no provision for dance. Since the last inspection separate provision for information communication technology has improved and now meets requirements. There has been some improvement in the use of information communication technology across the curriculum but the limited number of computers restricts further developments.
34. In Years 7 to 9 the arrangements for allocating students to groups on the basis of prior attainment have remained unaltered since the last inspection but the school now ensures that lower attaining groups have smaller numbers and in addition there are extra groups for English and mathematics. This has had an impact on improving behaviour and the quality of students' learning.
35. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements because provision for teaching modern languages is inadequate. The provision of a seven week French module for those students not following a GCSE or Certificate of Achievement course is insufficient. In Years 10 and 11 all students take English, science, mathematics, design technology, religious education and personal social and health education. In addition students choose three options from a good range of courses including business studies, child development and Youth Award. There is no provision for drama or dance.
36. The quality of provision in child development in Years 10 and 11 is excellent. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were above the national average for the higher grades, and all students who entered the examination achieved a grade A* to G. Students' results in child development are better than in the majority of other subjects they study. The quality of teaching is excellent, resulting in very good learning. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is infectious, and students are well motivated. Students are set a demanding pace of learning, and they make very good progress. The school's unique toddler group is a valuable teaching and learning resource, giving students the opportunity to carry out investigations and evaluate their work in a real life setting. The students organise and run the toddler group themselves, under the supervision of the teacher and a support assistant. There is a focus on practical involvement with the children and their carers, and an emphasis on safe practice. Students respond well to the high expectations of the teacher and their behaviour and attitudes are very good. They show interest and excitement in what they are learning.
37. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Subject departments are entering more lower attaining and special needs students for GCSE than in the past. In English students are entered for alternative accreditation as well as for GCSE to ensure that they attain a qualification at the end of Year 11. The Youth Award programme offers low attaining and special educational needs students opportunities for additional qualification. Provision for gifted and talented students needs to be developed. These students are not identified and there is no co-ordinator or planned programme of enrichment activities.
38. The provision made for lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11 through a national youth award scheme is good. The scheme arose out of a concern over the lack of take-up for physical activity, especially among girls and a lack of focus on fitness and

healthy lifestyles. Students now take up challenges which have a sporting emphasis, or which are connected with sports and leisure facilities. As a result of this provision, students are developing the skills to explore themselves and their abilities, they are becoming mature, confident and respectful, and they are learning from each other. A good example of this was a group of Year 10 students who conducted a survey of the public in Norton Canes village, asking about local leisure facilities. In atrocious weather the students approached members of the public and completed a survey form which they had devised themselves. They were courteous and respectful and handled the occasional rebuff politely. They persevered with the task in uncomfortable conditions, and in the discussion which followed they listened to each other's point of view and made sensible suggestions as to how the sample could be made more representative.

39. The school has a policy on equal opportunities which gives clear guidance for the implementation of policies on race, gender and disability. The headteacher is responsible for its implementation and the governing body monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. Opportunities for students with physical disabilities are excellent. They have full access to the curriculum and take an active part in all lessons. Following the last inspection, students with learning difficulties are now receiving good support and all have access to the sixth form. The school is hoping to establish an inclusion unit which will help to ensure that students with behavioural problems are given support. At the moment the number of temporary exclusions is quite high. Racist language is dealt with firmly by the school and all incidents are clearly recorded. There are three students on the school roll whose first language is not English. All speak Panjabi at home. They were all, however, born and brought up in England and have received their education in the English system. They all have well-developed English skills, so no specialist additional provision has had to be made for them.
40. Students enter the school with standards of literacy which are below national expectations and the need to develop those standards to meet the literacy demands of the whole curriculum is acknowledged. Whole-school approaches to literacy development are regarded as a priority with the use of key word lists in classrooms, dictionaries in every room and opportunities for reading in form tutor time. There has been a day's whole staff INSET on reading development. There is, however, no whole-school literacy policy yet in place, nor has a member of staff been appointed to co-ordinate developments across the curriculum. There is awareness of the National Literacy Strategy in the schemes of work in information and communication technology, mathematics, science, art and particularly religious education. In general, however, the implementation of a range of strategies in lessons is still at an early stage and needs the agreement of a whole school policy and the identification of a co-ordinator to move it forward. Numeracy skills are taught effectively in mathematics but there is limited use across the curriculum. This is another area which the school needs to address.
41. The school places a high priority on students' personal, social and health education and provision is satisfactory overall. There is appropriate coverage of drugs misuse, citizenship and other topics preparing students for adulthood. The school nurse provides valued guidance in sex education lessons. Although heads of year oversee the delivery of the programme very efficiently there is no strategic overview of the place of personal social and health education in the curriculum. The two-one hour periods allotted to guidance are more than most schools provide. The programme is delivered by form tutors who have not received specialist training. In most lessons the quality of teaching seen was satisfactory or better but in some lessons the quality of the learning experience provided for students was unsatisfactory. For example

activities such as making posters and silent reading are not a good use of time. The ten minute registration periods at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions are longer than is necessary for conducting form business but do not provide sufficient time for meaningful guidance. They do not provide students with a good start to the day or the afternoon.

42. There is good provision for careers education. In Year 9 students follow a course in decision making to prepare them for post 14 options. In Years 10 and 11 students are prepared well for the world of work through the personal social and health education programme. In one very good lesson students learned about life at work through a practical exercise of working in teams to assemble wooden toys. Students benefit from a well-structured programme on career action planning and post 16 options. There is good support from the careers service and all Year 11 students have careers interviews. There is a well-stocked careers room but the only access is through a classroom. This is unsatisfactory because it makes access to it difficult for sixth form students. The planned move to the multi-media room will give careers education a more central position within the life of the school and enable students to use the careers software which the school possesses.
43. Links with the community are good. Students raise money to support charities and organise and fund activities for senior citizens. The school responds to requests for help from the Parish Council and organises a youth club in the school. Night school classes are organised by the school and its drama and sports facilities are used by a number of local groups. These opportunities for students to show initiative and responsibility need to be developed further.
44. The school's links with contributory primary schools are good. They are managed by the head of Year 7, who remains in that position each year and is thus able to develop and maintain good personal contacts with the primary schools' staff. There are good arrangements for exchange of information and a well-organised programme of visits, interviews with prospective students and induction days to smooth the process of transfer. Staffing difficulties have made curricular links difficult but Year 6 students come to the school to undertake a project in science and staff teaching physical education, science and modern foreign languages visit feeder schools to run after school study clubs. Booster classes in mathematics have been given to Year 6 students and the English department organises pen-pal letter writing between Years 6 and 7.
45. Overall the school's provision for extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory. Although a small range of lunchtime activities are available the take-up is variable. Students stay behind after school for a variety of activities that are curriculum-based, for example in, art and design and design and technology. A range of out-of -hours activities are available in physical education including cricket and badminton as well as football. Fieldwork trips occur in geography and trips to galleries are arranged for students taking GNVQ and A level art and design. In English students have in the past visited the theatre and a yearly trip is arranged by language staff. Many opportunities, however, are missed for students to engage in activities outside normal curriculum time, for example in the expressive and performing arts and in school productions. There are not enough activities to enhance curriculum provision and increase the range of opportunities that are offered to the students.
46. Opportunities for spiritual development within the curriculum are limited but satisfactory. The most notable weakness is the limited opportunities for celebrating an act of collective worship. Only one such act was seen during the week. Form

periods of ten minutes at the start of the day and in the afternoon are used simply for administration and do not provide a good start for the teaching sessions. Opportunities for spiritual development in religious education are very good as students consider sensitively and perceptively links between the Old and New Testaments and issues relating to world development. In English the study of poetry develops a sense of wonder. In science students learn to appreciate beauty for example, in looking at the microscopic structure of the leaves of a water plant. They learn to appreciate the complexity of atomic structure and the infinite nature of the universe. In other subjects such as ICT, provision is addressed in development plans but not implemented. The art work displayed in corridors and public spaces lifts the spirits at every turn. In the sixth form, history students study religious conflict in the sixteenth century and the different ideas of Catholics and Puritans.

47. Provision for moral development is good. In history students discuss well issues relating to the persecution of the Jews following the viewing of a video on Auschwitz. They try to understand what is responsible individual and social behaviour and recognise, for example, that confession taken under torture is not reliable, as in the story of Guy Fawkes. In many subjects clear messages about right and wrong are conveyed as in modern foreign languages. In English texts which pose moral problems are studied such as *Macbeth* and *Of Mice and Men*. In some subjects group and co-operative work are used. In science students are encouraged to discuss and reflect upon the moral consequences of scientific advance. They are made aware of issues such as the use and limits of fossil fuels and the enormous moral and ethical questions raised by the human genome project. Students in physical education discuss the ethics of drug taking, playing to the rules, honesty and fair play.
48. Generally students behave with consideration to each other and obey classroom conventions. In several subjects they work well in a variety of groupings, with a partner, in a small group or as part of a team. In physical education and in circle time in modern foreign languages they demonstrate good teamwork to reach a objective. In religious education they are taught to work hard to reach a consensus in decision-making. Students have learned to be generous and share well in design and technology. Overall, however, there are insufficient opportunities to develop personal leadership, initiative and responsibility, and provision for social development is unsatisfactory.
49. Cultural development has improved since the last inspection. Opportunities for aesthetic development are very good in art, satisfactory in music and good in English literature. In history students have good opportunities to consider recent and ancient civilisations including the Islamic world in the middle ages, Native American culture and Irish society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Students study music from across the world, for example gamelan bands. In design and technology some opportunities are lost. Documentation shows there are possibilities to talk about foreign foods and costumes but there is little about the cultural heritage of students, for example Chippendale furniture or modern design. Students do consider other cultures in textiles, for example quilting in North America. Some visits take place to theatres, local faith communities and Christian churches to develop students' cultural experiences. Religious education makes a strong contribution to students' cultural understanding, for example, students look at the making of stained glass, examine the importance of sacred vessels, and examine banners and quilting in church. In art there are very good cross-cultural references to African art.

50. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in the size of low attaining groups. Provision for religious education and information and communication technology courses in Years 10 and 11 is now good. The amount of support for students with special educational needs and low attainers has improved and cultural provision is now satisfactory. There are weaknesses in the amount of provision for modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 and the range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory. Students are not given enough opportunities to exercise responsibility. Too much time is allocated to personal social and health education and guidance.

Sixth form

51. The school's partnership arrangements create a good range of opportunities for students at all levels of attainment, broader than the school could provide on its own. The school offers satisfactory opportunities for students at all levels of attainment. Most follow AS and A2 level courses. The school aims to respond to students' needs but at present many students do not yet perceive the GNVQ as an attractive route to higher education or vocational opportunities. Very small numbers of students take vocational courses, for example there are currently two taking the AVCE in health and social care. In addition to the traditional range of academic subjects students may take business studies, theatre studies, media studies, sociology, psychology, computing and general studies. Statutory requirements for teaching religious education are now met through the general studies course. Courses are taught at the school, at one of the partner institutions or partly in both. The school's timetable corresponds directly to those of the other schools so as to enable students to pursue courses on all three sites. The consortium enables the range of courses available to students in this small school to be significantly extended. In order to reduce travelling and simplify timetabling subjects are taught in two and three hour sessions. These very long sessions present difficulties for the teaching of some subjects. Overall the quality and range of opportunities offered by the school is good.
52. Most students opt for three AS courses in Year 12. In addition to examination courses the school runs one morning and one afternoon session independently of the consortium. This time is used for assembly, a personal, social and health education course, the general studies programme, key skills and tutorial session. All students in Year 12 attend a weekly tutorial session week where careers guidance, UCAS applications and interview techniques are covered. The tutorial period in Year 13 is optional and only attended by students who do general studies. It is poorly planned and teaching in the one lesson seen was barely satisfactory. Opportunities for students to meet with and establish good relationships with their tutor are also severely constrained by shortage of time. There is too little time for students to have one-to-one interviews with their tutor. There is no daily meeting with the tutor and registration takes place in lessons. The key skills programme runs in Year 12 but there are difficulties in covering the programme fully and students in Year 13 no longer attend. There is a general studies programme in both years which all Year 12 students are expected to attend. The course relies on short term ad hoc planning and is fragmented as a consequence. Very few students continue with general studies into Year 13. Teaching was satisfactory in the lessons seen.
53. Most students, especially in Year 12, have too little free time. They are not required to stay in school and there is no private study area dedicated to sixth form students. Students represent the school at Rotary Club meetings and at the school annual prize giving ceremony and small numbers have opportunities for work experience but apart from these events there is little opportunity for them to be involved in the community.

There is some limited opportunity for extra-curricular activities such as visits to the theatre and field trips – these are mainly organised through subject departments to support and extend students' work on examination courses. Biology and English make a good contribution to students' personal development but generally there is too little opportunity for students to take responsibility or play a part in school life. There are visits to open days run by higher education institutions in the area. The school has hosted visiting students from Japan, central Europe and the USA but no students from the school have been involved in foreign exchanges. Students themselves organise some social events. Overall, however, enrichment opportunities are too limited. On one afternoon each week all students have access to the services of a careers advisor who provides information about the breadth of available opportunities apart from higher education. Students appreciate the quality of advice given but feel that there is too little access to the advisor.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

54. The school has maintained its good provision for students' welfare since the previous inspection and there has been good improvement in assessment procedures which were previously an issue. Parents are pleased with the good care their children receive.
55. The school pays very good attention to the physical care and well-being of students. There is an effective child protection policy which follows local authority guidance and the designated person is an experienced deputy head. Good support is provided by outside agencies and lines of communication and responsibility are clear. There are good health and safety procedures. Risk assessments of the premises are carried out on a regular basis and teachers carry out risk assessment of procedures as part of their lesson planning. Six support assistants have first aid qualifications and accidents are properly recorded. There are good arrangements for caring for students who are ill. The very good care which is given to disabled students both by staff and students enables them to lead a full and happy school life. Cleaning staff maintain a good state of cleanliness in the school. The kitchen staff prepare well cooked meals and lunchtime is a civilised part of the day.
56. The monitoring and assessment of special need students have been improved since the last inspection. The new special educational needs co-ordinator visits the primary schools to meet and discuss the needs of individual students before they enter the school. All students are screened in Year 7 and departments are informed of the results. Referral systems have been improved so that students giving concern are quickly identified. Education plans are readily accessible and staff are well informed. Students know what their targets are. The assessment of progress made by special needs students has been much improved since the last inspection. All students are monitored twice in the year and talk about their progress with the special educational needs co-ordinator at the start of each term. All requirements for the review of statemented students are fulfilled. Parents are invited to attend the annual review.
57. Additional support is provided by withdrawing students for short periods for intensive one-to-one teaching. This system operates flexibly in order to avoid students regularly missing teaching time in a particular area. Most support is targeted in Years 7 to 9 and particularly in Year 7. Some students in Years 9, 10 and 11 voluntarily visit the special need base to seek help.

