

INSPECTION REPORT

BUXTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Buxton, Derbyshire

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112970

Headteacher: Mr Alan Kelly

Reporting inspector: Dr K C Thomas
OIN: 3390

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 February 2002

Inspection number: 222419

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: College Road
Buxton
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Alan Pimblett
Date of previous inspection: 13 March 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3390	Ken Thomas	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15396	Ronald Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
12356	Richard Dickason	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form) Physics (sixth form)	
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English Drama English as an additional language	
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology Design and technology (sixth form)	
20619	Jennifer Hazlewood	Team inspector	Business studies (sixth form)	
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art Art (sixth form)	
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music	
19452	Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education	

10941	Renee Robinson	Team inspector	Information and communications technology Health studies (sixth form)	
27983	Mary Sewell	Team inspector	English (sixth form)	
11300	Barry Smith	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
1845	Robert Tweed	Team inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities	
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	History History (sixth form)	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Buxton Community School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11-18, situated in the town of Buxton in north Derbyshire. The school is over-subscribed and the number of students in the school has increased by about five per cent since the last inspection. The school is bigger than other comprehensive schools with a sixth form. There are 1282 students on roll, including 132 students in the sixth form, and slightly more boys than girls. The school serves the town of Buxton and the surrounding area and has a broad social mix. There are very few pupils, four only, of minority ethnic group origin. Although two pupils have English as an additional language, neither is at an early stage of English language acquisition. The attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 while covering the full attainment range, is below average overall. The proportion of students with special educational needs, at 13.5 per cent, is about the same as the national average, while the proportion of students with statements, at almost four per cent is above. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals, at almost ten per cent, is below the national average. At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to be underachieving. The school has some difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified temporary teachers to cover staff absence.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective and improving school. The headteacher gives very good leadership and this is reflected in the good quality of education the school now provides. Teaching and learning are mostly good, often very good and occasionally excellent. In comparison with schools nationally, overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are average, at the end of Year 11 they are above average and at the end of Year 13 they are very high. Resources are very well managed and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership and management are promoting good teamwork and a strong commitment to continued improvement
- Very good teaching and high expectations in art lead to very high standards of work and outstanding achievement in this subject
- Pupils' attitudes to school are very good: they respond well to the good opportunities for personal development that the school provides
- The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of courses in Years 10 and 11, and excellent provision for extra-curricular activities
- Effective oversight from the governing body and very good financial control and planning are ensuring that the school makes good use of its resources
- Excellent use is made of the school's very close links with the local community to enhance the quality of education that the school provides

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment of boys at the end of Year 11
- Attainment in science at the end of Years 9 and 11
- Teaching and learning in drama
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by heads of department and other middle managers
- The use of information and communications technology to support teaching and learning in most subjects
- The use of computers to meet National Curriculum requirements in music in Years 7 to 9

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection, when the school was judged to be underachieving. Teaching is better now and overall National Curriculum test results have improved at the

same rate as those nationally while GCSE results have risen at a faster rate. Sixth form results have improved markedly. Good progress has been made on the key issues identified in the last report, including improvement in teaching, attainment, school management and in learning resources for information and communications technology (ICT). There is now a more unified drive for improvement in all subjects. Underpinning this is the more effective use of assessment information for evaluating performance and setting targets. There are now planned programmes for thought-for-the-day and assemblies, although practice is inconsistent. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Although the overall results in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, in English, mathematics and science have risen at the same rate at the national trend over the past four years, there are differences between subjects. While results in mathematics have risen over the past two years, results in English and science have declined. In the 2001 tests, the results in mathematics were above average in comparison with all schools and average in comparison with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances. However, results in English and science were below average in comparison with all schools and well below in comparison with similar schools. Inspection evidence indicates that curriculum changes implemented to raise standards in English are having positive effects and the attainment of pupils now in Year 9 is close to national expectations. However, changes implemented to raise standards in science have yet to have any impact and the attainment of pupils now in Year 9 remains below expectations. Inspection evidence shows the attainment in mathematics of pupils now in Year 9 to be above expectations. Girls tend to achieve higher standards than boys in English, but there are no consistent differences in mathematics and science. Comparisons of standards of attainment on entry with the results obtained in end of Year 9 tests show that achievement is satisfactory.

Results in the GCSE examination have been rising at a faster rate than the national trend over the past four years. In 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining at least five A* to C grades was just above the school's target. The results were average in comparison with all and similar schools. These results represent good achievement based on pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. This is seen when the results are compared with schools whose pupils had similar levels of attainment at the end of Year 9. This comparison shows the 2001 GCSE results to be well above average. Results in English were above average and in mathematics average in comparison with all and similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in physics and biology was above average, while results in chemistry were about average. However, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the double award examination was significantly below average. When all science results are combined the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades was below average both for all and similar schools. Boys' results were below those of girls in all three core subjects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. In 2001 virtually all gained GCSE grades in the A* to G range, with many gaining grades in the higher A* to C range. The few pupils with English as an additional language are also achieving well. Appropriately higher targets have been set for 2002.

Results at A-level in 2001 were very high, and in the highest five per cent in comparison with post-16 providers nationally. These results represent very good achievement relative to students' standards of attainment at the end of Year 11. The results of girls were slightly above those of boys, although the

difference was about the same as that observed nationally. A-level results have improved markedly since the last inspection, when they were about the same as the national average. Results of vocational courses in leisure and tourism in 2001 were very good. All students entered gained a distinction, although small numbers of students were involved. About 50 per cent of the pupils in Year 11 generally stay on to the sixth form; most of the rest continue in education or training and about 15 per cent enter employment. Most students continue from Year 12 into Year 13. At the end of Year 13, a small minority continue in further education and nearly all of the rest, about 75 per cent, progress to higher education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Generally very good and having a positive impact on the progress pupils are making.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory, and good in the vast majority of lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Older pupils, including sixth formers, mentor younger pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and from all backgrounds participate well in all aspects of the life of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. The unauthorised absence rate is above average. Sixth form attendance is satisfactory.