58. New and effective strategies have been developed with the support of the educational psychologist to support students with behavioural problems. The system is especially effective with boys who like its point-scoring approach.
59. Students with physical disabilities are given excellent support. There is very good access for students in wheelchairs and some teaching assistants are trained to help students with particular physical difficulties. All students have equal access to the curriculum.
60. Staff know students well and students value the good care and support they receive. A team of hard working and committed heads of year and form tutors headed by a deputy head plays a central role in this good care. Students are confident that if they have problems there is always someone to turn to and many students also mentioned how they value the advice and help provided by the school nurse.
61. The school has effective procedures for promoting good behaviour. The school is determined to encourage good behaviour through encouragement and reward rather than through over-reliance on sanctions. Students value the firm boundaries imposed by the system and consider it to be fair. Anti-bullying education is well covered within personal social and health education lessons. Students say they are not worried about bullying and are confident that incidents of bullying are dealt with firmly. The incidence of bullying is monitored by the senior management.
62. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Office staff make first day contact when parents have not notified absence. Electronic recording enables the school to identify quickly students with a poor attendance record. Heads of year discuss attendance problems with the education welfare officer on a weekly basis and irregular attendance is followed up rigorously.
63. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in the school's assessment procedures; these are now good overall. The use of assessment data to guide planning is satisfactory. Assessment procedures are satisfactory or better in all departments except geography and music where they are unsatisfactory. Assessments are based on National Curriculum levels, are generally accurate and are consistently applied within departments. Students' progress is regularly reviewed. There is particularly good assessment practice in art, religious education, design and technology and English. In these subjects assessment is used well to determine whether more work needs to be done on particular topics or skills and high quality marking makes it clear to students what they need to do to improve their attainment.
64. The school makes sound use of assessment data to guide its planning. Examination results are analysed in detail and trends identified. The school has analysed the relative performance of all departments at GCSE and on the basis of this departments have drawn up effective reviews of their performance and targets and strategies for improvement.
65. The monitoring of students' academic progress is good in some aspects and satisfactory overall. The school uses Year 6 results and Year 7 tests to predict students' grades at GCSE and keeps a close track on the progress students make, measuring it against their potential. The school keeps parents well informed both when students achieve well and when they under perform. Academic tracking, monitoring and targeting are particularly well developed in Years 10 and 11. The head of Year 11 collates information on academic and personal development on a weekly basis and tracks Year 11 students' progress closely. Year 10 and 11 students record

their targets in record booklets and review them with their form tutors three times a year. About 15 students who are not achieving their full potential receive mentoring from members of the community including governors and business people. The scheme is very successful and the school would like to be able to extend it so that more students could benefit. The academic monitoring of Year 10 and 11 students is dependent for its success on departments supplying sufficient and timely information on students' academic progress so that speedy intervention can be made when students face problems or are underachieving; at present this is not happening in a consistent manner. In Years 7 to 9 matters such as homework, equipment, behaviour and rewards are monitored very effectively through the positive behaviour system and by form tutors checking homework diaries, but academic tracking is in the very early stages of development.

66. Students' personal development is well monitored through the positive behaviour system. Students are encouraged to behave well, work hard and to serve the community by the awarding of stickers which are collected for prizes and certificates. The system is popular with younger students. In tandem with the discipline system heads of year work extremely hard to give constructive help to students with behavioural difficulties. Strategies used effectively include pastoral support plans and the involvement of outside agencies such as the behaviour support service. The addition of a social inclusion unit will provide the school with another means of helping a small number of students to manage their behaviour better. Although the behaviour system works effectively and has contributed to the improvement of behaviour, it is a time consuming responsibility for pastoral staff. heads of year have very little non-teaching time and this is largely taken up dealing with the poor behaviour of a very small number of students. At present academic staff see discipline problems as the responsibility of pastoral staff. However, behaviour referrals are unevenly spread between subjects and the pressure on the pastoral system would be reduced if all departments took more responsibility for poor behaviour in those lessons where there is ineffective teaching.

Sixth form

Assessment

67. Procedures for assessing students' work are good. Work is regularly and accurately assessed and students are given good feedback on their progress and how to improve. There is no formal examination period but there is regular assessment within subjects. All subject teachers have information on students' prior attainment and their examination performance is predicted on this basis. The consortium is introducing a system which will ensure consistency in tracking students' performance in the three consortium schools. Parents receive reports that include the students' current level of performance and the grade predicted on the basis of prior attainment. Students say that they find the tracking of performance and target setting helpful and that teachers will discuss assessments with them.

Advice, support and guidance

68. Information and guidance about courses before joining the sixth form are generally good. Information about sixth form opportunities and taster workshops for students and their parents run in Year 11 and there is an opportunity to discuss subjects and career plans with teachers and the head of sixth form. The courses and subjects offered are appropriate to students' needs and students are informed about what is available in other schools and colleges in the area. At the start of Year 12 there is a brief induction for each subject, assessment is explained and there is a short period when students can change courses. Students from the three schools are involved in team building.
69. Although some aspects of the tutorial arrangements work well, overall they are not satisfactory. Too little time is available for students to establish good relationships with their tutors. Most students felt that the tutorial programme offered in Year 12 was helpful and prepared the way for university applications but that the quality of support declined in Year 13. Students were not clear about the content of the course and had no records of the ground covered in previous lessons. In a Year 13 tutor period only a third of students attended. In contrast, tutorial time in Year 12 was well organised and students were working to a planned programme. There is very little time for students to meet individually with their tutor – sometimes an opportunity for personal advice and guidance is found during key skills sessions. Students were critical of the support provided for applicants to higher education. The careers library is well stocked with up-to-date information but students felt they received too little advice and help with choosing courses, universities and the application procedures. The great majority of students feel that subject teachers are accessible and give help with any difficulties they encounter with their work.
70. Procedures for monitoring attendance are unsatisfactory. It is not possible at present to monitor attendance adequately or to know if students are on site. A register is taken in all lessons and figures on attendance collated at one of the schools. Teachers contact the head of sixth form by fax if they are concerned about a student's attendance but at present there is no adequate system for following up attendance problems. The school is not able to supply figures on a termly or annual basis for attendance in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. The school continues to have satisfactory links with parents as it did at the time of the last inspection, but parents' involvement in the work of the school is unsatisfactory. Only fifteen per cent of parents returned the questionnaires and nine parents came to the meeting held before the inspection. Based on this evidence parents are broadly satisfied with the school's work. They agree that the school expects their children to work hard, they are pleased with the progress they are making and they agree that the school is approachable. However a significant minority of parents are negative about some aspects of the school's work. About thirty per cent of parents consider the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons and a significant number think that there is a lack of clarity about homework expectations. Many parents do not think they are kept sufficiently well informed about their children's progress and do not think that the school works closely with parents.
72. The school provides parents with a sound range of information including a well-presented prospectus, a curriculum booklet, newsletters and a termly community magazine. Parents value highly the good communication which exists between them and the friendly staff and the way in which they are kept informed, both when there are concerns and when there is good news to report. Parents also like the new homework diaries and the way that they provide information about what their children are doing and can be used for communication. They welcome the new interim reports. However, they would like more information about the school's assessment system. For example they would like the school to provide them with information at the end of Year 9 about the significance of predicted GCSE grades. Annual school reports, which were criticised in the last inspection for not clearly stating levels of attainment, now have National Curriculum levels for all subjects. However, no explanation is provided for parents on what these levels mean. Reports are informative and are based on good teacher knowledge. They comment perceptively on students' attitudes and progress but do not consistently explain what a student needs to do to improve attainment in terms which are specific to the subject. The use of computer bank statements for English reports in Years 7 to 9 is rather impersonal.
73. The school is working to improve its partnership with parents and there are many positive links. Parents support the school's behaviour policy well. They enjoy coming to school productions, concerts and achievement evenings. They support the toddler group, events such as the Year 7 coffee morning, extra-curricular sports activities and ensure that their children bring correct ingredients for cookery lessons. However, too few parents are actively involved in supporting their children's education and this has a negative impact on the progress they make. For example, although most parents come to the Year 7 parents' evening they appear to lose interest as their children progress through school and only about half of parents come to the important parents' evening held in Year 11. Meetings which have been held on the curriculum are poorly attended. Although most parents support their children's education by ensuring their children attend regularly a small minority do not. Very few parents support the school by joining the parent teacher association or by showing interest in becoming a parent governor.
74. The school recognises how important it is to encourage more parents to take an active interest in their children's education and has various plans to improve its partnership. For example, it plans to hand out reports at the Year 11 parents' evening to encourage more parents to come to it. Good press coverage and events such as the achievement evenings are helping to raise the profile of the school in the community. The results of the parents' questionnaire indicate that there is a need for

the school to set up procedures for periodically seeking parents' views and the school plans to do this.

75. Parents of students in the sixth form receive an interim report in the first two terms as well as an end of year report. Subject reports are thorough and give parents good information about students' progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76. Leadership and management were judged as unsatisfactory at the previous inspection in 2000 and are now good. There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and standards of attainment. The school runs efficiently and effectively on a daily basis. Teaching and learning are now being monitored more effectively and members of the senior team are linked to departments and hold regular meetings with heads of department. Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of policies are in place and the school has started to monitor and evaluate the impact of its development planning. Considerable progress has been made in the use of assessment information to track students' attainments and progress. Strategies such as mentoring are starting to be used to improve standards. There is still a need for heads of department to spend more time in evaluating teaching and learning.
77. The new headteacher has developed quickly the work started by his predecessor and has defined a vision for the school which is ambitious yet realistic. His leadership skills are very good and the school improvement plan is forward-looking, responds to the needs of students and is fully costed with monitoring and evaluation processes described carefully. The senior team have clear roles relating to school improvement but have considerable teaching commitments which affects their ability to manage as effectively as they would like. There is a need to review their roles especially in relationship to the sixth form and pastoral care.
78. The management of pastoral care is good. Year heads and form tutors know their students well and implement welfare procedures efficiently. The leadership of the deputy headteacher is good and he provides excellent support for both students and staff. Heads of department manage their departments well although there are weaknesses in music and geography. Although some departments have started to evaluate teaching and learning this needs to be developed in all subjects so that effective teaching methods can be shared across the school.
79. The management of special needs has improved considerably since the last inspection. The school has appointed a part time special educational needs co-ordinator and a special needs teacher. If there is concern about students they are referred by heads of department to the special educational needs co-ordinator. Good quality support is provided by external agencies but they are much in demand and stretched. The special educational needs co-ordinator is responsible for monitoring expenditure on resources. The school's policy and some of its practice for special needs should be reviewed as soon as possible in the light of the new code of practice. The criteria for identifying students with special needs are unclear. Resources for special needs have been improved and are now good. Students who are withdrawn have access to three computers running good quality interactive software to support the development of reading and spelling. The teaching assistants base is very well equipped so that as well as small group work they are able to support students with physical disabilities. One student, for example is given daily physiotherapy. The level of support available to students with special needs at the time of the last inspection was very small. The school has responded well to the

criticism made in the last report. In addition to the special educational needs co-ordinator and full time tutor there are now six teaching assistants. They meet regularly to discuss and review students' progress and other issues which arise. Teaching assistants have been trained to provide support for reading, behaviour management, and some physical disabilities. Teaching assistants run catch-up sessions for students in Year 7.

80. The chair of governors provides thoughtful and perceptive leadership. She is now more involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance than at the last inspection. Governors are supportive of the school and have recognised that they need to develop plans for the future direction of the school and question the headteacher about the school's performance. They meet regularly and are now much better informed about issues in the school. They are not meeting statutory requirements with regard to a daily act of collective worship and the provision for modern languages in Years 10 and 11. Overall the governing body is now performing its duties satisfactorily.
81. The school has good financial controls. Minor issues from the last audit report have been addressed. The bursar has developed clear systems for placing orders and paying for goods and services. The local education authority negotiates best value contracts although the school tries hard to get the best value it can from local firms. The governors have started to monitor more carefully the progress of the budget. There is a clear school improvement plan which informs departmental planning and is costed. The headteacher with his senior team and bursar presents a draft budget to the governors based on school priorities. Although the governors rely on the head and bursar for advice they are starting to ask questions about the allocation of finance to different budget headings. In this last financial year the school managed to pay off its previous debt and is in a stronger position to deal with inadequacies in book resources and computers.
82. Provision for in-service training is good. It is starting to be linked to the performance management policy and school improvement plan. There is an appropriate emphasis on continuing to improve teaching and learning with a specific focus on literacy and the use of ICT. An audit of staff skills would identify strengths and gaps in teachers' knowledge and expertise. Induction for new staff and arrangements for support for newly qualified teachers is very good. The school is involved in initial teacher training and works closely with a local teacher training organisation.
83. There are sufficient teachers to implement the curriculum. Most are qualified and trained in the subjects that they teach although there are some classes taught by non-specialist teachers in English, geography, physical education and design technology. This has had a detrimental effect on learning in geography and has increased the pressure on senior staff and heads of department in supporting the non-specialist staff. The newly qualified teacher in English has an appropriately reduced time-table and has been well supported. Supply teachers and the recently appointed teachers in science, mathematics, and ICT have also had good support throughout.
84. The number of support teachers has been increased and their support is good particularly with those students having some physical disabilities. However, there is insufficient support for some large classes in geography, modern languages, and religious education where there are significant numbers of students with special educational needs. The science department is well supported by an efficient and effective full-time technician. However, the second technician has to provide support for art, ICT, and the whole of the design technology department which includes food,

textiles and work with resistant materials in the workshops. This one technician cannot effectively and efficiently provide all the support that is needed in every area. The quality of secretarial and management support is very good. They project a friendly and professional image for the school.

85. The reception area and the main corridor of the school are welcoming and create a very good, positive impression. Apart from in geography and music, the classrooms and facilities are generally suitable, adequate, well maintained and cleaned. Most of the rooms and corridors have attractive displays of students work and subject information. The work of the caretaker and the cleaners was of a very high quality. There is a difficulty in the refurbished science laboratories where there is an acoustic problem and the playing fields are often water logged in winter. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the accommodation with the arrival of two new mobiles and the refurbishment of two laboratories.
86. There are sufficient textbooks in some subject areas but there is a shortage in English for the new curriculum in Years 7 to 9, modern foreign languages, design technology and especially in geography. The provision of equipment is adequate but in history, geography and art there are shortfalls. The number of computers is insufficient with 2 or 3 students having to share a computer in ICT lessons. The school is hoping that this situation will be resolved in the near future with the leasing of a new computer system which should allow other subject areas to use the facilities when necessary.
87. The library, sometimes referred to as a multi-media resource area, has a large range of fiction books, some of which are modern and others are old and dated. The non-fiction stock is limited especially in modern languages, music and design technology. The centre is used as a classroom and is rarely available in lesson times for other students to use. At lunch-time and after school the students are able to use the computers and the library sections of the multi-media centre.
88. There has been some improvement in the provision of resources since the last inspection but there is insufficient new and modern equipment to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

89. The leadership of the sixth form by the school's senior management is effective. As a result of the consortium arrangements the school is able to offer a considerably extended range of courses providing good access and opportunity for students. A very high proportion of students recognise and appreciate the good range of courses available to them. Relationships amongst the three schools in the consortium are very good and there have been some important developments designed to improve the consistency of students' experience, for example in the monitoring of progress, reporting to parents and assessment practice. There is a willingness to review the practicability of arrangements to ensure that generally things work well. Students appreciate some of the problems inherent in the consortium. They feel, for instance that travelling arrangements work well but that they are often not informed when lessons are cancelled and therefore make pointless journeys. A joint prospectus is published and systems for recruiting and inducting students are common. There are regular strategic planning meetings, as well as meetings between the heads of sixth form to deal with organisational and day-to-day matters. Subject departments now

have regular, scheduled meetings to address curriculum matters. Subject teachers monitor attendance in lessons across the consortium but this system is not yet operating well. The quality of teaching in the three schools is not yet monitored to ensure that it is of consistently high quality. Students' attainment, recruitment to and retention on courses are monitored and good use is made of assessment data to provide predictions of A level results and to calculate value added. Governors take an active interest in the sixth form. Day-to-day management of the sixth form is satisfactory.

Resources

90. The sixth form is cost effective and financial planning is good. Arrangements within the consortium to staff the shared curriculum are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Accommodation for the sixth form is only satisfactory - there is a social area but no facilities for quiet study. Access to computers is limited, there are too few resources for the teaching of geography but students benefit from the sharing of resources in the consortium.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- (1) Improve teaching in geography in Years 7 to 9 and in some modern languages and PHSE lessons across the school by:
 - i. providing extra support to these staff including in-service training and observation of good teaching.
 - ii. Increasing monitoring and evaluation of teaching in these subjects.
(Paragraphs: 24, 28, 41, 143, 144, 145, 169)
 - (2) Improve the management of the geography and music departments by:
 - i. linking them to other departments to provide support on classroom management.
 - ii. ensuring there is support for the acting head of geography and head of music from senior staff and advisers in curriculum development and lesson planning.
(Paragraphs: 78, 173, 184)
 - (3) Extend provision for modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 and for performing arts and information and communication technology across the school by:
 - i. developing a higher profile for languages and creating enough time for the subject in Years 10 and 11.
 - ii. providing opportunities for students to study dance and drama throughout the school.
 - iii. continuing to develop staff skills in using information and communication technology.
(Paragraphs: 33, 35, 161, 162, 172, 186)
 - (4) Provide more opportunities for students to exercise responsibility in the school and time for independent and group learning in lessons by:
 - i. developing further schemes such as peer mentoring and involving students more in decision making.
 - ii. providing more opportunities in lessons for students to learn from and with each other and to develop their independent learning skills.
(Paragraphs: 19, 28, 48, 139, 150, 169, 178)
 - (5) Strengthen provision for literacy and numeracy in Years 7 to 9 by:
 - i. appointing a co-ordinator for numeracy, conducting an audit, and developing a policy for implementation
 - ii. providing more opportunities for reading and extended writing across the curriculum
(Paragraphs: 9, 26, 40, 97, 110, 115, 125, 143, 189)
 - (6) Increase the number of computers for use in all subject areas and Improve learning resources in English, modern foreign languages, design technology and, especially, in geography.
(Paragraphs: 86, 100, 136, 145, 160, 179)

- (7) Extend the range of extra-curricular activities to include the performing arts and more provision for girls
(Paragraphs: 17, 45, 100, 185, 191)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the quality of care and guidance of students by:
 - i. increasing the amount of tutorial time
 - ii. improving the quality of the tutorial programme.(Paragraphs: 52,69)
- (2) Improve the quality and level of advice and support about careers and help with applications to higher education.
(Paragraphs: 53, 69)
- (3) Improve provision for students' personal development through a range of enrichment activities.
(Paragraphs: 23, 53)
- (4) Develop the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the consortium so as to ensure consistently high quality.
(Paragraph: 89)
- (5) Improve procedures for monitoring attendance in the consortium schools.
(Paragraph: 70)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	124
	Sixth form	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	6	25	51	34	6	2	0
Percentage	5	20	41	27	5	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	7	14	4	0	0	0
Percentage	4	27	54	15	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.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	556	68
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	57	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	27	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	85	2

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	3

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	67	50	117

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	49	47
	Girls	39	35	33
	Total	86	84	80
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (63)	72 (61)	68 (42)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (16)	38 (28)	29 (17)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	48	45
	Girls	37	33	34
	Total	81	81	79
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (70)	70 (65)	68 (54)
	National	65 (64)	68 (64)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (39)	27 (24)	29 (23)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	51	53	104

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	11	46	46
	Girls	26	49	49
	Total	37	95	95
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	36 (47)	91 (91)	91 (95)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	34.0
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	11	10	21

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	104	12.9	11.6	0	0	0
National	17.8	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	N/A
	National	7.32

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	0	0
	National		80

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	616
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	48	19
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	37.47
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	291.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	NA
Key Stage 3	22.7
Key Stage 4	20.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	623
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	£
Total income	1,666,663
Total expenditure	1,652,691
Expenditure per student	2,653
Balance brought forward from previous year	N/A
Balance carried forward to next year	13,972

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.28
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Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.95
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	524
Number of questionnaires returned	77

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	23	56	17	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	57	6	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	61	12	4	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	44	21	8	3
The teaching is good.	25	58	14	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	44	14	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	40	8	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	39	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	44	21	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	27	51	9	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	51	14	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	39	22	10	10

Other issues raised by parents

Only a small number of parents returned the questionnaire and nine attended the parents' meeting. Parents are satisfied overall with the education provided by the school. Concerns were expressed about the range of activities outside lessons, the lack of clarity about homework and the amount of information provided about their children's progress. The inspection team agrees that the range of extra-curricular activities is too narrow and the school should try to involve parents more in their children's education. The school does report to parents twice a year and organises parents' evenings although these are not well attended by parents. Homework is satisfactory although not enough is set in some subjects.

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

- Good results in the national test for students in Year 9 in 2001.
- Good quality of teaching and learning.
- Good quality and use of assessment.
- Good response to the new framework for teaching students in Years 7 to 9.

Areas of improvement

- The provision of extension activities for gifted and talented students.
- The provision of opportunities for extended writing by students in Year 7.
- The quality of reporting on the attainment and progress of students in Years 7 to 9.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities.

92. When students enter the school their attainment in English is below and in some years well below the national average. Year 9 students who had entered the school with below average levels of attainment made very good progress achieving standards in the 2001 tests above the national average. The proportion attaining high levels of attainment was in line with the national average. Students did better in English than in mathematics and science. Standards in relationship to similar schools are comparable although there are not as many high attaining students. Since the last inspection there has been an upward trend, above the national trend, in attainment – the attainment in 2000 was in line with the national average. Generally boys do better than girls, which is the reverse of the national situation.
93. In 2001 GCSE results at grades A* to C in English were below the national average and the average for similar schools. Students whose attainment had been below average in Year 9 were significantly below the national average at GCSE and under achieved. These results, however, were a deviation from the satisfactory progress in previous years indicated by a steady pattern of better results. The results at grades A* to G were better than the national average – all the students who entered achieved a grade and the proportion of students entered was similar to the national proportion. In English Literature, the results were significantly better than in language, although they also were below the previous year's results. The proportion of grades A* to C was higher than the national proportion, although the school only entered half of the students in Year 11 compared to over three-quarters nationally. As in Language, all students entered achieved a grade. Students' performance in English was better than in science but not as good as in other subjects. In both English and English Literature girls did much better than boys compared to the national difference between boys and girls.
94. Currently the overall standards of students' work by the end of Year 9 are in line with those expected nationally. Most students listen actively, concentrate when watching videos and follow instructions. High attaining students answer questions readily and respond articulately and at some length. Middle and low attainers' responses are lively, though more limited in scope. Students with special educational needs are

eager to contribute, although on occasion they lack the self-discipline to take their turn. Most students share ideas sensibly and freely in pair and group work. Students' reading skills are equal to the demands of the texts they read. In Year 9, middle and low attaining students have the skills to extract information from *Macbeth* for a newspaper story about the murder of Duncan. High attainers show good knowledge and understanding of *Twelfth Night* which inform their presentations of the comic and romantic elements of the play. Writing is, generally, at least satisfactory and students produce a variety of writing for different purposes. They also undertake tasks using information and communication technology. High attaining students in Year 9 take notes independently without the teacher dictating and produce extended and well-planned writing. Middle and lower attaining students are more dependent upon the frameworks provided by teachers but produce a good range of responses, although the vocabulary is limited and there is some uncertainty with spelling and punctuation. Students with special educational needs have difficulty writing at much length without strong teacher support. Their spelling and punctuation are erratic and their script is untidy and immature. The standards achieved by all students by the end of Year 9, however, are good in relation to their levels of attainment on entry.

95. The standards of the work of students by the end of Year 11 are in line with national expectations. Students' speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. They listen attentively, concentrate on teachers' explanations and video presentations and respond to questions articulately. Generally they are less willing to contribute orally than younger students, and their answers, although perceptive, are brief and undeveloped. Students can cope with the range of required reading. High attaining students respond thoughtfully to poems by Wordsworth and Blake, for example, with developing awareness of literary terminology. Students in Year 11 show good knowledge and understanding in a quite sophisticated comparison of a video of *Of Mice and Men* with the text and a stage production they had seen. Middle attaining students identify features of mystery writing in nineteenth century short stories and are able to compare the writing of Charlotte Bronte and Conan Doyle. Students of lower attainment and with special educational needs have some difficulty with reading but can understand and respond to a simplified version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* sufficiently, with the help of a framework provided by the teacher, to prepare a coursework essay. All students are required to produce one word-processed coursework piece, which they do very competently; in addition many students, particularly high attainers, voluntarily and capably use word processing for other written work. Writing is generally of at least a satisfactory standard. High attainers write accurately and fluently, producing extended and well planned essays which, in responses to literature, make good use of supportive quotation. Middle attaining students, with the help of frameworks, produce extended writing which is painstaking and expresses meaning clearly, although their vocabulary is less sophisticated and some spelling is uncertain. Low attainers and students with special educational needs write simply and legibly, although their vocabulary is limited and spelling and punctuation are weak. Their progress is good and although the lowest attainers have the opportunity of entering the Certificate of Achievement as an alternative to GCSE most are expected to achieve GCSE grades.
96. Within English there is good attention to the development of students' literacy skills, and the department has responded very effectively to the new Framework for teaching English in Years 7 to 9. The practices of the National Literacy Strategy established in the primary schools have been incorporated, including the teaching of Progress Units to students who did not do well in the tests at the end of Year 6.

97. In other subjects the implementation of literacy development varies. Speaking and listening activities are undertaken in most subjects, and students are often keen to contribute. Generally students listen well, to teachers, to recorded presentations and to each other. The majority of speaking and listening opportunities for students are in listening to teacher presentations and answering questions. Opportunities for pair and group discussion are limited in many subjects but students take good advantages of opportunities where they are offered to exchange ideas. In most subjects students show good understanding and use of the specialist vocabulary. There are few opportunities for reading aloud except in history, modern foreign languages and particularly in religious education where it is actively encouraged. In other subjects there is little explicit development of reading skills and a lot of dependence upon the teacher interpreting the material. Students' writing is generally appropriate for the tasks they are set, although much of the writing is in the form of notes and explanations and there are limited opportunities for extended writing until Years 10 and 11. Students are assisted with planning and writing by the provision of frameworks in modern foreign languages, history, art, religious education and geography. In these subjects writing tasks are set which go beyond the factual and practical and require a personal or empathetic response. Teachers are concerned to develop students' capacity to understand and use the particular language of their subjects. Students' presentation is generally satisfactory, but spelling and punctuation are careless and often uncorrected.
98. In English lessons students' attitudes to their learning are good throughout. Younger students are lively and eager, but are easily settled to work and they respond with interest. Students listen attentively and work steadily; their work is generally tidy and many take an obvious pride in presentation. Relationships in the classroom are good-humoured and students work co-operatively with teachers and each other. Older students work quietly and sensibly, are polite and stay on task. They produce a considerable and very conscientious body of carefully prepared written work. A few students, particularly lower attainers, are uncooperative and attention seeking; under good-humoured but firm management, however, they work as required.
99. The quality of teaching is good. In all the lessons observed it was satisfactory or better and in four fifths it was good. As a consequence the quality of students' learning is good. Lessons are well planned, informed by good knowledge and understanding of curriculum requirements, and regular homework consolidates students' understanding. Teachers are sympathetic to students' different learning needs and aid their progress by well-prepared support materials. These enable, for example, students in Years 10 and 11, particularly middle and low attainers, to complete the GCSE coursework requirements. Teachers' good experience ensures that classroom control is secure so students stay on task, but relationships in the classroom are good humoured and students enjoy their work. Lessons have good pace and a variety of activity which stimulates students, particularly in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 students are appropriately challenged but in a few lessons the concern to cover the course requirements limits variety of activity. The quality of day-to-day assessment is good; students' work is carefully marked and teachers' comments are constructive, giving clear judgements on attainment and identifying points for development. The formal reports to parents on students in Years 7 to 9, however, are rather unhelpfully standardised and do not give parents enough help in how they can help their children.
100. The accommodation for English is satisfactory and good use is made of interesting displays of students' work. The use of the library as a teaching space is not satisfactory, but this is recognised and a change is planned. Resources are barely

satisfactory to maintain the delivery of the curriculum. The scheme of work meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, however, and of the GCSE examinations, although there is no formal provision of extension activities for the gifted and talented. The department has responded well to the new Framework, adapting teaching practices accordingly, although the new emphasis on literacy development gives limited opportunities for extended writing in Year 7. Little is offered in the form of extra-curricular activity to develop students' interest in English except good encouragement of wider reading and the use of the library.

101. The leadership and management of the department are good. A well-qualified and experienced team of teachers works effectively together to deliver a well-prepared scheme of work. There is consistency in the delivery of the curriculum and in the use of assessment. There is very good practice in the recording and analysis of student data to set targets, monitor progress and inform curriculum review. Regular formal and informal meetings enable the sharing of good practice and allow the team to contribute to the process of planning and development. There is good practice in monitoring the delivery of the curriculum through reviewing lesson plans and sampling students' work but lesson observation has yet to be established as a formal process.
102. Progress since the last inspection is good. The good features of the department noted in the report have been maintained. Standards of attainment of students by Year 9 have improved. The particular recommendations in the report have been followed - more students are entering for GCSE and there is a good variety of lesson activities, including oral activities.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There was an improvement in attainment in the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds.
- The new schemes of work introduced in September 2000 for students up to 16 have helped staff to improve standards.
- The appointment of a second in the department responsible for the work of students up to 14 and for ICT has improved students' learning.
- The revision class for all students at the end of Wednesday has improved support for students.
- Lesson planning is good and homework is used appropriately.
- The quantity and variety of textbooks available for students are good.
- The smaller numbers in lower attaining groups enable teachers to provide more individual support.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of ICT.
- The higher attaining students in some classes are not always provided with the extension work they need.
- Teachers' expectations in some lessons are not high enough.
- The marking of some books could be more thorough.
- There is no strategy for numeracy across the curriculum.

103. In 2001 although students started in Year 7 with below average attainment standards were better than in the previous two years when they were well below the national average. The results for students in the 2001 national tests at 14 were higher than the national average with boys reaching higher standards than girls. The number of students attaining higher than level 5 was considerably higher than the national average but the number of those reaching level 6 or more was below.
104. At GCSE in 2001 the results were not as high as in 2000 but were still above the national average. Eight students achieved A grades and almost half of those entered for the examination obtained grades A* to C and all who were entered gained A* to G grades. There are no consistent differences between boys and girls. When compared with results in English and science the results are better. In general the high attaining and low attaining students achieve appropriate results and the results of students in the middle attainment range have improved. The number of students taking up mathematics in the sixth form this year has increased with most students having achieved A grades at GCSE level.
105. In each year group students are grouped by attainment. This allows classes to be taught at a pace that is appropriate to their level of understanding. The smaller classes and the use of support staff in the lower attaining groups have improved the conditions of learning and raised standards. Students with special educational needs make good progress and their achievement is good. Standards of students' work in Year 9 compare favourably with their standards when they entered the school in Year 7 and there is evidence of good progress in most areas of mathematics. Students are able to use numbers effectively when solving problems and are used to estimating answers to check the answers that have been worked out using a calculator. Students are taught a variety of applications from everyday life and their use of data handling and graphs is good. Year 8 students had a good basic knowledge of simple algebra and work with shape. Some low attaining students used calculators for some calculations that should have been done mentally. Year 7 students are enthusiastic, easily motivated and work hard. Lower attaining students were eager to show their limited mental skills in finding factors of numbers. All students in Years 7, 8 and 9 were benefiting from the mental 'warm up' exercises on number at the beginning or end of each lesson. Throughout the school students benefit from homework, which is set to reinforce the work in class and also to challenge the more able students. There is not enough use of group work or opportunities for problem solving.
106. Standards of students' work in Year 11 are only satisfactory and some are working below the national average. The high attainers work hard and produce very good work especially in algebra and shape. However, a significant minority of middle attaining students are working below their ability and have behavioural problems. This affects their learning capabilities. The low attaining students have made progress and have all been entered for the GCSE examination following success in their mock

examinations. Students in Year 10 are being introduced to aspects of the GCSE course at the levels most appropriate to them. The higher attaining students dealt well with the problems set on the area and circumference of a circle as well as semi-circles, quadrants and other fractional parts of the circle. There was also some good work with algebraic graphs and trigonometry. The lower attaining students produced some effective work in number by calculating fractional and percentage amounts of given quantities. The examples used were from everyday life situations. Homework, in the form of appropriate past papers, provide Year 11 classes with opportunities for revision. Students across the attainment ranges appreciate this challenge and use it to extend their learning.

107. Teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and the quality of the planning of lessons are strengths. Planning is thorough and usually caters for a range of abilities in the class, with easier work for the lower attaining students and challenging extension work for the higher attaining students.
108. In some satisfactory lessons the explanations of the content of the lesson and what students needed to learn were clear but how the lesson fitted into a sequence of lessons on the topic was less clear. There were occasions when some students who finished their work early were not given extra work to extend them. On the whole, discipline is good with staff making effective use of the positive discipline procedures. When the lesson was poor, the Year 11 middle attaining students did not listen and learning was poor. Students are not prepared effectively enough to bridge the gulf between GCSE and AS and A level.
109. The quality of presentation of work in the books is varied and generally in line with the attainment of the students. However, the books of some of the boys, particularly in the lower attaining groups, are unsatisfactory and at times poor. The attainment and progress of students with special educational needs have improved as a result of the smaller classes and the help of support staff. Assessment is a mixture of teachers' marking and students' self-marking. It is effective but on occasions needs to be more thorough to make sure that all corrective marking instructions have been carried out. Students in Year 10 are given target grades but it is not clear when and how frequently these are reassessed. The more able students make good progress but on occasions in some lessons there is not sufficiently challenging work.
110. At present there is little use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics. A teacher has been appointed to organise its introduction but until there is greater availability of hardware, peripheral equipment and the accompanying software progress will be slow. The introduction in September 2000 of new schemes of work has helped to give a fresh approach. It is refreshing to discover that departmental meetings have been used to discuss the progress of the schemes of work and if necessary to amend them. Together with the fact that now there are four full-time teachers qualified in mathematics, this indicates a stable and promising future. There is now a need to develop a policy for the use of numeracy across the curriculum with a senior member of staff responsible for its implementation.
111. Most students enjoy mathematics, are very enthusiastic and have good levels of concentration. These positive attitudes have an impact on the quality of work. The leadership of the department is good but the monitoring of staff teaching and exercise books needs to be increased. Since the last inspection there have been improvements. Numeracy skills are now satisfactory, there are more better quality text books, teaching is good and attainment at Key Stage 4 has improved

considerably. However, the use of ICT in the department is still not satisfactory and a minority of students have challenging behaviour. Attainment in Year 9 in 2001 was above the national average, which is an improvement, but there is fluctuation in these results and therefore consistency must be aimed for.

SCIENCE

Overall provision in science is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Very good procedures for the assessment and monitoring of students' progress are in place
- There is some very good teaching of students with special educational needs.
- National test results have risen at the end of year 9.
- Three laboratories have been refurbished.
- The subject is well managed and clear about its priorities.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are hard working and committed.

Areas for improvement

- Results and attainment in GCSE at the age of 15.
- Setting arrangements which create difficult teaching groups.
- The subject is reaching its targets for GCSE, but results have not improved over the last three years.
- Not enough use is made of homework to extend and consolidate students' learning.
- There is evidence of underachievement among higher attaining students especially in Years 10 and 11.

112. In the 2001 national tests at 14, students achieved the national average which was a significant improvement on the previous year and a higher percentage than that found nationally reached the expected level five (5) or better. The proportion of students attaining the higher level six (6) or more was about four fifths of the national average but again a great improvement on the previous year, more than two thirds better. The results dipped significantly after the last inspection two years ago. The challenge to the subject now is to sustain this recent improvement. When results are considered over the last three years, science achieves less well than English or mathematics, and girls are further behind boys than in the national picture. When considered in terms of the number of points they acquire, students' results are close to the national average. However, when compared with schools in similar circumstances results are well below average.

113. In 2001 GCSE results were below the national average for students taking the double science examination. They were below average for the proportion achieving a grade in the A*-C range but closer to the national average for those gaining a grade in the A*-G range. Nevertheless the school has analysed its Year 9 results and set challenging targets for the end of Year 11 attainment over the last three years. Results have fluctuated reflecting the previous attainment profiles of each year group. In 1999 the target was not achieved, in 2000 it was exceeded and in 2001 the results were just below the expected target. Overall the results have reached a plateau which the school has found it hard to improve, but the last year's national test results provide a further challenge and encouragement to raise standards.

114. In their written work and in lessons students generally achieve average standards from Years 7-9 and from Year 9-11. Across Years 7 to 9 students gain a sound foundation in science. For example, they grasp ideas of how energy is transferred, that energy cannot be made or destroyed, and that it can be changed from one form into another. Students understand that the energy needs of different people vary. They know the components of a fair test. Students develop good practical skills and most handle equipment safely and sensibly and gain an increasingly accurate use of terminology to give precision to their work. The investigative skills, especially of high attaining students, develop well, for example in investigating insulators. Students gain a good understanding of the impact and the effects of the abuse of drugs, including tobacco and alcohol which contributes to their personal development as do studies on microbes and health. Girls overall cover more ground than boys. A weakness in many notebooks is the amount of copied work from texts or the board and there is not enough of students' project work or individual research.
115. From Years 9-11 students' previous work shows deeper understanding of some difficult topics such as the importance of inherited variations in evolution. Some very good notes and homework of high attaining students showed good understanding of the importance of selective and 'high-tech' breeding and genetic engineering. Their work shows a good knowledge of atomic structures and chemical bonds. Students of average attainment, however, have difficulties with calculations and copy too much of their work. The written work of lower attaining students is sometimes incomplete, for example all data are not completed in graphs. Key words and targets written in books help these students to achieve.
116. Students' work in investigations is generally satisfactory. For example, in investigating heat loss by babies and adults students were able to simulate the process using conical flasks and observing the temperature drop. There was good observation, analysis and evaluation of results especially by high attaining boys. These students realised the necessity of repeating tests to get many results, and could speculate on what would happen if the ratio of the size of flasks was changed in line with the overall ratio of size of adult bodies to those of children. Work is well presented with some good use of word processing and computer drawn graphs. Lower attaining students still have difficulty with grammar and spelling. Although they can, with help, identify anomalous results and the need to get the line of best fit on graphs, they cannot spell accurately the terms they use and confuse plurals, for example, 'we was'. Overall students make satisfactory progress.
117. All teaching is satisfactory. In a third of lessons in Years 7 to 9 teaching is good or very good. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good in a third of lessons, good in another third and satisfactory in the rest. Overall teaching is good or better in half the lessons taught to students aged 11-16, but this proportion is lower than that of the school as a whole. Teachers have good, often very good, subject knowledge enriched by their teaching in the sixth form but appropriately simplified for earlier stages in the school. All lessons are well planned and prepared. Teachers' expectations are usually appropriate except in some Year 9 lessons in upper sets where students were not challenged enough in their work on photosynthesis and starch formation in leaves.
118. High expectations and evident previous good training characterised a lesson for the lowest stream in Year 7. All students, many with behavioural as well as learning difficulties, showed considerable initiative and competence in microscope work. They collected equipment quickly, safely and sensibly and set up their preparations of leaves from a water plant by laying cover slips carefully on their microscope slides.

Encouraged and supported by the teaching, students identified the chloroplasts in the cells of a green plant and gained a real sense of achievement and some sense of the beauty of the natural world. In a lesson for a similar group in Year 8 most students managed a complex practical on food tests satisfactorily in spite of their very impulsive and restless behaviour because of careful organisation.

119. In lower sets in Years 7-9 a significant number of students lack the self-discipline required in laboratories. Only one lesson was seen where a learning support assistant was present. However the role of these assistants is not clear and they are not used effectively, for example in regular and consistent support of groups, or in joint planning so that they are aware of the objectives of the teaching and the learning expected. The behaviour management skills of some of the experienced senior staff are very good and as a result students with special educational needs are well taught, but these skills are not yet shared sufficiently widely within the department. In many lessons technical vocabulary is well taught which helps students to give precision to their work.
120. In upper sets in Years 10 and 11, very good questioning techniques are used to elicit students' ideas and make sure they do the work, as in a lesson on micro-organisms and the impact of disinfectants. In another very good lesson, very clear expositions and demonstrations raised the societal importance of burning fossil fuels and the value of the various fractions obtained. Throughout the school, however, sometimes the introduction to the lesson is too short and there is a very short summary session. Students do not settle quickly enough and are sometimes unclear what they have to do. At the end of the lesson opportunities to review and consolidate new learning are lost. Many lessons have a good sequence of activities which lead learning forward. However, not enough use is made of homework to consolidate and extend learning and teachers find it hard to get students to complete work outside lesson time.
121. Students' attitudes to the subject are generally satisfactory and usually reflect the quality of teaching in lessons. Given the opportunity they respond well to teachers' questions and occasionally ask their own. Most listen with sufficient attention and follow instructions. Students are generally co-operative and biddable in their behaviour especially where they are well trained in laboratory routines and experimental procedures. Positive attitudes and interest in some Year 10 and 11 lessons ensure that middle sets cover a good deal of ground. Very good relationships help teachers to question students closely and sort out their difficulties. However, a significant number of students, usually boys in Year 11 show unsatisfactory, uninterested and sometimes disrespectful behaviour even though they have considerable capability. These underachieving students reduce the progress which can be made by others, especially girls, in the same sets. Despite their appreciation of the good teaching they believe they receive, girls become very frustrated at their inability to learn as fast as they could. Marking of students' work is occasionally very detailed giving encouraging diagnostic comments which help students to improve. In spite of the good policy most marking is perfunctory and unsatisfactory with ticks which tell students little. However, the overall assessment at the end of curriculum modules is very good. Students are able to understand the levels that they have achieved and to set targets for improvement. These findings are shared with parents.
122. The department is well led and managed. It has identified the correct priorities for development. Monitoring of teaching and learning is now good. The subject is staffed by well-qualified, hard-working and committed teachers, and valued and very effective technical support. However, the effective head of department has a very heavy teaching time-table with additional pastoral duties and too little non-contact time to do

the job without excessive pressure. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection. Three laboratories have been refurbished presenting an up-dated image of science. The acoustics of these rooms are unsatisfactory as all surfaces are hard and resonant and hearing is difficult. Some teachers have tried to remedy the problem by adopting soft black-out curtains which mop up sound but may produce other hazards, for example, when using burners. Resources are sufficient although no ICT was seen in use during the inspection week. Staff have been trained in new data-sensing and logging equipment but have experienced considerable difficulties in using the equipment located in the department. This has led to some disenchantment among the students and staff who are working hard to resolve technical difficulties.

123. Overall however the department has improved well since the last inspection and has within it the capacity and skills to improve further.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE are very high.
- Teaching is very good. Staff have very good subject knowledge and skills.
- Relationships are excellent.
- Students work enthusiastically and behave well.
- Students make very good progress when working independently and in group work.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress.
- Department leadership and management is very effective.
- Excellent assessment, monitoring and target setting enhances learning.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for and use of ICT.
- Gallery and site visits for students aged 11 to 16.
- Reading and speaking in Years 7-9.
- Use of professional artists in residence.

124. When students first enter the school their art and design skills are well below average but they make significant progress very quickly. Standards of attainment in art and design are improving. When students enter the school their skills in drawing and painting are generally very low, but teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the majority of students are meeting national expectations with a significant minority achieving well above. GCSE results for students at the end of Year 11 have been at a consistently very high level since the last inspection. The percentage of students gaining passes between A* and C are well above the national average. A* to G grades are also above average. Given the low level of attainment on entry this is a significant achievement. Both girls and boys are achieving better than boys and girls do nationally, the range and standard of grades being distributed equally. All students make very good progress.

125. The picture presented by these results is one of consistency and improvement. By the time they are 14, all students are achieving well including students with special educational needs who also make good progress. Very good teaching and the

excellent attitude of the students to both staff and the subject contribute significantly to this very positive trend. Sketchbooks are used very successfully by students of all ages and demonstrate how well skills, techniques and processes are systematically improved. As a result of very good direct teaching, use of paint, pencil, clay and card is well developed with students of all ages taking a pride in their work. Students demonstrate a very good awareness of a range of artists work across time, place and culture. Students are objective when evaluating their own and each other's work but an increased emphasis on reading and speaking would help to support this. They are very supportive of fellow students and enjoy talking about their work to classroom visitors, as a consequence the involvement of professional artists or craft workers would make a real contribution to the ongoing improvement in Years 7-9.

126. In Years 10 and 11 standards rise significantly with very good gains made in skills and understanding of art and design. For example in a Year 10 classical architecture project students demonstrated an impressive knowledge of terms and concepts, for example, styles of columns, pediments and proportion. Students also present their work well for evaluation and checking of progress over time, including very good annotated sheets, as in a Year 10 lesson on body adornment that provided concrete evidence of clear thinking and developmental skills. Both folder and sketchbook work are of a consistently high standard with homework linked well to class work. The quality of work done at home in sketchbooks provided by the department is very good. The half-termly homework schedule is well thought out and makes good use of key words and vocabulary. As a result of direct but not prescriptive teaching students' work shows high levels of creativity and imagination. Work such as this could be further developed by increased use of information communication technology and subject specific image manipulation software.
127. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department. Teaching is never less than good with examples of both very good and excellent lessons. Teachers know their subject very well and enjoy teaching it. The lessons are very well planned using a appropriate balance of direct and one-to-one teaching. As a result the level of challenge and high expectations plays a significant role in the high quality work produced by the students. Marking is both conscientious and purposeful with excellent individual feedback to students on examination requirements, techniques or homework. Students' attitudes to the subject are excellent and due to this and to very good class management behaviour is exemplary. In a Year 7 lesson on introducing monoprinting, for example, explicit aims of "sharing" and "listening" enabled students to make marks to music in order to design a "twittering machine" inspired by the artist Paul Klee. In a Year 9 lesson a large group of students produced excellent quality claywork based on a landscape through a window, demonstrating the harmonious atmosphere that prevails throughout the department. The rooms have very strong visual impact with very well displayed students' work used as exemplars and stimulus. Work is recent, named, described and informative.
128. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department providing clear sensitive direction for both staff and students. The curriculum throughout the school is appropriate and provides a very good range of learning opportunities. The department uses its own very good scheme for the younger students. The staff work very well together and this consistent approach in all aspects of the work of the department is one of the reasons for the success of the students in this subject. This success is not enhanced at the moment by visits to sites and galleries.
129. The department has improved and continues to improve. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The main area of improvement is the quality of work in

Years 7, 8 and 9. Resources are well managed and the very good leadership ensures that teaching is focused on clear learning objectives with stimulating and challenging work which encourages students to be imaginative and creative.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The behaviour of students in lessons is very good and results in good quality learning.
- The teachers know the students well and give very good one-to-one help in lessons to ensure they all make good progress.
- The department's targets for improvements in teaching and students' attainment have been exceeded.
- The standard of practical work from the majority of students in all years is above average.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of drawing, lettering and general presentation of portfolios in Years 10 and 11.
- The amount and type of homework given to students.
- The use of assessment data to plan and extend the curriculum.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 are not aware of their National Curriculum grades and targets.
- The department is under-funded and needs extra computers and computer-controlled equipment to fulfil the requirements of the national curriculum.

130. Students enter school at the age of 11 with diverse experiences in design and technology, and their attainment on entry is below average. Only a few students worked with food in their previous schools and their knowledge of nutrition is weak. Many students made simple hand-stitched items using textiles and nearly all experienced model making with recycled media, but very few used more durable materials such as wood and metal. In science lessons, most students made simple circuits, but they are unskilled in computer control. Students did not often design what they intended making, and only drew the final results.