A small but significant number of younger pupils do not behave well in some lessons. This behaviour is most often seen in Year 9 lessons and frequently when the teacher is temporary and has not established clear classroom routines. Sixth form students feel they are treated as adults and respected. They have positive attitudes and their personal development is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are good overall. Examples of good teaching were seen in all subjects and of very good teaching in many, including support for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching and learning are very good in art and good in all other subjects, apart from science and drama, where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. There were examples of excellence in teaching in art, history and mathematics. Literacy is well taught in English in Years 7 to 9 and is being given increasing emphasis in all subjects. Numeracy teaching is satisfactory. In the great majority of lessons, which are well taught, students concentrate and learn well. Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding. In the best lessons pupils learn systematically because work is effectively organised. However, weaknesses in planning leading to a slow pace and a lack of direction in lessons contributed to unsatisfactory teaching in science and drama. Much sixth form teaching is characterised by high expectations and challenging tasks that involve students in a suitable range of activities. Teaching of this quality makes a direct contribution to the high standards students are achieving.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in Years 7 to 9. Very good range of courses in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to achieve well. Sixth form provision includes a very good range of A-level subjects and opportunities for students with a wide range of interests and abilities
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Provision is well organised and carefully monitored. Good support for pupils' learning through well-constructed individual education plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils make good progress as a result of the good support they receive.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, with strengths in social, moral and cultural development. Adults provide good role models. Opportunities for reflection are provided in assemblies but limited awareness of the contributions that every subject can make to pupils' spiritual development. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for and information on their progress is used effectively to monitor and support their improvement.

Extra-curricular activities are excellent and include numerous sports, music, drama, art exhibitions and revision activities. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is very good. Links with parents are satisfactory. The school actively encourages parents to come to help but few are able to take the opportunity to do so. Where they are able to help, their work is much appreciated.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher ensures clear direction, and good teamwork among competent senior and middle managers generates a positive ethos. The sixth form is effectively managed. Much improved leadership in many areas of the school has had a significant impact on the progress pupils are making.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors provide good support to the school. Other than the provision of collective worship, the full National Curriculum requirements in science and music, and the provision of religious education in the sixth form, statutory requirements are fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Planning, monitoring and evaluation, both of results and of priorities for improvement, are strengths.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is increasing the range of opportunities on a tight budget. The school seeks to get the best value when buying services and in making educational decisions.

All teaching posts are filled, with a good match between qualification and teaching responsibilities, but the school has to rely on temporary staff to fill gaps caused by absence through illness or by recruitment difficulties in some subjects. While some new staff manage pupils very well, others have problems and pupils' learning is interrupted. Learning resources are adequate but not all subjects use

computers as much as they should. The accommodation is good and buildings are very well maintained.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good progress their children are making • Their children are expected to work hard • Their children like school • The approachability of school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Homework • The closeness with which the school works with parents • The information the school provides

The school has satisfactory links with parents and most parents have positive views about the school. Many parents were keen to let the inspection team know about the ways in which the school has improved over the past two years. Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They found that although a minority of mainly younger pupils do not behave well in some lessons, behaviour overall is satisfactory and in many lessons it is good. It was also their view that the amount of homework set is appropriate for the needs of pupils, there are sufficient opportunities for parents to work closely with the school and that parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

BUXTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form, with 132 students, is about the same size as most. The number of students is about the same as at the time of the last inspection in 2000. Most of the students progress into Year 12 from within Buxton Community School and a small number join from other schools. There are few students of minority ethnic origin and few bilingual students. None are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Two students have special educational needs, one with a statement for specific learning difficulties and one for physical impairment. Students are usually required to have achieved a grade C in an appropriate subject before embarking on an A-level course, although exceptions are made. Many were of average ability on entry to the school in Year 7. The school offers a very good range of subjects, including 23 GCE AS and A2 levels. In addition, there is an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in health and social care and four distance learning courses in accountancy, sociology, law and economics. The courses provided meet the needs of most students. Leadership and management are effective. Most students continue from Year 12 into Year 13. At the end of Year 13, a small minority continue in further education and nearly all of the rest, about 75 per cent, progress to higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful and is cost-effective. Students' achievement is very good and results have risen to be very high, and in the highest five per cent, in comparison with schools nationally. The sixth form caters very well for students. They are provided with a very good range of courses from which to make choices and a highly suitable environment for their personal development. The overall quality of teaching is very good in most subjects. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in sixth form lessons during the inspection. Both leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

Strengths

- Achievement is very good and standards are high in many subjects
- The sixth form ethos is one in which all staff and students work and learn together in an atmosphere of mutual respect
- Teaching is very good in most subjects and this enables students to make good gains in their learning
- Assessment is used effectively to monitor and support students' progress and set targets for improvement
- Sixth form students display a great deal of maturity and offer excellent role models for younger pupils
- Effective leadership provides a clear direction for the development of the sixth form and is well supported by governors and staff of the school

What could be improved

- The provision of religious education to meet statutory requirements
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in most subjects

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
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Mathematics	Good. A-level results are well above average. Students are achieving very well in response to teaching that is good or very good.
Biology	Good. The 2001 A-level examination results were well above average and much improved compared with the previous year. Very good teaching and high expectations create a classroom ethos in which students work hard.
Physics	Very good. Examination results are very high in comparison with national figures. Teaching and students' achievement are very good. Many students exceeded their predicted grades in 2001.
Design and technology	Good. Students progress well in response to good teaching. Results are above average.
Business studies	Good. Results are consistent with predicted grades. Teaching provides good challenges to students of all attainment levels. The teacher's very good subject knowledge helps students to achieve well.
GNVQ Health and social care	Good. Teaching is good and lessons are well planned. Students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE examination grades.
Art	Very good. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are outstanding. Very high expectations, very good and often excellent teaching, along with the students' interest and commitment to their work, are at the heart of consistently high achievement in art.
History	Very good. Results are significantly above the national average. Very good teaching promotes very good achievement relative to students' GCSE results.
English Literature	Very good. Results are well above average. Teaching is very good and students' achievement is well above predictions.

Lessons in English language, chemistry, drama, geography, ICT, French, German, music, media studies, religious education, psychology and physical education were sampled. The quality of teaching was generally good. Students are progressing well, except in chemistry, where progress is satisfactory, and media studies, where it is very good. Results were very high in English language and geography and well above average in media studies, music and physical education. Results were above average in French and German, but the number of entries was small. Work is well planned in most subjects, and the precise use of technical language is helping students to develop good understanding of concepts in most subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Assessment is used effectively to guide students' progress. Students are known well individually and they receive good guidance and support.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective. Arrangements are co-ordinated and monitored well. Performance is carefully analysed and evaluated and appropriate action taken to raise standards further. The school is alert to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all students.