131. The overall attainment of students in design and technology at the end of Year 9 is close to the national average. This represents good achievement over the first three years in school as students build up a good amount of knowledge about handling and manipulating materials and skills in using equipment. In the most recent teachers' assessments, the percentage of students attaining level 5 and above is near, but just under the national average. In work seen in lessons and students' folders during the inspection, girls perform slightly better than boys and overall attainment matches the teachers' assessments. Students work through course booklets and on simple projects that gradually help them to build up their skills before progressing to designing for themselves. By the age of 14, students understand how designers work and know that good design stems from thorough research and individual effort and creativity. Many students find design drawing difficult although they have good ideas about what they would like to make. They are used to working with tools and equipment on projects in food, textiles and resistant materials. All students, with help, work safely and generally know about getting a good finish on their pieces. For example, students in Year 9 are working on a theme park project and are devising items that could be sold in a gift shop or cafeteria. They use hand and power tools efficiently and with a good degree of control. They take account of value for money,

fitness for purpose and buyer attraction. Some of the boxes being made in resistant materials fit well as students pay good attention to measuring and marking. Students with special educational needs are encouraged to set themselves realistic tasks at their own levels, which do not over face them so they gain in confidence in what they attempt. Students who are gifted and talented are given opportunities in lessons to do more work at higher levels and as a result, show greater ingenuity in designing. Most students are not fully aware of their National Curriculum levels, or which levels they should be aiming for.

132. The attainment of students at the end of Year 11 is slightly above the national average and reflects good achievement over the two year course. The percentage of students gaining grades A* to C in food studies, textiles and graphic products in 2001 was well above the national average, but was well below it in resistant materials. Food studies results were the best in school. In design and technology, students usually gain their best GCSE grades and all gain at least an F grade. Results amongst the different material areas have varied, but over the past three years, results have been consistently above the national average and were well above in 2000.
133. By the time they are 16, students have a good grasp of what technology means and know that the designing and making processes are interlinked. Students understand something of the design flow and accept the value of research, although a few students, usually boys, merely collect pictures and do not assess the quality of the products they investigate. Design drawing and lettering are generally weak, and are especially so in resistant materials, as many students find difficulty in drawing what they visualise and then working out the proportions and processes necessary before completion. They are used to making prototypes and samples to ensure that the final design is capable of being made.. Students become skilled and confident in using both hand and power tools. Most mark and measure carefully and set themselves an appropriate amount of work to demonstrate skills in making and individuality in designing and improving existing items. Once started on practical tasks, students work sensibly and can spot errors in manufacture. The quality of practical work is generally above average and is higher than that of the written work. Only the highest attaining students have a systematic way of completing and presenting their work in logical order and to a good standard. Many complete the easier design papers, omit some sections, do not spend enough time on portfolios and therefore get lower marks than they should for coursework. Portfolio work in food and textiles is mainly good, and some students use the computers for word processing to improve presentation, especially in graphic products.
134. Students have good attitudes to the subject. Most of them enter the rooms cheerfully, and show a willingness to work. They listen attentively to instruction and are interested in seeing examples and demonstrations. During formal introductions, a few students make pertinent comments and most answer questions politely, but only the higher-attaining students ask questions. They settle to tasks quickly and take responsibility well for selecting their own work areas and equipment. Most students enjoy practical work more than theory, but they all accept that written work is important. They use their support booklets sensibly and persevere before asking for help. Students appreciate help and often thank adults for helping them. During lessons, concentration levels are generally high, as most students work independently and try hard. Students in Year 7, for example, were so happy and engrossed in making their `alien coat hooks' that they complained when it was the end of the lesson. A few students try to help others if the teacher is busy, showing mature attitudes and very good relationships with fellow students. Behaviour is very good. Students know the rules, wait for their turn when necessary, share fairly and

behave very sensibly in practical work areas. They respect school property and the items on display. During the inspection, students were proud to show their finished work, which indicates that they enjoyed it and many were very generous in sharing their food products. Some of the higher attaining students have sensible attitudes to studying as they often produce extra work and tend to do more homework.

135. The quality of teaching is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and in the majority of lessons teaching was good or very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They are accomplished demonstrators and successfully pass on appropriate craft skills to the students who gain confidence and learn well from seeing high quality work and practical performance. Teachers plan and prepare well for their lessons and ensure students learn effectively by presenting challenging tasks in order that they gain good knowledge and understanding. They try to make the topics and modules enjoyable, give clear instructions at the beginning of lessons to focus students on the tasks, and ensure no time is wasted. They use language appropriately so that students acquire a technical vocabulary. In many lessons, teachers improve students' numeracy skills by introducing concepts of time, formulae and accuracy in weighing and measurement. During lessons, students have enough time for their own work and receive very good one-to-one help. This aids overall progress, encourages them to improve their work and increases their work rate. It helps students who are struggling, encourages the less-confident students, including those with special educational needs, and ensures that the higher-attaining students are attempting higher level tasks. At the end of sessions, teachers question students about what they have learned and encourage them to ask questions to ensure they understand the next stages. Teachers track students individually, mark their work carefully and put comments on work to indicate where it is good and where improvement is required. Students are left in no doubt about the quality of their work and the degree of effort made. Homework is set regularly, but there should be more of it, in order to enhance the small amount of timetable time given to the subject, especially in years 7 to 9. The technician gives very good support in and out of lessons, and ensures students have all the resources they need so that the teachers can focus more of their attention on the students.
136. Leadership of the department is good and the staff in the department work effectively as a mutually supportive team. The department has made a good response to the comments in the last inspection report and there has been very good overall improvement since the last inspection. Regular meetings focus mainly on students' attainment and the rate and amount of progress they make. Standards have been maintained in Years 7 to 9 and improved in Years 10 and 11. The department targets for improvement are already having an impact on students' standards of work as the targets for high grades in GCSE have been exceeded. Weaknesses in the department have been recognised and the main aims in the development plan focus on raising personal targets, improving teaching and learning by ensuring a better balance of theory and practical work in lessons and introducing more work on systems and control. Assessment information is used mainly for tracking students, which is good, but at present, it is not fully used to inform curriculum planning. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching and students' behaviour is very good. Departmental documentation is well presented and the revised scheme of work is linked to the programme of assignments and the National Curriculum statements of attainment. The workrooms are open out of lesson times so that students can do extra work if they so wish and receive additional help. This helps students who are slow in practical sessions and helps the higher attaining ones to perfect techniques. Newly introduced study guides and course booklets are helping students to become more aware of what they produce and how

they can gain extra marks. There is increased use of information, communication and control technology. Accommodation has improved. Food and textiles are now taught in separate rooms and the rearrangement of space in the workshops has helped the department to create areas for ICT, electronics and display. Storage is adequate, but the technician's room is too small. Owing to lack of equipment, such as computer-controlled equipment in both resistant materials and textiles, the department cannot extend the curriculum for students in years 10 to 11. Funding is limited and the department is grateful for the support of the parents and friends of the school who supply good quality consumables for students' use.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Students' behaviour in lessons is good.
- Students have positive attitudes towards learning in geography.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment are below average
- The quality of teaching in some lessons
- The level of resourcing of the department.
- The leadership and management of the department.

137. In each of the last three years, standards achieved by students in the teacher-assessed tests at the end of Year 9 have been in line with the national average in the proportion of students attaining level 5 or higher. The proportion attaining level 6 or higher was in line with the national average in 1999 but declined to well below the national average in the last two years. However, these assessments are likely to be inaccurate as teachers continue to over-estimate National Curriculum levels, as was noted in the last inspection report.
138. Standards of attainment in lessons and in the written work of students aged 11 to 14 are below the standard expected nationally. Students in Years 7 to 9 acquire a satisfactory geographical vocabulary and are able to use it both orally and in writing. They learn to use a range of geographical skills and most can draw and interpret simple climate charts, draw and annotate diagrams and understand how simple weather recording instruments are used. Their map skills, however, are under-developed. In Year 7 students draw maps of their routes to school and plans of their bedrooms but they do not go on to learn to use Ordnance Survey maps and they make little use of atlases. Consequently students do not have a well-developed sense of place. Their knowledge and understanding of geographical processes are better developed and by Year 9 students can write competently of how crustal plate movements lead to volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Students do understand the concepts of environmental change, of economic development and of sustainable development but much of their knowledge is superficial.
139. The progress that all students are making in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory and leading to under-achievement. Gifted and talented students can carry out individual research of good quality and in Year 9 presented some very capable research on Japan, but they are given too few opportunities for extension work and tend to under-achieve.

Work for students with special educational needs is insufficiently adapted to meet their needs and they often resort to copying material that they do not understand, or simply fail to complete their work. A significant cause of the general lack of progress is the current staffing situation in which over half the students are taught by teachers who are not subject specialists or by a series of short term temporary teachers.

140. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 the proportion of students attaining grades A*-C in 1999 and 2000 was at the national average and the proportion of students attaining the highest grades A*- A was well above the national average. Geography examination results were amongst the best in the school. In 2001 the proportions of students gaining grades A*-A and grades A*-C fell to well below the national average. However all students attained grades A*-G, as all had done in 1999 and 2000, a proportion above the national average. More boys than girls follow the GCSE course but there is no significant difference in their performance.
141. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection are below the expected levels for students in Years 10 and 11. Students have a satisfactory geographical vocabulary although most use imprecise language when answering written questions. Their geographical skills have developed: they can plot and interpret data relating to population and climate; most can read maps and photographs competently; they can carry out a first hand investigation. Their information and communication technology skills are good. Students in Year 10 make effective use of the technology to create graphs and incorporate them into text to show the outcomes of a survey they had carried out on the use of the Euro. However, their opportunities to complete more of such work is limited as they have little access to the computer suite. Coursework that students in Year 11 are in the process of completing shows that they are able to carry out first hand enquiry in an investigation into the environmental impact of the Birmingham Northern Relief Road. They have gathered data, produced simple graphs to help analyse the data and incorporated appropriate maps and photographs into their written accounts. However, few if any areas of enquiry have been explored in depth and the quality of their work is below that which most should have achieved. The quantity and quality of work completed by many students have been adversely affected by the recent changes of teachers as some work is incomplete, some is missing and some is inaccurate. Students' achievement, and the progress they have made overall, are unsatisfactory.
142. Students' attitudes to learning in all years are good. In lessons they are generally attentive, interested and keen to participate. They are ready to think for themselves and are not dependent on the teacher. Their behaviour is generally good and when it is less good it is related to a general sense of frustration at being taught by a series of teachers. Most students present their work carefully but where work is poorly presented or much is incomplete, it is mainly in classes that have experienced the changes of teacher.
143. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. A strength in teaching is the good relationship that teachers enjoy with most classes. They engage students' attention and keep them interested and on task so that students are willing learners who enjoy acquiring new knowledge. Tasks set for students are generally varied and appropriate. They usually require some independent writing and occasionally require imaginative writing: students in Year 8 wrote to the Prime Minister about immigration and students in Year 9 wrote an account of the Kobe earthquake through the eyes of a survivor. However, this latter technique is sometimes used inappropriately in Years 10 and 11. Some good teaching in Year 10 was marked by effective use of information and communication technology and in

Year 11 by effective individual work with students, challenging their thinking in the completion of their coursework so that their learning was strengthened.

144. There are some significant weaknesses in teaching. The work presented to students across the ability range in all year groups is too similar: there is little extension work to challenge gifted and talented students and tasks and materials are insufficiently modified to make them accessible to students with special educational needs. Through insecure subject knowledge teachers transmit factual inaccuracies to students, leave important geographical processes inadequately explained and instruct them incorrectly in geographical techniques. The marking of students' written work is very variable in quality. In some exercise books much work has been left unmarked; much marking is minimal in quantity and quality and offers little guidance for improvement; few mistakes in English are corrected; wrong answers are marked as correct; an unfamiliarity by teachers with examination requirements has led to a tendency to over-reward work and to be insufficiently rigorous in its evaluation, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
145. A generally unstimulating and pedestrian approach to teaching is intensified by a lack of resources. Students are not shown real places and geographical processes through video film; there are few books for them to use for research in class and they cannot take books home. There are no computers in the department and access to the school's computer suites is very limited. There is a lack of suitable maps in some classroom. Students' learning is thus much weakened by their over-reliance on imagination and on their limited personal experience when trying to understand geographical processes.
146. Leadership and management are poor. There is evidence of lack of effective management over some years, exacerbated by the current long term absence of the head of department, that the recently designated, temporary acting head of department can do little to improve. The scheme of work is incomplete and poorly developed and offers ineffective guidance to teachers' lesson planning. The departmental handbook contains little of substance and does not clarify policies and practices in the department. There has been very little monitoring of the work of the department. Resources for learning, described in the last inspection report as poor, are now very poor. A general air of neglect pervades one of the two geography rooms.
147. Since the last inspection there has been some improvement: the number of students opting for GCSE geography has increased; the behaviour of students has improved. In all other respects, provision has worsened considerably. Standards of attainment have declined. Students' progress has declined. The quality of teaching has declined. The system of assessment has not improved significantly. Resources for learning have deteriorated.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision for history is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching is always satisfactory and usually good.
- The clearly structured learning materials provided for each topic are good. Each study develops comprehension and literacy skills together with the ability to analyse sources.
- The teaching of historical skills which are transferable to other subjects and situations, for example, how to recognise bias.

Areas for improvement

- The encouragement of class discussion and the further involvement of students in lessons.
- The provision of opportunities for independent learning.
- Access to ICT.

148. In 2001 teachers' assessments indicate that at the end of Year 9 students' attainment is close to the national average. Students taking these tests have results on entry to the school, which indicate attainment below the national average. Work seen during the inspection confirms that the attainment of students at the end of Year 9 is close to the national average. Most are able to recognise bias. Higher attaining students are able to provide evidence to support their statements. In a lower attaining Year 9 class most students, working with calculators, are able to work out the relative military/naval strength of the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. Higher attaining Year 8 students are able to collate letters written by the defenders of Brompton Bryan and to put them in chronological order. Some lower attaining students in Year 8 are not able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. Some need considerable guidance to put clear, simple instructions into practice in written exercises. The same students are able to decide that the forced confession of Guy Fawkes was not reliable.
149. In 2000 the proportion of students gaining GCSE A* - C grades dipped well below the national average. In 2001 the proportion of students gaining A* - C grades is in line with the national average. These students have results on entry to the school which indicate attainment below the national average. Work seen during the inspection confirms that attainment, overall, in years 10 and 11 is in line with the national average. Levels of attainment vary. Higher attaining students write fluently and accurately. They collect first hand evidence for their local study on the Trent and Mersey Canal. Some course work is word processed. Year 11 students studying Twentieth Century Irish History are able to explain the British Government's folly in making martyrs in the Easter Rebellion. These students appreciate the value of being taught how to select the most important points in a document. They are able to explain that their understanding of bias makes them wary of contemporary newspaper articles. There are more higher attaining students in Year 10 and not all are well motivated. Students working on nineteenth century cholera epidemics are able to explain why an outbreak began in Sunderland. Some complete a written exercise fluently and grammatically. Others are able to concentrate only for a short period.
150. Across all year groups most students make satisfactory or good progress. In some classes students do not make sufficient progress because they are not given enough opportunities to contribute in class. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough. More often students learn well and add to their historical knowledge. They learn skills which are transferable to other subjects and other situations. The department is aware that poor literacy skills impede progress in history. There is an

element of reading and writing in every lesson supported by word games, spelling tests and comprehension exercises. Lists of historical terms, linked to a time line, are posted in the history room. Students with special educational needs usually make satisfactory progress. Teachers have detailed knowledge of their requirements. Extended writing exercises are set for higher attaining students. Appropriate materials are also available for lower attaining students. In most lower attaining classes the standard lesson plans are used but with very much more support from the teacher.