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"> • Students feel that they are taught well and challenged to do their best • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise others to join • They feel they have a suitable choice of courses for their career aspirations • They feel teachers are accessible to help when they encounter difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers advice and guidance • The information they receive on their progress • Information provided before entry to the sixth form • The range of extra-curricular activities

Inspectors feel students' favourable views are justified. The vast majority of students are very positive about the sixth form, the range of opportunities it offers them, and the guidance and support they receive. The inspection team could find little evidence to support students' opinions on what could be improved. Indeed, students who were interviewed during the week of the inspection contradicted these opinions. Careers advice is very good and the range of extra-curricular activities is excellent. Students and parents are provided with detailed information on the opportunities the sixth form offers through the prospectus and consultation evenings. Through effective assessment procedures the school provides students with good information on the progress they are making.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

Main school

1. The attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7, while covering a wide range, is below average overall. Although there are no consistent differences in standards of attainment on entry between boys and girls in mathematics and science, girls enter the school with higher standards in English than boys. Although the overall results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 have risen at the same rate as the national trend over the past four years, the overall trend has been affected by the results in English and science. While results in mathematics have risen over the past two years, results in English and science have declined. In the 2001 tests, the results in mathematics were above average in comparison with all schools and average in comparison with similar schools, based on pupils' entitlement to free school meals. However, results in English and science were below average in comparison with all schools and well below in comparison with similar schools. The differences in standards of attainment between boys and girls on entry are reflected in the end of Year 9 test results. Girls tend to achieve higher standards than boys in English, but there are no consistent differences in mathematics and science.
2. Comparisons of the results obtained in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 with the results obtained by the same pupils in the tests taken at the end of Year 6 show that pupils' achievement in mathematics was good. In science pupils achieved the standards expected of them, while in English pupils did less well than expected.
3. Following the 2001 results the English department has implemented a number of changes to raise standards in Years 7 to 9. These changes include a revision of the English curriculum to incorporate the National Literacy Strategy and build on the literacy work covered in the primary schools. The indications are that these changes are having positive effects. Inspection evidence suggests that the attainment of pupils now in Year 9 is close to the national average. This represents good achievement throughout Years 7 to 9. However, inspection evidence indicates that changes implemented to raise standards in science have yet to have any impact and as a result, the attainment of pupils now in Year 9 remains below average. Consistent with the test results in mathematics, inspection evidence indicates that the attainment in mathematics of the pupils now in Year 9 is above average.
4. The 2001 teacher assessments in other subjects show standards at the end of Year 9 to be at or above national expectations in geography and history and to be above the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education. Standards in design and technology, ICT, art and music were assessed to be consistent with expectations while in modern foreign languages and physical education they were below. Girls achieved higher standards than boys in all subjects other than physical education. When standards of attainment on entry are taken into account, achievement by the end of Year 9 was very good in geography and good in all other subjects.
5. Pupils make good progress overall across Years 10 and 11 and results in the GCSE examinations have been good relative to standards of attainment at the end of Year 9. Over the past four years GCSE examination results have risen at a faster rate than the national trend. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE higher A* to C grades in 2001 was average in comparison with all schools and similar schools, while the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades was above average in comparison with all schools and similar schools. The GCSE average point score is a broader indicator of pupils' performance across the full grade range. This shows pupils' performance in 2001 to be above average in comparison with all schools and average in comparison with similar schools. However, this similar school comparison is based on pupils' entitlement to free school meals. When the comparison is made with similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9, the 2001 GCSE results are shown to be

well above average. This comparison confirms the good progress that pupils have made through Years 10 and 11.

6. In the 2001 GCSE examination in English, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was above the national average and above the average gained by pupils in similar schools. Girls performed much better than boys and the difference between them was greater than the national difference between boys and girls. Overall, pupils' performance was better than expected given their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9. A much greater proportion of pupils than nationally was entered for English literature and this accounts for an apparently lower than average percentage of candidates gaining A* to C grades. However, the percentage of pupils gaining the highest A* and A grades is almost double the national percentage. There has been a marked increase over recent years in the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C in mathematics and in 2001 the percentage was close to the national average. Girls obtained better results than boys. A number of pupils were entered for and achieved well above average results in the GCSE statistics examination. In science, most pupils were entered for the double award science examination, with a small number of pupils entered for the separate examinations in physics, chemistry and biology. Achievement in biology and physics was good and the proportions of pupils gaining A* to C grades in these subjects were above average. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory in chemistry and results were about average. However, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the double award examination was significantly below average and pupils' achievement was below expectations based on the standards attained at the end of Year 9. Also, when the good results obtained in the separate sciences are combined with the double award results the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C is still below average both for all and similar schools. Boys' results were below those of girls and they did less well in science than in other subjects taken. GCSE results in most other subjects reflect well on the progress pupils made in Years 10 and 11. Pupils achieved well and the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in 2001 was well above average in art, geography, history and media studies, and above average in physical education and religious education. However, results in information and communications technology (ICT), French and German were below average. Girls achieved better results than boys in almost all subjects. Only in chemistry and physical education were boys' results better than girls'.
7. Pupils on the special educational needs register achieve well. The attainment of many pupils on entry to the school is below, and sometimes well below, the national average, with many having weak literacy skills. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 11 most obtain GCSE grades close to national expectations. Pupils who are gifted and talented progress well, overall. The proportion of the highest grades achieved at GCSE is broadly consistent with those of all comprehensive schools.
8. The school is making more effective use of targets to improve results. Targets are set annually, for results overall and in individual subjects. The targets have been exceeded in each of the last two years. Appropriately, more challenging targets are being set for the next five years and the indications are that the school is on course to meet them.
9. There are two pupils who speak English as an additional language, neither of whom is at an early stage of language acquisition. The progress and achievement of these pupils are good and comparable with those of their peers.
10. Inspectors found that the standard of pupils' work is consistent with national expectations in most subjects, by the end of Year 9. This reflects good progress, from pupils' levels of attainment on entry in Year 7. In English, for example, pupils' good achievement starts early in Year 7 and by the time they reach Year 9 they have made good improvement and attain close to average standards. In mathematics, art, geography, history and religious education standards in Year 9 are above national expectations and reflect good progress. In these subjects, careful planning and good teaching are important factors in helping pupils to achieve. In music and ICT the progress of most pupils is good and standards are average by the end of Year 9. Similarly, in modern foreign languages, recent improvements in teaching methods and more accurate methods of assessment have led to standards being much closer to national expectations by the end of

Year 9. Only in science and drama are standards and achievement below expectations by the end of Year 9.

11. Standards are above average, overall, in Year 11. In English, art, geography, history, religious education and the GCSE physical education course, standards are above average and progress is good. Broadly average standards observed in mathematics, design and technology, ICT, music, modern foreign languages and core physical education reflect good progress in many lessons, resulting from well-planned activities and generally good teaching. In science and drama, standards in Year 11 are lower than expected nationally. The best work in science shows satisfactory depth of knowledge but pupils' progress is adversely affected by too much unsatisfactory teaching, characterised by inadequate lesson planning and too brief explanations that lead to pupils not knowing exactly what they are expected to do. Standards are similarly adversely affected by too much unsatisfactory teaching in drama.
12. Standards of literacy are average and enable most pupils to access the full curriculum in most subjects. Pupils have satisfactory reading skills and are able to read and understand the reading matter they meet in lessons. High and average attaining pupils are able to explore the writer's intentions and identify how these intentions are conveyed to the reader. All pupils are encouraged to extend their research skills through the use of a range of information resources. Pupils' writing skills are improving because the English department is now ensuring that pupils gain a more objective understanding of how good writing works. They analyse the work of other writers and are expected to write extended commentaries on their own work. Teachers support pupils' writing with resources that give sound advice on how to structure their writing. By Year 9 lower attaining pupils are able to communicate clearly using a range of different styles, employing lively vocabulary and with reasonably accurate spelling and punctuation. By Year 11, high attaining pupils write fluently and coherently, using a wide range of techniques to engage and interest the reader in both their narrative and non-fiction writing. Pupils' overall standards of numeracy are above national expectations. The mathematics department makes provision for the development of basic numerical skills and pupils cope well with numbers and mathematical ideas when they use them in other subjects.

Sixth form

13. Results at A-level in 2001 were very high, and in the highest five per cent in comparison with post-16 providers nationally. These results represent very good progress relative to students' previous achievements in the GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11. The results of girls were slightly above those of boys, although the difference was about the same as that observed nationally. A-level results have improved markedly since the last inspection, when they were about the same as the national average. Results of vocational courses in leisure and tourism in 2001 were very good, with all students entered gaining a distinction, although small numbers of students were involved. About 50 per cent of the pupils in Year 11 generally stay on to the sixth form; most of the rest continue in education or training and about 15 per cent enter employment. Most students continue from Year 12 into Year 13. At the end of Year 13, a small minority continue in further education and nearly all of the rest, about 75 per cent, progress to higher education.
14. The A-level results reflect the, overall, very good teaching, in the sixth form. This is particularly so in art, English literature, English language, geography and history, where students made very good progress and results were very high, and in the highest five per cent, in comparison with all post-16 providers. Students also made good progress in mathematics, design and technology, media studies, music, physics and physical education, where results were well above average, and in biology where results were above average. Results in psychology were average. Results in chemistry were below average, although the grades reflect satisfactory progress, relative to students' GCSE grades.
15. In lessons observed and in the samples of work scrutinised, achievement is generally consistent with the examination results being obtained at the end of Year 13. Standards in art have risen rapidly over the past three years and are now outstanding. Well above average standards are

being achieved in English, physics, biology, geography, history, and physical education, while standards in mathematics, design and technology, French and German are above average. Standards in chemistry are below expectations and consistent with the examination results being obtained in the subject. Standards in business studies and on the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) health and social care course are consistent with expectations. Students' work shows a good response to the quality of sixth form teaching, which encourages them to make increasing demands on themselves.

16. Standards of attainment in the key skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT are generally satisfactory for students following the A-level and GNVQ courses. Although the school provides lessons in key skills and students are making satisfactory progress, there are currently no discrete lessons in application of number, which would be of particular benefit to those students not studying AS level mathematics. Also, not enough use is made of computers in most sixth form subjects to enable students to apply and develop their ICT skills. In most subjects this is due to a lack of ready access to computers. Nevertheless, there is no indication that any weaknesses in key skills are inhibiting the majority of students from engaging fully with the subjects they are studying.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

Main school

17. Pupils' attitudes to school are generally very good and have a positive impact on the progress they are making. When interviewed pupils said that they like their school and this is confirmed by the results of the parents' questionnaire. In many lessons pupils approach work enthusiastically. This is particularly so in lessons where learning activities are challenging. This was seen in a Year 11 history lesson, for example, where pupils explored what it was like to be Jewish in Nazi Germany and developed a greater understanding of prejudice and discrimination. The majority of pupils listen attentively to their teachers and are willing to answer questions. This helps them to overcome difficulties as, for example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson on collecting and analysing data. In most lessons pupils settle quickly to their work, concentrate well on the tasks they have been given and make good progress. This was evident in a Year 11 science lesson where clear learning objectives and high expectations helped pupils to make good progress in understanding electronic processors. Pupils with special educational needs participate fully in lessons, have very good attitudes to their work and respond well to the support that they receive.
18. Pupils' behaviour, as at the time of the last inspection, is satisfactory, overall. Most pupils co-operate well with their teachers and behaviour is good in most lessons. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. The school has high expectations of good behaviour and pupils respond well to the system of rewards and sanctions. The very good accommodation enables pupils to move around the school without jostling. Lunchtime is a generally pleasant occasion where pupils mix well together and where pupils of all year groups eat together and socialise well. Pupils are trustworthy and handle equipment with care. They show respect for school property and there is no evidence of graffiti on the school buildings, although many carpeted rooms are disfigured by discarded chewing gum. Pupils have open access to the learning resource centre and computer facilities and no vandalism occurs. Pupils said that although there are occasional incidents of physical bullying, they are always treated seriously, and generally effectively by the staff.
19. A small but significant number of pupils display unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour in some lessons. This behaviour is most often seen in Year 9 lessons and frequently when the teacher is temporary and has not established clear classroom routines. In these lessons, pupils lack enthusiasm, work at a slow pace and sometimes call out and distract others. Their negative attitudes and anti-social behaviour have a detrimental effect on their own and others' learning. Inspectors saw a few incidents of anti-social behaviour during the inspection. These incidents were dealt with in a satisfactory way by staff. Although in the last school year there was only one permanent exclusion, the number of temporary exclusions doubled to be above average for a school of this size. The rise in the temporary exclusion rate is mainly due to the school's

assertive approach to discipline, which is supported by the governing body. Exclusions are given only for good reasons and procedures are correctly followed.