151. The good progress made is the result of good teaching. Teaching is always satisfactory and usually good. It is better in Years 7,8 and 9 because students are more responsive. Well-qualified and experienced staff have good subject knowledge. In the best taught classes confident, energetic teaching and varied activities ensure that students are kept involved, their attention held and their concentration sustained. Classes are well managed. Study booklets prepared by the department give lessons a good basic structure. They provide each student with clear factual information and primary sources. Controversial questions are posed and students encouraged to make their own decisions. They are taught to think and to analyse. For example, Year 8 students are asked to decide between the traditional and revised theories of the Gun Powder Plot. By using three contemporary sources Year 7 students are asked to decide how William I established his control over England. When a whole class needs more than usual guidance to move along at the same pace, however, teaching is sometimes necessarily directive. Occasionally teaching is not flexible enough because the very detailed, and very good lesson plans are followed too closely. The teacher moves on without encouraging class discussion. In these circumstances students answer questions but do not make pertinent comments. Most students respond well to a challenge. Year 9 students, boys in particular, tried hard to improve on the original military plans to get British troops across No Mans' Land at Passchendale. When the opportunity arises ICT is used effectively. Year 9 students access the Internet to trace the burial places and to find out the personal details of ten men listed on the local war memorial. Finding that a soldier who died on the Somme had lived in their street made history very relevant. Relationships between students and with teachers are good. Students work co operatively and help each other. In many classes there is a pleasant hard working atmosphere.
152. The department is well managed. Departmental documentation is clear. Assessment and tracking procedures are well developed. Records are carefully kept. Each study booklet has assessment pages at the end of each topic to be filled in by the teacher and the student. Work in folders is regularly checked. Written work across the department is monitored by the Head of Department. The department makes a contribution to cross-curricular learning. For example, students examine the beliefs of people in different periods. Since the previous inspection assessment procedures and resources have been further developed. There are more opportunities for extended writing. The history department is forward looking, committed to the improvement of students' academic performance and to increasing their enjoyment of the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is good

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good
- Statutory requirements are now met
- Progressive subject management
- Recognition of the need for further development

Areas for improvement

- Cross curricular ICT
- The student/computer ratio
- Assessment of ICT activities
- Technician support

153. The level of attainment of students entering the school is varied with most being below the national average. Attainment in Year 7 is improving and in Year 8 students progress well and attain appropriate levels. This progress is continued in Year 9 and by the end of the year students have achieved results which are above the national average. Students in Year 9 are not only able to select information for different purposes, but develop and refine their work. They present ideas in a variety of ways, using a range of software techniques. Many students combine information from a variety of sources, including the Internet, and use this information in creative presentations. They design models for particular needs and use ICT in a variety of contexts.
154. Attainment at the end of Year 11 has improved since the last inspection. In 2001, 60 per cent of students gained A* - C grades at GCSE, which is above the national average. Students achieve better in ICT than in other subjects. Although more boys take ICT at GCSE level, the results of the smaller number of girls are better than the boys.
155. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject; they plan and structure lessons well so that students improve their knowledge and skills. Teachers set appropriate tasks to extend students and the pace of lessons is always good. They use homework to enhance classroom teaching and learning and manage students with care, ensuring a good learning environment.
156. In Years 7, 8 and 9 teachers identify tasks suitable for the age of the students. Students demonstrate skill in manipulating the facilities of the software. They use basic and advanced techniques to create and edit their work. Students are able to clearly explain what they are doing and how to use the software. In one lesson students created a spreadsheet to manage the finances of a fund raising event developing well their knowledge of how to construct an appropriate spreadsheet and input data and relevant formulae. In another lesson students used a plan prepared for homework to create a poster to advertise the fund raising event. They used a wide range of techniques including text and graphics and worked hard at amending and improving their work.
157. Although students are provided with a wide range of activities there is no formal assessment, although teachers assess performance in discussion with individual students. The department should introduce a system for the formal monitoring of progress and recording of attainment.
158. In Years 10 and 11, teachers plan well and give students good structured activities. The pace of lessons is good and sometimes brisk, tasks are set which challenge the

students and improve their learning. They extend their knowledge and skills in the use of ICT. Students involve themselves in open discussions which consolidate previous work displaying a wide range of skills and a depth of knowledge in the use of software. In two classes students undertook activities to enhance their GCSE coursework. They were given the task of identifying the difference between a User and a Trouble Shooting Guide and by the end of each lesson, students were able to give examples of how they would use each of the guides. They wrote appropriate sentences and questions to place in each type of guide and most students developed not only their knowledge but also their ability to explain to others the relative contents and purposes of each guide. In another lesson students developed their understanding of the different types of questions used in a survey. By the end of the lesson students were able to give examples of open, closed and multiple choice questions discussing the value and use of each type and giving positive examples to show the differences. In all these lessons learning was positive and reinforced by questions and discussion. The well prepared lessons and demanding tasks used in Years 10 and 11 should ensure that the good results of last year will be maintained. Teachers assess students on a regular basis. The Head of Department assesses all students in the examination classes every lesson to find how they have progressed.

159. Students respond well in ICT lessons and behaviour is good or better. They cooperate with each other and are willing to help fellow students with care and understanding. They freely discuss their work and are able to explain what they are doing and how they use the facilities of the software. They work independently and are willing to experiment and find out new techniques for themselves. In Years 10 and 11 students show much independence in managing and presenting their coursework. They contribute to class discussion, concentrate with enthusiasm, can fully explain the tasks they are undertaking and demonstrate how to use effectively the software to advance these tasks. They are also willing to show initiative in the planning and implementation of their projects.
160. The department is well lead by an enthusiastic head of department. There is a good plan for improvement, but the developments agreed in July 2001 have not yet been fully implemented. If the constructive ideas of the Head of Department about the future expansion of ICT are realised, the school and students will benefit considerably. There has been improvement since the last inspection in the number of computers in the school. The three computer rooms have 16 or 17 computers each and there are plans to re-develop and increase the number per room. However in most classes there are over 25 students, which mean students have to share computers. This is undesirable and may compromise the good quality teaching and learning. In all lessons and in every year students should have access to their own computer. The number of computers is now high and there is not enough technical support. As yet the department has not fully activated the procedures for the monitoring of teaching.
161. There has been improvement since the last inspection in the use of ICT across the curriculum. Inspectors observed some good examples of the use of ICT in lessons. A number of departments use ICT effectively such as music and design and technology. Others such as biology, English and mathematics make some use, and there is limited use in geography, art and physical education. Most departments would like to develop and extend their use of ICT but their enthusiasm is frustrated by the lack of computers and the ease of access to the computer rooms.
162. The current management of cross-curricular ICT is poor. There is not a cross curricular ICT group with representative membership from every department chaired by a member of the senior management team. Consequently there is no

understanding about which department should deliver each element of the ICT curriculum and how progress should be monitored and assessed.

163. Improvement since the last inspection is good but there is potential for further improvements in resources and more curriculum opportunities for students to use ICT both as a separate subject and in other subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is unsatisfactory

Strengths

- Teaching is good in half of the lessons.
- Relationships with students are generally good.
- The accommodation provides a good environment for learning.

Areas for improvement

- The management structure of the subject.
- Students' entitlement and access in Years 10 and 11.
- Access to ICT.

The department should also consider the following:

- Revision of long-term planning to include references to National Curriculum levels and Programme of Study opportunities.
- Resources should match current curriculum requirements.
- A sharper focus on teaching and learning styles with high attaining students.

165. The assessments that teachers made of 14 year old students in 2001 show that attainment was broadly in line with national expectations in both French and German. This has been the trend over the last four years with the exception of 1999, when standards were below national expectations. The standard of work seen during the inspection bears this out. For example, a Year 8 German class were using past tense forms to explain that they had lost items of property. By the end of Year 9 students in French can understand language spoken at near normal speed which covers several topics and includes references to present and past or future events. They can refer to recent experiences or future plans in structured conversations, understand a range of written material and write in simple sentences. Lower attaining students need more repetition of taped material, and their grammatical accuracy is not so secure. Their pronunciation is approximate, but their meaning is usually clear. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in both French and German, although the department could consider planning for these students more specifically.

166. The attainment of 16 year old students in the GCSE examination in French in 2001 was broadly in line with national averages. These results have to be seen in the light of the small numbers of students taking the examination. In German, results were below national averages although the numbers entered are small. Girls performed better than boys. The majority of students who studied a foreign language in 2000 and 2001 followed the Certificate of Achievement course in French or German, and many of them attained a pass at Distinction level. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that for students following either the full or short course to GCSE attainment is in line with expectations. Samples of students' written coursework in French which staff have assessed show that some students are reaching high levels of attainment in written work. They can refer to past, present and future events; they can write in complex sentences and participate in extended conversations on a range of topics. In a Year 10 German class students could produce extended sentences, giving opinions and using more complex structures such as *weil* clauses, and remembering to invert subject and verb following an expression of frequency.

Students following the Certificate of Achievement course in French can operate quite successfully in a fixed number of structured situations. They can participate in short conversations, for example ordering food in a café or taking part in a short telephone conversation, and can read at a basic level, for example simple menus and instructions. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in either French or German in relation to their prior attainment.

167. Students' attitudes to the subject vary and are influenced by differing responses in the wider community as to the value of studying languages. In some groups students are orderly, attentive, and participate with enthusiasm in the activities and tasks set by teachers. This is evident in lessons where there is a good relationship with the class teacher, who uses a variety of planned activities taught at pace. For example, a lower attaining group in Year 7 learning weather expressions in French responded well to flashcards, chorus work and games which involved them actively in learning. Other students show more resistant attitudes to learning a foreign language. These attitudes can show themselves occasionally in challenging behaviour, which teachers usually manage well. More often, however, students can be passive and reluctant to become involved.
168. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In a half of the lessons it was good, but one lesson in five was unsatisfactory. There is a higher proportion of good teaching in Years 10 and 11 in both French and German. Where teaching is good, teachers have clear learning objectives which they share with students. They conduct lessons at pace and use a variety of questioning techniques with humour. This means that students are engaged and involved. They look for ways to maximise their use of French and German, so that students have a good model to imitate. They support meaning clearly with visuals, real objects, mime or gesture so that students have a clear understanding of the key language. Students work individually, as a whole class, or in pairs or small groups so that more of them have an opportunity to speak and listen. They use time well and review learning effectively at the end of the lesson so that students can reflect on the progress they have made. They select homework appropriately.
169. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in both French and German in Years 7 to 9. Where teaching is unsatisfactory students are unclear about the purpose of the lesson; teachers do not pitch work at a level appropriate to the learners in the class; they do not support meaning with visual aids; there is too much emphasis on bookwork and worksheets; there are few opportunities for students to learn actively or interact with each other.
170. Teachers assess students' work quite accurately in both French and German, and have a good knowledge of the standards expected by the National Curriculum levels and the GCSE examinations. They are beginning to share level descriptions with students so that they know what is expected of them.
171. Where the teaching is good, students respond well and make good intellectual efforts in lessons. In a Year 7 French lesson students showed good comprehension of key weather expressions because the teacher involved them actively in labelling visuals on the board. They concentrate and persevere in listening activities and co-operate well in pair work situations, as in a Year 9 French lesson where students were asking each other about minor ailments. When teachers review learning, they can see the gains they have made in acquiring vocabulary or producing extended responses.
172. The curriculum for modern foreign languages fulfils statutory requirements for Years 7, 8 and 9. The time allocation is sufficient for these students, and alternating the first

language between French and German keeps alive the opportunity for studying a second language. The curriculum in years 10 and 11 however, does not meet statutory requirements. The provision of a seven week module of French in Year 10 for students who have previously studied German is insufficient. A small number of students are correctly disappplied from the study of a language, while the majority have no access to accredited courses. The department has worked hard to provide suitable accreditation through the Certificate of Achievement course, but the options structure has made it too easy for students to elect not to follow a course in a modern foreign language, and has effectively ruled out any possibility of a student choosing two languages. This has meant that the modern foreign languages curriculum is exclusive rather than inclusive. The department provides opportunities every year for students to visit either France or a German-speaking country, and until recently has run a residential weekend in Barlaston. The department helps to promote students' social development by using pairwork and groupwork, and the use of circle time also helps students develop listening skills. As a result of this, some students are becoming more confident in themselves and are showing maturity. Teachers contribute to the moral development of students by giving clear messages about right and wrong. They help students' cultural development by communicating a sense of the culture of the target language country, the visits abroad and by arranging visits by a French Theatre in Education company.

173. The department is led by a good classroom practitioner who has a vision for the development of the subject. Unfortunately, his dual role as Head of Year means that he is unable to devote as much time as is needed to his core function, which is that of raising both the profile of modern foreign languages and attainment. As a consequence, the department has not developed as far and as quickly as it should have. Procedures for monitoring student performance are developing, as are performance management arrangements for staff. Time constraints have meant that the development of teaching and learning styles has not had a sufficiently sharp focus. Much of this is a direct consequence of falling rolls, and as such has not been within the power of the department to influence. As the school has contracted over recent years, staff have been obliged to take on wider responsibilities. As far as modern foreign languages is concerned, this has meant that staff have not been able to counter the culture of resistance among students and the community as effectively as they might, despite their considerable efforts in that direction. The negative impact of this situation can be seen clearly in the lack of interest among students in Years 10 and 11 which must be countered as a matter of urgency. There are still no students taking a modern foreign language in the Sixth Form.
174. Departmental documentation is comprehensive, but has not been revised and updated in the light of changes to the modern languages curriculum which came into effect in September 2000, and subsequent developments such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The departmental development plan is presented in a suitable format, and the priorities stated in it are appropriate.
175. The department is housed in an attractive suite of rooms with good office and storage space. The rooms are comfortable and well lit, and the carpets and curtains mean that the acoustics are good. This means that work in listening and speaking benefits enormously from the clarity of sound. With the exception of Year 8 German, resources in the department are inadequate. The texts available to teachers in French are mostly outdated and do not comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum. There are good quality tape recorders available and a TV and VCR, but provision for ICT is non-existent. This means that the department is unable to deliver

the requirements of the National Curriculum Orders for modern foreign languages with regard to ICT.

176. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Although some progress has been made on assessment in Years 7,8 and 9, the issue of access to ICT remains unresolved, the numbers studying languages in Years 10 and 11 has declined and there is now a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is unsatisfactory

Strengths

- There is some good use of computers for composition in all years.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on practical work, including the consideration of the music of other cultures.
- Instrumental teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- Lesson planning and student assessment.
- Work designed to help students of differing attainment, particularly higher attaining students.
- Extra-curricular work and the small amount of instrumental teaching.
- Low expectations.
- Appropriate administrative routines and systems.

177. Students' attainments at the end of Year 9 are average. Standards achieved by students in Years 10 and 11 are often average in composing and performing although aural and appraisal work are below average. In Year 7 lessons students are able to manipulate rhythms with some precision. Keyboard work is used to good effect, for example in a Year 9 lesson on the Indian raga where students were able to use keyboards to combine a variety of musical patterns. At the end of Year 9 students are able to use electronic keyboards and percussion instruments with some degree of competence, for both performance and for composition. Attainment on entry is below average in music and their achievements in Years 7-9 are satisfactory. The department teaches technical terms and this helps to improve attainment in aural appraisal.

178. In 2001, only one of the six GCSE music candidates gained a grade between A* and C. However, the low number of candidates who took the examination invalidates exact comparisons with national statistics. In 2001 the candidates' achievements in music were broadly in line with their attainment in other subjects. GCSE examination results in 2000 were above average with four of the five students achieving better than grade C. At the end of Year 11 attainment is often near average in performing and composing, but below average in appraising music. The achievement in aural and appraisal work of students in Years 10 and 11 is helped by the emphasis that the department places on teaching key words. There is insufficient time spent on helping students to develop a suitable technical vocabulary in extended writing with which to describe the music they hear. Students' compositions display competence in work derived mainly from classroom projects. Coursework in composition often uses a limited harmonic vocabulary and students seldom use inventive developmental

devices in their examination folios. Standards of presentation in composition are sometimes high. Computers are used well in Years 10 and 11 for performance linked to composition and musical scores are well presented as a result. However, students have too few opportunities to develop individual enthusiasms and support composition with their own instrumental skills. This leads to moderate progress across the key stage for most students. The number of students opting to take music for GCSE is low but improving.