20. Pupils' personal development is good. Relationships are very good throughout the school. When interviewed pupils say that the school is a friendly place. When given the opportunity, boys and girls work well together in groups. They are willing to share resources and ideas. Pupils with special educational needs form good relationships and help each other in group work. They discuss and explain their work with enthusiasm and this is particularly true of those pupils in the inclusion centre. Younger pupils appreciate the support they receive from older pupils and pupils through the mentoring system. Most pupils are helpful and courteous, and enjoy talking to visitors about their work. They respect each other's beliefs and express their opinions without fear of ridicule, as in a Year 10 geography lesson where pupils were discussing water, land forms and population. They take responsibility and they help in the classroom and around the school when asked to do so. Pupils are actively involved in fund raising for charity and many take part enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities.
21. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. The attendance rate, which was just below 90 per cent in the last school year, has risen in the current year to 91 per cent and close to the national average. The school works hard to improve attendance and every opportunity is taken to ensure that parents are aware that only valid reasons for absence will be accepted. For this reason the rate of unauthorised absence is above average. Good use is made of the electronic registration system to record attendance and first-day absences are well tracked by the school attendance clerk who makes early contact with parents. Pupils are generally punctual and most lessons start on time.

Sixth form

22. The attitudes of sixth form students are very good and, when interviewed, students confirmed that they are appreciative of all the efforts that staff make to advance their education. They enjoy sixth form life. Students relate very well to their teachers and treat each other with courtesy and respect. An atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding permeates from the sixth form though to the rest of the school and the sixth form exerts a very good influence on the rest of the school. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies. They are very anxious to achieve good examination results and work diligently to achieve these. Sixth formers are well-organised and most complete work within the time limits given. They attend regularly and most absence is explained, and agreed with the school.
23. The majority of students behave very well in lessons. The need for exclusion does not arise in the sixth form. Students are keen to talk about their interests. They show maturity in their thinking and are able to express themselves clearly when discussing their work and future plans. Most have well developed study skills and work well with others. They are able to take responsibility for their own learning. Students were, for example, observed working independently in English, drama, and psychology. Sixth form students make good use of the learning resource centre for independent study and many use the Internet well for personal research.
24. Students' personal development is good. They develop confidence and a sense of pride in themselves and in their school. Students are provided with very good support and meet with their tutors on a regular basis to review their progress and to set targets for future work. Through the general studies programme and formal and informal contacts with tutors, students learn to make informed choices about personal issues. Students' personal development is promoted through a range of other opportunities. They take on responsibilities, which include anti-bullying counselling, supervising pupils at break and lunchtimes, helping on residential visits and organising sports events. Students take these responsibilities seriously.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Main school

25. Teaching and learning are good overall and much improved since the last inspection, when the ordinariness of a good deal of the teaching was seen as the cause of much underachievement. In lessons seen across Years 7 to 11, teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent, good or better in 69 per cent, very good in 26 per cent and excellent in three per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in six per cent of lessons. There was little difference in the quality of teaching between Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) and Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). Learning followed a similar pattern to teaching. Since the last inspection the amount of good or better teaching has increased by 14 per cent, while the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has decreased by three per cent. Examples of good and very good teaching were seen in most subjects including support for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching and learning were very good in art and good in all subjects other than science and drama where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. Temporary teachers took many of the lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory. There were examples of excellence in teaching in art, history and mathematics. Teaching of this quality had a significant effect on pupils' progress and achievement in the lessons observed. Much of the improvement in teaching and learning has been brought about by the action taken following the systematic observation of teachers in classrooms by members of the senior management team.
26. General strengths in teaching include teachers' good use of their subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding. The effective use of teachers' subject knowledge is a strong feature in art lessons. In an excellent Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils made rapid progress in understanding perspective and were able to apply this in their own work because the lesson was well structured and the teacher skilfully demonstrated the techniques. Similarly, in a Year 11 lesson, the effective use of the teacher's specialist knowledge enabled pupils to gain a very good understanding of the principles behind cubism. In religious education, very good subject knowledge and planning ensure that pupils gain a good understanding of Christianity and other world religions. Similarly in physical education, very good subject knowledge and planning ensure that pupils build systematically on their existing skills. In the best mathematics lessons, teachers increase pupils' understanding by means of suitable illustrations. This was evident in an excellent Year 11 lesson where pupils made fast progress in understanding how to calculate bearings from given points.
27. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory, overall. The English department lays a good foundation for the development of pupils' literacy skills. For example, Year 7 pupils' reading skills are enhanced by extracting information from a text in order to make brief, well organised notes. In the upper years appropriate texts engage pupils' attention and extend their understanding of the use of language as in, for example, a Year 10 lesson, where pupils learned how Carol Ann Duffy uses an extended metaphor in the poem 'Valentine'. Although some subjects, such as science have been slow to recognise that they need to teach the specific styles of reading and writing that pupils need for success in the subject, other subjects are making very effective contributions to pupils' levels of literacy. The contributions of subjects across the curriculum to the raising of standards of literacy have been accelerated by the recent appointment of a literacy co-ordinator. There are opportunities for pupils to plan, draft and rewrite their own work in English, geography, history and religious education. Support for the development of pupils' writing skills through the use of subject-specific key words is provided in, for example, English, mathematics, art and modern foreign languages. Pupils' reading skills are developed and consolidated through opportunities to read both silently and aloud in many lessons.
28. Pupils develop their numerical skills in many subjects. In mathematics lessons, teachers include activities to improve recall and pupils' mental arithmetic skills. Numeracy is also developed through measuring and judging proportion in art and design and technology, and in interpreting data in geography and science. However, although there are opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills in many subjects, these are not at present co-ordinated in any way. The school is in the process of tackling this issue. Within mathematics the recommendations of Key Stage 3 Framework and Numeracy Strategy are being implemented in Year 7 with the firm intention of extending this into Years 8 and 9 in the near future.

29. Lesson planning is good and shows marked improvement since the last inspection. Most teachers plan their lessons effectively. They share their objectives with pupils at the start of lessons and review them at the end. As a result most pupils are clear about what they are doing and become fully involved in their learning. This was evident in a Year 10 food technology lesson, where pupils made good progress in understanding the value and use of dietary fibre because the teacher carefully explained the lesson objectives at the outset of the lesson and consolidated learning by reviewing the objectives at the end. Careful lesson planning was also a feature of very good teaching in a Year 11 French lesson where pupils were revising vocabulary in preparation for the GCSE oral examination. Activities were well prepared and sequenced to stimulate interest and motivation and this led to very good learning in the lesson. However, weaknesses in planning led to a slow pace and a lack of direction in an unsatisfactory Year 10 science lesson. Good lesson planning in art helps to ensure that teaching rooms are ready when pupils arrive so that lessons get off to a brisk start.
30. In order to raise pupils' achievement the headteacher has made clear the need to raise teachers' expectations. This is now understood by most teachers and in lessons where high expectations are communicated clearly to pupils good progress and achievement result. For example, in a very good Year 11 mathematics lesson, pupils made good progress because of the enthusiasm and sense of enjoyment engendered by the challenging pace of the lesson. This high level of challenge was also seen in an excellent Year 10 history lesson on medicine through time, where pupils made fast progress in response to excellent opportunities to describe, explain and evaluate evidence. The best teaching in physical education is characterised by high expectations and lessons that proceed at a good pace. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils made clear gains in their understanding of health-related fitness because of the challenging nature of the teaching. High expectations are a feature of the best teaching in design and technology and are particularly important in supporting girls who are taking traditionally boys' subjects. However, low expectations were among the shortcomings in most of the unsatisfactory teaching in science.
31. Teachers use a good range of strategies to enable pupils to learn and develop skills. Paired and small-group work is used well in many subjects. The very effective use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies in music helps to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils worked enthusiastically in small groups as they recorded and evaluated their own performance. Pupils benefit from opportunities to work with different partners when engaged in oral work in modern foreign languages. Small-group work is used effectively in English and religious education to discuss and extend pupils' thinking and to undertake investigations in science. Group work is also used effectively in physical education to develop pupils' skills.
32. Teachers make good use of a variety of resources to stimulate pupils' interest and to make explanations clear. For example, teachers use the overhead projector and video clips well when making demonstrations and to illustrate ideas. This underpins the development of new knowledge and skills and encourages progress. The use of a wide range of resources is a feature of teaching in art. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning in a few subjects - for example in English, modern foreign languages and religious education. However, not enough use is made of computers in other subjects. In many subjects this is due to a lack of ready access to computers. In the majority of lessons teachers make good use of time and set deadlines for tasks to be completed.
33. Pupils are well managed, on the whole. Experienced teachers know pupils well and usually have high expectations of their behaviour. In most lessons pupils respond well and work hard. However, some, but not all, new or temporary teachers had difficulty in managing pupils whose behaviour was disrupting teaching and learning. This type of behaviour was most likely to be seen in the middle years. Incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour usually occurred when pupils were not involved enough in lesson activities. In some subjects, for example, in science and drama, teachers lack support in coping with difficult pupils. At the time of the inspection, the head of science had been in post for a relatively short period of time and in drama there is an interim management arrangement, pending the appointment of a permanent head of department.

34. The marking of pupils' work is well used in several subjects to give pupils clear information on the standard of their work and on what they have to do in order to improve it. Marking in English, art, history, ICT and modern foreign languages provides pupils with a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their work. Similarly, marking is well used to provide pupils following the GNVQ course with accurate information on the standard of their work. However, marking in science and mathematics does not provide pupils with the guidance necessary in order to improve the quality of their work. Teachers have become more aware of the need to focus on spelling in their marking in order to raise standards of literacy and this is evident in most subjects. However, although marking in physical education and religious education is regular, some inaccurate spellings are left unchecked. Although 21 per cent of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that pupils are given insufficient homework, inspection evidence indicates that homework is well used to consolidate and extend learning in most subjects.
35. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils with special educational needs are taught mostly in mainstream classes and subject teachers have satisfactory awareness of pupils' individual education plans. These plans are often used in lesson planning so that learning activities are well matched to the attainment levels of pupils. This includes both higher and lower attaining pupils. Education care officers provide pupils with good support in lessons and close liaison with subject teachers helps to ensure that there is a clear understanding of pupils' needs. The teaching of pupils withdrawn for individual and small group work is very good. Lessons are well prepared and pupils are provided with much support and encouragement. Appropriate tasks are set and learning is constantly reinforced. Work is related well to National Curriculum targets in Year 9 and to GCSE and other external examinations in Year 11. The enthusiasm of the special educational needs teachers and education care officers provides pupils with a great deal of confidence. This contributes significantly to the progress pupils are making. Teaching in the inclusion centre is good. Close liaison with subject teachers helps to ensure that pupils referred to the centre are provided with appropriate work and do not lose touch with ongoing work in their normal lessons. Good use is made of ICT both in the special educational needs department and the inclusion centre to support pupils' learning. For example, literacy progress units and the after-school use of the 'Success maker' computer-based learning programme enhance the provision for lower attaining pupils. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is as effective as that given to their peers.

Sixth form

36. Teaching and learning in the sixth form have also improved since the last inspection. At the time of the last inspection teaching was judged to be good. It is now very good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons. In 88 per cent of lessons teaching was good or better. In 36 per cent of lessons it was very good and in 4 per cent, it was excellent. This quality of teaching is reflected in students' high levels of achievement. Key skills are separately and effectively taught, although there is at present no discrete lessons in the application of number. Students with special educational needs receive very good support, as do the few with English as an additional language.
37. Teachers' planning is mostly very good. High expectations and challenging tasks involve students in a suitable range of activities. Generally, by the time they are in Year 13, students are well motivated and articulate. In English literature, for example, Year 13 students collaborated well when exploring attitudes to World War I through the poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. They shared ideas effectively, to make very good progress during the lesson. Similarly, in media studies, Year 12 students, were enthusiastic, shared ideas and deepened their understanding of the techniques of advertising. In biology, lessons are well planned and contain demanding and interesting activities that keep students' attention and give them confidence to demonstrate their understanding. This was seen, for example, in a Year 13 lesson where students were keen to explain the digestive and respiratory systems. However, where there are weaknesses in planning there can be a lack of pace and direction in lessons, with time not used to best effect. This was seen, for example in a Year 12 psychology lesson and a Year 13 theatre studies lesson.