179. Progress and development for students with special educational needs are satisfactory throughout the school. Progress is better when work is designed especially to cater for students of differing abilities and students with special educational needs are given additional classroom support. Gifted and talented students are not always challenged enough in music lessons.
180. Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. There are some elements of good practice, for example the emphasis on singing and practical music making. Teachers' knowledge and expertise are sound. Work is usually matched to most students' abilities and teaching helps many students to expand and consolidate their learning. Computer work is underused in Years 7 to 9 but there are a few examples of good use of the limited computer resource at this stage. Lesson planning is poor. This was mentioned in the previous report. Teaching embodies enthusiasm, satisfactory organisation and some suitable work. The balance in work is generally satisfactory although on occasion lessons concentrate on one topic or task and this can cause some students to lose focus. Students' books are marked but Year 9 students have no written record of work. This makes it difficult for students to consolidate skills and review previous work. Folios in Years 10 and 11 are not regularly assessed working documents and this makes it hard for students to estimate their progress. In general the work of students is not routinely assessed and few records of marks are kept. This has a detrimental effect on target setting and student progress. The department undertakes some informal analysis of GCSE results.
181. Teaching ensures that students have opportunities to explore both their own culture and non-Western cultures, for example in the effective use of the gamelan and Indian raga in a Year 9 lesson. Such work helps broaden understanding of other cultures. Satisfactory teaching and suitable resources ensure that students make satisfactory progress across the school. Students have opportunities to develop many necessary musical skills. However, there are only a limited number of current opportunities for students to use information and communication technology appropriately for performance and composition in Years 7 to 9.
182. Visiting instrumental teachers make a small but very worthwhile contribution to the curriculum and their work is managed and integrated into the work of the department. There are three visiting teachers and the range of instruments taught is limited. The number of students who take instrumental lessons is well below average although teaching is good. Students have the opportunity to take instrumental grade examinations and have a record of success up to Grade 5.
183. Students' attitudes in music lessons are usually satisfactory, sometimes good. Their response to teacher-directed tasks is often attentive, with appropriate levels of interest and co-operation. Students often work satisfactorily individually and in small groups. However, they require regular teacher input when working independently and are not always confident when answering questions. Ensemble work is variable with an occasional loss of focus in performances. Students clearly enjoy keyboard work and listen attentively to each other's contributions.

184. The department's organisation is inadequate with many administrative processes at the developmental stage. Schemes of work are satisfactory and the work offered to students meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Leadership of the department has some impact on performance but procedures and day-to-day organisation and planning require development. Assessment is a weak area. These areas were mentioned as requiring development in the previous report. Management of the classroom environment is satisfactory and accommodation is suitable for most musical activities.
185. Extra-curricular activity in music is very limited and there are modest opportunities for students to perform. The performing work of a relatively small number of students is celebrated in the school and in the community in occasional musical events. Such opportunities for performance have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of students; they also foster important links with parents and the community.
186. Since the last report overall progress has been unsatisfactory, particularly in relation to assessment, administrative procedures and management systems. There has however been satisfactory progress in a number of other areas: the improvement of teaching, the use of computers, Year 9 attitudes and the number of students opting for music in Years 10 and 11. The department has developing information technology resources together with good teacher expertise in this area and therefore has the capacity to further improve students' use of computers for musical tasks. Currently, no regular drama or dance lessons are provided under the auspices of the performing arts department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Low attaining students achieve well in the GCSE examination.
- Good teaching enables all students to learn effectively.
- There is enthusiasm and expertise in harnessing modern technology to the curriculum.
- Strong links with community sports clubs enables gifted and talented students to excel.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are far below the average in the GCSE examination.
- The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are unsatisfactory.
- There is poor take-up and limited provision in extra-curricular activities for girls.

187. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were very low when compared with the national average. This shows a decline compared to results in previous years. However, all the students who entered the examination achieved a grade. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Students' results in physical education are lower than those in the other subjects they studied.
188. In the work seen during the inspection, students' attainment in physical activities in Years 7 to 11 is average. This represents a good level of achievement, given the students below average prior attainment on entry to the school.
189. By Year 9, most students of all levels of attainment are competent in a range of games skills. Boys and girls achieve well and make good progress in acquiring the knowledge and skills to equip them to play team and individual games, as displayed in hockey and badminton. High attaining boys in Year 8, for example, demonstrate their mastery of the high clear in badminton, which they can use effectively in the game. The majority of boys show that they understand the basic rules of the game, and can apply their skills with some success in play. Year 8 girls make sound progress in hockey, as they develop their skills through strategic play. Many girls show a good understanding of tactics, as they discuss strategies for team play at penalty corners. Standards are average in gymnastics. Girls and boys show generally good control, as they practise making different shapes in flight. The majority makes good progress, particularly low attainers, who find extension difficult, and take a pride in the improvement they achieve in lessons. Students with special educational needs are well-integrated, and make good progress alongside their classmates. This was well illustrated in a boys' gymnastics lesson, where the demands of the activity successfully challenged students with behavioural problems to focus on control and discipline in their movements, to good effect. Students' skills of planning, performing and evaluating develop, satisfactorily, in most lessons. However, there are few opportunities for individual students to observe, evaluate and comment on performance against specific criteria, and these skills are less well developed. Students have a sound understanding of the need to warm up before strenuous exercise, and perform this well. They learn to do this independently, and high attainers take a lead effectively in group warm ups. Although there are some opportunities for students to develop literacy and numeracy skills, this is not yet a strong element in their learning in physical education lessons. Overall, boys and girls make good progress in their learning in Years 7 to 9.
190. By Year 11, standards in the core programme followed by all students are average, although a few attain at a higher level. Improvement in games continues, and the performance of high attaining boys is well illustrated by the Year 11 football team, which is currently at the top of the district schools' league. In the health-related exercise course, participants in a Year 11 girls' lesson show a satisfactory level of knowledge and understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. However, the overall achievement in this group was affected by the high number of girls, half the total group, who were absent or not participating. This reflects the lack of motivation of some girls in Years 10 and 11, identified in the previous inspection that has not been overcome. Students studying for the GCSE examination attain well, and make very good progress in a theory lesson examining the effect of drugs in sport. No

practical coursework was observed. Students' theoretical coursework reflects a wide range of attainment. However, the work of current students indicates higher standards than those gained in the 2001 examination. Low attaining students continue to achieve well. Although standards are generally below average, the proportion of middle and high attaining students working at the higher grades is similar to the school's targets for the subject. In Years 10 and 11, the progress of the majority of students is good, but it is unsatisfactory for the minority of girls who do not participate regularly in lessons.

191. A good programme of extra-curricular sport, open to all students, offers opportunities for individuals, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel in individual sports. These are well supported by boys and, to a lesser extent, by girls. Opportunities for students to extend their skills in team games are organised separately for boys and girls. As identified in the previous inspection, more boys than girls are involved in extra-curricular games. Female teachers are committed to other areas of the school and there are currently no regular girls' games fixtures. Boys have regular fixtures, and the school is justifiably proud of the successes of its football and cricket teams. For example, both the Year 8 and Year 9 football teams have reached the finals of the District Schools' 5-a-side Football Championships. Individual students gain representative honours at district, country and, occasionally, national level. A student who recently left the school is now playing for the England Under-19 football team.
192. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. The teaching of examination classes is very good. Good relationships between staff and students create a co-operative learning environment. The teachers' management of students and class organisation are generally very good and contribute, significantly, to the high levels of participation, smart standards of dress and good behaviour in almost all lessons. Students are well motivated and have good, often very good, attitudes to the subject, reflected in the high physical effort they put into their work. There was an exception to this, in a Year 11 girls' lesson, where non-participation was high and some girls failed to take learning seriously. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers, whose careful planning ensures that tasks build on previous learning, and students make progress through opportunities to practise new skills. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace, and there is good use of time and resources. Information technology is used to very good effect in examination classes, including outstanding use of PowerPoint for presentation in a GCSE lesson focused on the impact of drugs in sport. In the best lessons, there are clear learning objectives, and sharp perceptive questioning sets a demanding pace of learning, and gives all students a share of responsibility for their own learning through opportunities to observe, analyse and comment on each others' work. This was well illustrated in a boys' gymnastic lesson. Homework is set, appropriately. The marking of GCSE coursework often fails to give students advice on how to improve their work, and teachers do not ensure that missing work is completed. More attention to the development of literacy and numeracy would help students to develop these skills, for example, in the use of key words and the technical language of the subject. Although teaching is good, overall, there are still areas for improvement, which were noted in the previous inspection report. There is a need to match tasks more closely to students' different levels of attainment, to identify learning objectives more clearly and to provide more opportunities for students to take a share of responsibility for their own learning, and gain independence.
193. The leadership and management of physical education are good. There is a clear sense of educational direction, and improved monitoring of the subject's performance. Documentation of the department's work is very good. Excellent use of information

and communication technology, particularly in examination classes, is hindered only by lack of accessibility to appropriate resources. However, there is a lack of monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching, which is having an impact on students' learning. The department has not moved forward sufficiently in this aspect. Similarly, the department has yet to find ways of motivating and involving all girls in Years 10 and 11. Strong links with community sports clubs offer very good opportunities for students, particularly the gifted and talented, to pursue their chosen sport.

194. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Standards of attainment have been maintained in Years 7 to 11. The consequences of changes in the examination syllabus that contributed to last year's poor GCSE results have been resolved, and the department is on course to meet the school's targets for the subject. The good quality of teaching has been maintained.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is very good

Strengths

- There is very high attainment in GCSE and Certificate of Achievement.
- Students make very good progress.
- Teaching and learning are very good
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good.
- The subject makes a considerable contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- There are no areas for development other than to continue to maintain the existing high standards.

195. Students' attainment in religious education is not assessed nationally at the end of Year 9.
196. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 standards of attainment in 2000 and 2001 were well above the national average in the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C and in the proportion gaining the very highest grades A*-A. Over four fifths of students gained grades A*-C and one fifth gained grades A*-A. In both years all students gained a pass grade. The number of students entered for the examination was the highest outside the three subjects of the core curriculum. Although significantly more girls than boys are entered for the examination there is no real difference evident in their performance. A small number of students are entered for the Certificate of Achievement examination. All do well, mostly passing with distinctions.
197. No students have followed an A level course in the last two years. A unit of work in the general studies programme provides for the statutory requirement for religious education in the sixth form.
198. By Year 9 the standard of students' work seen during the inspection is above that expected nationally, even though students enter the school with levels of attainment

below the national average. Boys and girls, and students of all levels of prior attainment, make very good progress. Students in Years 7 to 9 acquire a good knowledge of the principal beliefs and practices of Christianity, Islam and Sikhism, the three religious faiths that they study in depth. They understand how religious beliefs shape the daily lives of individuals and communities and appreciate that certain experiences can have meaning for others if not for themselves. They treat others' beliefs with respect. They make effective use of their own experiences to provide insight into the nature of religious belief. In the course of studying the significance to believers of religious journeys, to Lourdes and to Amritsar, students in Year 7 practised meditation. They found from powerful first hand experience that they can make journeys inward into themselves and write reflective, highly personal responses to the experience. They think well about all that is presented to them and are honest in their responses. They understand clearly that Christianity and Sikhism demand that you should help your enemy, but will acknowledge their personal difficulties in carrying out such a precept. They are able to enter well into debate about such issues, listening carefully to each other and respecting other points of view, while considering their own response. They have a mature understanding of the nature of religious belief.

199. Students in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress and their attainment is above the national average. Students in Year 10 have a good knowledge of the major events in the life of Jesus and of their significance. They have a lively awareness of the political conflicts that surrounded His crucifixion. Students in Year 11 have a good understanding of the Christian perspective on social and world issues. They build well on the foundations that they developed in Years 7-9 in seeing humankind as stewards of the world that God created. They can relate writing in both the Old and the New Testament to current ethical and moral issues such as famine, world debt and fair trade. They use their good knowledge of the New Testament to integrate well quotations into their writing. Students in both Years 10 and 11 have a very good religious vocabulary and use it effectively in lessons to share their thinking, to hypothesise and to deepen their understanding.
200. Students' attitudes to learning are very good and their behaviour is never less than very good and is often excellent. They enjoy their lessons, are attentive and interested and waste no time. Their written work is very carefully presented, including that of students with special educational needs, including some who have considerable difficulty in writing neatly. They respond with enthusiasm to the teachers' invitations to read aloud and often try hard to read with expression. They listen to each other when they are reading aloud and help each other sensitively with difficult words. They enter enthusiastically into debate and discussion then equally enthusiastically write up their own thoughts on the topic under discussion, again including students with special educational needs who find writing difficult. They think hard during lessons and often experience flashes of insight. Students with special educational needs in one class in Year 8 suggested that conditions in Belsen might be compared with those of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, and in another that the treatment of Jews in Hitler's Germany had parallels with the treatment that Afghans received under Taliban rule.
201. The high standards of attainment and response from students are the result of the very high quality of teaching. All teaching is very good and some is excellent. There are excellent features in every lesson. Lessons are well planned, learning objectives are made clear and excellent resources are used. Teachers use a variety of activities in each lesson to engage students' interest and keep them on task. Teachers' relationships with their students are excellent. All teaching is focused very directly and consciously on ensuring that students learn well: it is stimulating and challenging.

Practical activities such as making Hindu shrines or Hanukkah cards, designing posters to advertise for an altar server, or making leaflets to express their views on animal rights, deepen students' learning. The use of drama, short video film clips and a variety of ingenious ways of engaging students in exchanging views, all involve students actively in the lessons. Students' learning is constantly assessed, by questioning during lessons, and by very constructive and thorough marking of students' written work. All students cover the same subject content but the writing tasks and discussions are appropriately modified for students with special educational needs while much more is demanded of gifted and talented students.

202. Students' experiences in their religious education lessons make a very significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The topics that are covered in lessons address these areas of development very directly but the high quality of teaching, of learning and of students' attitudes mean that students' experiences in these areas are deepened and enriched. Their spiritual awareness, self-knowledge and sense of responsibility are particularly well nurtured.
203. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The very close working relationship between the two teachers creates a synergy from which students benefit. They work together to develop ever-new ideas for teaching and are unafraid to experiment. The curriculum is enriched by visits to a range of faith communities and Year 7 spend a stimulating day in a local church participating in a range of church related activities such as rubbing brasses, making banners etc, assisted by church members. Although the use of information and communication technology is limited by its availability, it is built into units of work in every year group and many students make good use of it for homework.
204. The department has maintained the high standards of the last inspection.

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

205. In the inspection, five 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.
206. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	5	40	87	0	43	2.0	5.8
Biology	1	0	88	0	34	0	5.3
Physics	2	0	88	0	40	0	5.7
Full Design and Technology	6	83	91	17	30	4.0	5.4
Economics	4	100	89	25	36	6.0	5.5
Computer Studies	5	80	86	20	23	5.2	4.6
Sports/PE Studies	1	100	92	0	25	4.0	5.1
Health and Social Care VQ	1	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	0	10.8
Art and Design	9	89	96	0	46	2.7	6.8
Other Social Studies	6	100	87	50	34	6.33	5.3
English Literature	2	100	95	50	37	7.0	5.9
Communication Studies	4	100	93	75	31	8.5	5.5

Intermediate vocational qualifications

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

207. The focus was on mathematics and biology but physics was also sampled. Ten students are taking the AS level physics course, the first group to undertake this qualification. Students' prior attainment spanned a wide spectrum but was above average in the lesson seen. The quality of teaching was good. A well-planned sequence of activities sustained interest and pace in this three-hour session. Very good questioning helped students to evaluate their results, argue, and debate with each other. Precise feedback helped students to identify any false strategies in calculations. Students from all three consortium schools co-operated well and felt they were able to make good use of the facilities on each of the sites.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in both years.
- Small classes mean that students receive generous help.
- Teachers know students well and relationships are good.
- Good use of homework supports and extends work in classes.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results are inconsistent from year to year.
- Few high attainers have chosen to continue with mathematics into the sixth form and other students find the transition from GCSE difficult.
- The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

208. Results in the A level examination in 2001 were well below average. In 1999 and 2000 too few students entered the examination to permit reliable comparison with national figures. Even so, results over the three years have been below average overall. High attaining students have not, in the main, opted to study A level mathematics. In the three last years levels of attainment on entry to the course in Year 12 have been below average, and many students could not cope with the final examination. For 2001, the school changed the syllabus and results in AS level were satisfactory and in line with the school's predictions. One student gained an A grade.
209. Year 13 students have a good understanding of the basic methods of differentiation and integration and can apply these to solve problems. Some students reach above-average standards. Basic work is thorough but applications give students some difficulty. Teachers know students well, however, and give good support. Work in algebra and trigonometry is sound and students can apply well the appropriate graphs. Learning is enhanced by students' positive attitudes, good relationships, careful planning by teachers and the use of appropriate homework.
210. The present Year 12 entered the sixth form at a higher level of attainment than has been the case in previous years and most gained A grades at GCSE. Most demonstrate good understanding of the new terms they encounter, although some struggle. They are well supported, however, and are growing in confidence. During their first term students were introduced to the basics of differentiation and integration and their simple applications in preparation for the pure mathematics paper. Students coped well with these concepts. There was also extended learning in algebra and trigonometry which built on previous experience at GCSE. The quality of work seen in response to challenging problems was slightly above average with students concentrating hard to produce correct solutions.
211. Teaching is good and students make clear gains in knowledge and understanding. The strengths in teaching include good subject knowledge and thorough planning which takes students' needs into account. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and work set, including homework, is appropriate and challenging. Marking is thorough and includes constructive comments and advice about how to improve. Assessment is used to plan revision sessions which meet students' needs. Questioning is pitched at an appropriate level for each students and always tests understanding by

systematically requiring students to justify their thinking and to explain why some answers are incorrect. Work is intellectually challenging but there is not enough individual target-setting.

212. Learning is good. Students are very focused in lessons and relate well to the teachers. They want to do their best and feel confident enough to attempt challenging problems. They are not deterred when they make mistakes, are confident in discussions and are involved in question and answer sessions. They support each other and share ideas, talking and listening sensibly. Newly introduced topics include a review of previous work to reinforce understanding. Students are very positive about the course and speak well of the teaching they receive. They are clear about their progress and what they need to do to improve. Students undertake some independent work which improves their study skills. ICT is not used regularly because of a lack of appropriate software and computers.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is good.

Strengths

- Very good, well-planned teaching is underpinned by strong subject knowledge.
- There is good co-operation and mutual support amongst students.
- Sharing of resources and facilities in the three schools is good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment at AS and A level.
- The length of time between lessons.

213. Over the past three years the number of students taking A level biology has varied but has always been too small to make reliable comparisons with national figures. All six students in the present Year 13 are expected to gain a grade. Students' attainment in lessons and in their course work was above average. In their study of photosynthesis students showed good knowledge of chloroplasts as organelles and learned it is the thylakoid grana which absorb light. After extracting chlorophyll from a sample of grass they used thin layer chromatography to identify its constituent pigments and used the relevant equation competently.

214. The performance of the six students who took AS level in 2001 was below average: one student gained a C grade, the rest gained Ds. There is a wide span of attainment in the present AS and A2 groups. Only a minority of students take mathematics or chemistry as part of their course so some find the biochemical topics such as the Krebs cycle very difficult, but students persevere. In a topic on personal fitness they showed good knowledge. They understand the relationship between pulse-rate, respiration and blood pressure and can describe the differences between tidal and residual volume. They distinguish clearly between aerobic and anaerobic exercise and know their importance in fitness. Most students have good skills in ICT to support their assignment work. All had been set the task of researching the range of fitness tests available. Students had prepared plans capably to test their own personal fitness. Several well-presented assignments showed very good use of the Internet and the ability to extract and synthesise useful information including fitness data tables.

215. The quality of teaching is very good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they modify appropriately to ensure that students have access to new ideas at a suitably demanding level. New material is presented very clearly, learning objectives are made clear at the start of lessons to help students assess their own achievements. Students' knowledge is checked and extended by careful questioning. A good feature of teaching is in the way classic breakthroughs in the developing understanding of biological processes are introduced, for example, Eglemann's elegant and simple experiment to determine the sites of photosynthesis in spirogyra. Students come to appreciate science as a continuous and continuing human endeavour of which they are part. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' personal development. Teachers' marking and students' assignments show very thorough assessment of progress which helps student set realistic and challenging targets.
216. Relationships between teachers and students and amongst students from the three schools are very good. Students behave in a mature and responsible way and are committed to their work. Students learn well because they work systematically and co-operatively. They are well motivated. The timetabling of three-hour teaching sessions poses a challenge to their concentration. Teachers manage the time well, however, by dividing the time into several shorter slots, integrating practical and theoretical work and maintaining good pace. The long gaps between teaching sessions, sometimes as much as ten days create difficulties for both teachers and students. More use could be made of ICT networking arrangements to maintain contact.
217. The subject is well managed. There is good co-operation amongst teachers in the consortium schools who meet regularly. Topics to be taught are carefully planned and prepared and the criteria for assessments are made clear to students. Students appreciate the resources that are available on the three sites. The curriculum is enhanced as a result of opportunities offered by the consortium.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

BUSINESS

218. Business studies at A level was sampled. Although numbers of students taking business studies have varied considerably in recent years all students have passed the examination and business studies is their highest grade for over half the students. Only six students were entered for A level in 2001 and although numbers were too small for reliable comparisons to be made, students achieved an average points score above the national average. There are nine students in the present Year 13. The group did not fulfil predictions of performance at AS level last year although there were three students who attained grade A but overall attainment in the group is above average. Only one student left the course in Year 12. Teaching is good. Students demonstrated very mature attitudes and the capacity to work independently in a lesson on the way external business influences affect decision-making. A very good feature of the lesson was the one-to-one review of targets and progress in coursework. Very good use is made of assessment data.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

219. Physical education was sampled. In 2001, one student was entered for the A level examination and one for the AS examination. Both students passed. The

achievements of students in Years 12 and 13 are satisfactory in relation to their previous attainment. Students generally complete the course although last year two students left to take up employment. One lesson in Year 13 was seen. The quality of teaching in the history of sport course was very good. Questioning was probing and perceptive and led to a demanding pace of learning. Students responded with increasing confidence, drawing on their own knowledge and experience. Relationships were very good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

220. Health and social care was sampled. One student in Year 12 and one in Year 13 are taking AVCE health and social care and are taught together. Attainment in the lesson seen was average and teaching good. Achievement is satisfactory given students' prior attainment. Students and teacher were discussing the physical, social and emotional development, which takes place in infancy. Pace was sustained despite the small number in the class and the three-hour teaching session. Four of the six students who started the course have left. One student took the course in 2001 but did not pass.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good; planning is good and theory and practical work are well integrated
- The range of courses is good.
- Students achieve good standards of work.
- Relationships between students and staff are excellent.
- Monitoring, assessment and feedback are very thorough.

Areas for improvement

- The integration of ICT across all courses.
- The limited space for students to work.

221. The school offers a good range of art and design courses. These include full-time courses leading to GNVQ and GCE A level courses in art and design. The number of students taking these courses is not high but students indicated in discussion that without this opportunity they would not be involved in further education. A high proportion of students continue to higher education and foundation courses in art and design.

222. Overall standards are above average but there have been variations in examination results since the last inspection. The small numbers of students make comparison with national averages unreliable. Although few students achieve the higher grades results are above average overall. Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment and gain entry to competitive foundation programmes each year.

223. The quality of work in students' portfolios confirms these standards on all courses. Students develop appropriate vocational and technical skills and can talk about their work knowledgeably and with enthusiasm. They display ability and understanding in engaging with the work of contemporary and classical artists, which is reflected in their day-to-day work. Some students show exceptional flair, for example in painting large-scale work based on conceptual rather than observational starting points. Portfolios of art and design work show that students have carried out thoughtful investigation and creative exploration of ideas, in particular, one student's research and design figures for role-play gaming.
224. Taking account of the broad range of attainment indicated by students' GCSE results, achievement is good overall. One student, for example, had not studied art and design for two years but was making very good progress and had caught up very well. The challenge of the work and the guidance offered lead to good progress.
225. The quality of teaching is very good overall. In the very good lessons and in the best of the others, students are set very challenging work to which they respond with enthusiasm. Theory and practical work are effectively integrated, for example in writing a critical statement on the "sound, noise, music" project. Teachers are particularly good at drawing on cultural diversity to stimulate creative ideas. Aboriginal, African and Celtic artworks are used to stimulate and to initiate developments. Project briefs are well designed: they include clear aims and objectives, staged tasks, well-defined assessment criteria and deadlines for progress. Consequently, students understand well what is required of them and work at a very good pace, making good progress. The use of a wide range of resources maintains students' interest and helps them to learn although better access to ICT for both staff and students is needed. Teachers prepare students well for group work and encourage independent learning where appropriate. They are very effective in developing students' capacity for making and taking constructive criticism, for example, on one occasion a member of staff brought in his own work and analysed this in terms of primary and secondary source material. Students work well on their own and in small groups and learn well from each other.
226. Teachers monitor students' work thoroughly. Assignments and assessments are discussed and the arrangements for the co-ordination and checking of assessment processes are good. Students receive regular support and feedback on their progress and are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. All students speak highly of the support provided by teachers.
227. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Communication between consortium staff and teachers is effective and staff meet regularly. Students benefit from enthusiastic and highly committed teachers who work well together. Teachers set targets for pass rates and regularly monitor progress against these targets. Courses are well managed and resources are adequate although students would benefit from more space in which to work. Individual work areas for students would considerably enhance current provision and could improve recruitment. Issues raised by surveys of students' views have been resolved well by the department.

HUMANITIES

228. The focus was on geography but psychology was sampled. Six students were entered for psychology in 2001. All students passed and three attained the highest grades. There are seventeen students in the present Year 13 group. Overall attainment is average. In a lesson on psychology and environment students were

involved in an experiment testing the positive role of noise, in particular the effect of Mozart on a group of students. Students participate well in discussion and were able to apply theory and evidence to real life events. Teaching was satisfactory.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students reach the standards expected.
- Relationships between teachers and students in the consortium are good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT
- Resources are poor.

229. In 2000, the last year in which students were entered for the A level examination, attainment was well below the national average. Only one of two students entered obtained a pass grade.

230. The standard of students' work seen during the inspection in Year 12 is in line with national expectations. Students are making satisfactory progress. They are able to analyse and interpret a range of materials, including maps, photographs and statistics to identify key issues in a land use conflict case study. They can reach independent and different conclusions and effectively challenge each other's reasoning. They use a variety of geographical techniques to carry out first hand investigation into an environmental problem, the effectiveness of erosion management at Barlaston Downs, and present a written commentary. They subject their research to statistical examination and draw sustainable conclusions. Their written accounts are illustrated with appropriately annotated maps, photographs, and diagrams drawn from their own data. Some work is poorly presented, however and not all have completed their studies. There are no students from the school in Year 13.

231. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare stimulating tasks for students. Students enjoy the lessons, are interested in their work, and work hard in lessons, so their learning is good. Relationships amongst students from different schools in the consortium and with teachers from both schools are good. Learning is constantly assessed during lessons through discussion and questioning by the teacher so that the teaching is sensitive to students' learning needs. The quality of teaching, however, is affected by the school's lack of resources. There is too narrow a range of resources to challenge students fully: there are no computers available for essential research, and even such basic equipment as a large map showing the Pacific Ocean is unavailable. The marking and grading of work are sometimes too generous so that some Year 12 students are uncertain about the standards required at this level.

232. The poor leadership and management of the subject overall have not affected the quality of sixth form provision except in the paucity of resources. Teachers from both schools in the consortium work closely together and meet regularly and formally so that provision for geography in the sixth form is effectively managed. Since the last

inspection students have continued to make satisfactory progress and to achieve in line with their capabilities.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

233. The focus of the inspection was on English although the course on media studies was sampled. There are currently two students following the AS media studies course and seven following the A2 course. The media studies course is relatively recently established – the first entry for the previous A level course was in 2000. The numbers entered for the examination in 2000 and 2001 are too small to make valid comparisons with national data although all students achieved a grade. Attainment in the new AS examination in 2001 was good and is likely to be above average when national comparisons are available. All seven students achieved a grade, including four grade A's. Achievement in relation to attainment on entry to the course was satisfactory, and at least half the students did better than expected. All have continued with the A2 course. The quality of teaching in media studies is good. There is good support for students from a variety of teacher-prepared task sheets, transcripts and information sheets. Marking is thorough and helpful in identifying points for development. The standards of work are at least in line with the national average. Students make good progress in this subject.

English Literature

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

Strengths

- Good results in the 2001 AS examination.
- Teaching is good
- Students are encouraged to acquire independent study skills..
- The programme of study has been adapted well to the demands of the new AS and A2 courses.

Areas for improvement

- Sustain the improvement in attainment.
- Sustain the increase in numbers of students taking the course.

234. Attainment in English literature has improved in recent years. The numbers of students taking the previous A level English literature course have been too small to make valid comparisons with national data. One student in 2001 achieved a grade A and all students passed. Currently five students are taking the new AS course and sixteen are taking the new A2 course. The take-up from AS to A2 has been good, with sixteen of the seventeen AS students last year continuing into Year 13. At AS, all seventeen students obtained a grade and their achievement, in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the course, was at least satisfactory and, for half of the students, good. Attainment was good and is likely to be above average when national comparisons are available.

235. The standards of work are at least in line with those expected nationally. Students demonstrate, in both class and written work, the capacity to read and respond to the set texts at an appropriate level, using the specialist language of literature study. They use evidence from the text to support their oral and written answers and, in their

writing, are accustomed to support their conclusions with reference to works of literary criticism.

236. Students in Year 12 show a good knowledge of *Othello* from their reading of the play and use it well to inform their assessment of the critical interpretation of the text by Bradley. They discuss the interpretation in groups articulately and very thoughtfully, with a high level of interest and enthusiasm. Students in Year 13 show good perception in exploring Shakespeare's sonnets, working in pairs to present prepared commentaries which are then discussed by the class. They are familiar with sonnet forms and respond well to the opportunity to contribute to analysis and interpretation and are able to recognise the significance and effect of imagery. In the study of *Measure for Measure* Year 13 students read the text very capably, although they are less confident in their contributions to discussion, perhaps because they find the text less accessible. They understand motivation and consequence, however, and take their own notes assiduously. Their learning is very active – they have prepared and deliver their own commentaries, which are perceptive and show good knowledge and understanding.
237. Students' views about the course are positive. They believe the course is well organised, although some of the new course materials for AS arrived late. They appreciate the clear way in which teachers explain the assessment criteria. They enjoy open discussion and opportunities to participate actively in lessons. They feel well supported by teachers who are generous with their time and effort.
238. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared. Good use is made of directed questioning informed by good subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers' commentary on the texts is authoritative so that students are engaged and understanding develops well. Relationships are good, students and teachers relate in a mature and good-humoured way which encourages the interchange of ideas. Students' work is carefully marked, with detailed and helpful suggestions for development. The good emphasis on active learning enables students to acquire independent study skills and they make good progress.
239. The leadership and management of English literature in the sixth form are good. The relatively limited resources of the department are well-deployed to the benefit of the students. Students' attainment and progress is recorded very systematically and they benefit from the good relationships they have developed with their teachers, who know them well. The department has responded well to the change to the new course.