38. Good progress has been made in the teaching of science in the sixth form since the last inspection, when teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teaching is no longer too teacher directed and very good use is made of a wider variety of teaching methods, including providing students with more opportunities for independent learning. Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good knowledge of their subjects. This helps students to make very good progress in most subjects. In art, for example, students' critical skills are well developed through excellent teaching that challenges their perceptions of their own and other work, enabling them to make confident use of critical judgements through the language of art. In history, teachers draw on their very good subject knowledge to guide students' learning and help them consider topics from different standpoints. In physics, teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to ensure that students know exactly what they have to do in their practical sessions and to check their understanding of what is being taught. For example, careful explanations of scientific techniques in a lesson about voltage and current in Year 12 helped to ensure that students carried out practical tasks successfully.
39. A good range of activities is used in most subjects. Students' learning in geography and biology is enhanced by fieldwork studies, which promote good participation and include evaluation by students of their findings. In business studies, effective use is made of links with local business for visits, work experience and Young Enterprise. This enables students to gain first-hand knowledge of the business world. The small number of students taking A-level courses in modern foreign languages thrive in well-structured and energetically taught lessons. Some students have the opportunity to live and work in Germany and these are markedly more confident and articulate in the foreign language than those whose studies are confined to the classroom. The teaching of the leisure and tourism course is enhanced by the effective use of real-life examples from the immediate area of Buxton and the Peak District to illustrate points. A wide variety of activities is included in sixth form design and technology lessons, helping students to gain knowledge, understanding and skills.
40. Teachers have very good relationships with their students and this is seen in history and geography, for example, where students make very good gains in knowledge because of the mature and supportive relationships in lessons. Teachers transmit their high expectations to their students, who respond accordingly. There is an emphasis on personal research, and the sharing of findings in groups leads to greater challenge, when students try out their ideas on each other and come to more refined conclusions. The atmosphere established by teachers in most lessons is strongly collaborative and this provides students with the confidence to argue their viewpoints. Levels of concentration and students' involvement in lessons are high. In English, lessons are characterised by enthusiasm and humour, which results in high student motivation. Teachers know students well and target tasks appropriately. Very good assessment arrangements and the support provided for students following the health and social care course help them to learn effectively. However, although work is marked regularly in mathematics, some written comments are restricted to praise and generalities that do not give students enough guidance on how they should improve. This is most likely to be seen in the marking of students' work in Year 13.

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

Main school

41. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good for pupils in Year 7 to 9, and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development. The school provides very good careers education and guidance and a very good alternative education programme for those pupils who would benefit from a reduced National Curriculum. The curriculum caters well for the needs and aptitudes of all pupils, who have equal access and opportunities to learn. The school has made significant progress in its curriculum provision since the last inspection. At that time the statutory requirement for the provision of ICT was not met. This weakness has been tackled and the curriculum now meets

statutory requirements in all subjects other than music and science where there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use ICT. The teaching time of 25 hours a week meets government recommendations. The school does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils or religious education in the sixth form.

42. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 builds on the very good links with the primary schools. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, together with religious education and personal, social and health education. These subjects provide a good range of appropriate and stimulating activities. There are specific programmes for individuals as well as opportunities for withdrawal to work in small groups. French or German is the core foreign language choice for pupils in Years 7 to 9, but there is no second modern foreign language for pupils in these years. All pupils have a discrete one-hour per week ICT lesson.
43. Additional GCSE subjects, vocational courses, certificates of achievement and specifically designed programmes for some pupils enhance the breadth and relevance of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The range of additional options has been extended since the last inspection to meet the needs of all pupils and to place an increasing emphasis on the vocational contexts of learning. To this end the school offers Part One GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism, health and social care, and engineering. In addition pupils are offered the opportunity to take an on-line GNVQ in ICT. The school has effectively used the process of disapplication from modern foreign language or design and technology to create different pathways for pupils to follow that more closely match and enhance their learning opportunities. For particular pupils this can mean following alternative courses at the local college and work placements. This additional curriculum provision increases the range of achievement opportunities, particularly for lower attaining pupils and offers them the best possible chance of success. However, the relatively small number of pupils studying a modern foreign language in Year 11 - approximately one third of the year group - seriously weakens the prospect of sustainable teaching groups in the sixth form.
44. The school has recently completed a full revision of the PSHE programme. It is well designed and has improved since the time of the last inspection. The programme includes modules on citizenship, drug awareness, sex education, relationships, family life and self-esteem. This meets requirements for health and sex education and raising awareness about drugs. Topics are dealt with at appropriate stages and include study skills and coping with difficult situations, including the behaviour of others and bullying.
45. The school's policy is to meet pupils' additional needs, wherever possible, in the classroom and pupils with special educational needs have good access to the full curriculum. Where the school has identified a need for individual or small-group teaching for some pupils, so that they can have counselling or focused teaching to improve their basic skills, this is carefully monitored to minimise the disruption to the curriculum. Additional support is provided through activities such as paired reading during registration and in small withdrawal groups. Provision for pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 is very good. These pupils have a broad and relevant curriculum that includes the opportunity to follow accredited courses, such as the Certificate of Educational Achievement and the Youth Award Scheme. The structured way in which the programme is designed allows flexibility as pupils can follow some subjects to GCSE. The school has yet to tackle the issue of raising the achievement of boys in a systematic way. The school is at an early stage in identifying gifted and talented pupils. However, their needs are satisfactorily met through teachers' planning in most subjects. Progress is accelerated among higher attaining groups - in English and mathematics, for example. In mathematics higher attaining pupils are able to take the GCSE statistics examination and the highest attaining pupils in English are able to take AS English language in Year 11. However, not enough is done to lift pupils' attainment in science.
46. The school is developing effective strategies for teaching literacy across the curriculum. A successful literacy summer school was held last year providing a very timely boost to pupils before they entered the school. Within English the adoption of the Key Stage 3 Framework and Literacy Strategy has made a significant impact on pupils' speaking and listening skills, building of their experiences from the primary schools. Other subjects as well as English are becoming

more aware of the importance of literacy and pupils in Year 7 are assessed in their speaking and listening skills. Most classrooms have displays of key words and teachers now see the importance of focusing on language in their marking. Within mathematics, the recommendations of the Key Stage 3 Framework are now being implemented.

47. Very good careers education and guidance ensure that pupils receive the advice needed to make choices at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. The careers library includes appropriate information and pupils attend open days and conventions designed to offer information about higher education and career opportunities. Representatives from business and industry work with selected pupils under the Compact scheme where they are taught about the principles of employability. These pupils have practice interviews in Year 11 and take part in an enterprise project. All pupils in Year 10 have two weeks work experience and are visited by staff during their work placements. A debriefing day at the end of the placement allows all pupils to share and learn from the experiences of others.
48. Vocational education is enhanced through a partnership arrangement with High Peak College. A wide range of courses is offered as tasters or at foundation and intermediate levels. Excellent links with the community are used to enrich the education the school provides. Local business supports the Compact scheme, under which seven personal goals are set for Year 10 pupils. Compact incentives are awarded to pupils who make most progress towards their goals, and a Compact certificate is awarded at the end of Year 11. Members of the local Rotary club act as pupil mentors and assist with the practice interviews for pupils in Year 11.
49. The strengths in the provision of extra-curricular activities identified at the time of the last inspection have been enhanced, particularly in terms of the breadth of opportunity, so that provision is now outstanding. Most subjects provide homework and more general clubs, and organised revision programmes for older pupils. Every week a good range of physical education, music and drama activities takes place and through these subjects, in competitions, matches and performance, very good links are maintained with the local community. A substantial number of pupils take part in the extensive programme of inter-form sporting competitions. Competitive team games and individual pursuits such as rock climbing and other outdoor activities are also well provided for. There is an extensive range of visits and field trips, including opportunities to travel abroad. Sixth form students arrange social events for themselves and younger pupils and are also involved in a wide range of charitable activities, some of which take place through local business organisations. Pupils have access to some areas of the school - for example, the learning resource centre, art and computing rooms - before and after school and at lunchtimes, to develop their skills and improve their work. Visits to France and Germany enhance pupils' competence in modern languages. Visits are regularly made to theatres, concerts and art galleries.
50. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Staff are committed to creating an orderly environment, based on respect, trust and shared moral values. There is a positive ethos in the school. However, there is little monitoring of these areas of pupils' development to ensure that they are systematically threaded through the curriculum and that these important dimensions are made explicit and reflected in all departmental planning.
51. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. The contributions that different subjects make to pupils' spiritual development vary considerably. Art offers opportunities for creative expression of feelings, particularly through the high quality three-dimensional work on human suffering on display in the atrium. Music contributes to pupils' spiritual development through reflection on harmony and rhythm. Religious education contributes well, by the exploration of the meaning of religious beliefs such as reincarnation in Eastern religions. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils were challenged to consider their personal response to Christian, Moslem and Hindu death rites. Thoughts about the meaning behind prehistoric burial practices helped to create a sense of spirituality in a Year 10 assembly. In modern foreign languages, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own view of the world and develop their self-knowledge. However, there is not enough awareness of the contributions that every subject can make to the

spiritual development of pupils and the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

52. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Ethical and moral issues are discussed in religious education in a wide range of contexts, as in, for example, a Year 11 lesson on contraception and a Year 8 lesson on religious rituals. The school's programme of one-day blocks for PSHE makes an important contribution to pupils' awareness of contemporary moral issues. This programme involves both form tutors and outside speakers. The school's strong stance against bullying reflects a wider commitment to educating pupils about right and wrong conduct, and this is also evident in the role models that teachers provide. Issues of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour are tackled firmly and fairly. The ethos of teaching, as in modern languages, for example, encourages trust and self-respect. Opportunities to discuss moral issues are taken in many lessons, particularly in English and history. In physical education, pupils are taught the principles of fair competition and respect for decisions. However, all form tutors do not make as full use as they could of the extended registration time to explore moral issues that arise in thoughts for the week.

53. The very good provision for pupil's social development, noted at the last inspection, continues to be an important feature of school life. Many subjects such as science, design and technology and modern foreign languages offer pupils of all ages and abilities the chance to work together towards common goals both in lessons and in out-of-school activities. In physical education the importance of teamwork and leadership is emphasised through a wide range of sports, outdoor activities and competitions held in school, locally and further afield. Pupils with special educational needs are included in all aspects of learning and extra-curricular activities. The very good facilities for art, drama and music enable a continuous programme of exhibitions, concerts and stage performances using the talents and energy of many teachers and pupils. A newly established inclusion centre within the school has already had a beneficial effect on the attitudes and achievements of pupils at risk of exclusion. The incidence of bullying and challenging behaviour is relatively slight, and both are promptly dealt with. The life of the school is very well integrated into that of the local community. Contributions by the pupils to local festivals and their involvement in caring or charity work add substantially to the life of the town and its surrounding area. Wider involvement in the welfare of disadvantaged people in many developing countries is encouraged by regular fun-raising activities such as Comic Relief.
54. The school's provision for cultural development is good. Many pupils benefit from stimulating, regular involvement in the rich cultural life and traditions of the locality, such as well dressing and the Buxton festival. Artwork produced and displayed in the school goes on exhibition in the town gallery. Popular drama and music productions develop the talents of many pupils, giving others the chance to take responsibility for organising and managing the events. Several subjects, ranging from English and modern languages to food technology, encourage pupils to compare their own culture with those of countries overseas. Artists in residence and visiting authors regularly contribute to the curriculum. The school's programme of external visits to galleries, museums and the theatre is satisfactory but relatively sparse, given the wide range available in major northern cities. However, not enough progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of strategies to prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society. Key subjects such as English, art, music and religious education make tentative contributions to pupils' awareness of ethnicity and faiths, but this important aspect of the curriculum remains inadequate both in these and other subjects.

Sixth form

55. Curriculum provision in the sixth form is very good. The strength of the sixth form curriculum is its breadth, creating opportunities for students with a wide range of interests and abilities. Sixth form courses are very flexible and offer a varied choice depending upon individual performance in the GCSE examinations; they are well matched to students' aspirations and needs. This enables the school to offer a very good range of subjects, including 23 GCE AS and A2 levels. In addition, there is an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in health and social care and four distance learning courses in accountancy, sociology, law and economics. These courses are proving to be very successful and augment the sixth form curricular provision. They provide students with a good variety of routes to employment and to further and higher education. There is also a wide range of enhancement courses, and opportunities for students include key skills at Level 3 in communication and ICT. An application of number key skills unit is to be introduced later this year. Some students are able to re-take GCSE mathematics, science and English examinations. The school has recognised the importance of providing students with a broad range of opportunities and experiences and this has resulted in an increase in take-up in Year 12. The increase in the range of subjects offered is an improvement since the last inspection. However, as at that time the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education in Years 12 and 13 is not met.
56. Provision for careers education and guidance is very good. The programme is effectively managed by the head of sixth form and by the school's careers co-ordinator. The programme builds on the work in careers undertaken in the earlier years and students are provided with good information on opportunities in higher education, employment and training. Within the enhancement programme students can choose from a rich range including community sports leadership, an advanced community leadership award, the Duke of Edinburgh award, and Young Enterprise. Health

education and personal support for the students are effectively organised throughout the year when whole days are devoted to exploring a range of issues. For example, a very successful day was held recently in which the focus was on being a world citizen. Sixth form students do not attend an assembly every day of the week. Students in the sixth form are expected to undertake work experience, including placements abroad for those taking modern languages. Students are also encouraged to take an active part in the wider school and through the sixth form council.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Main school

57. The school has strengthened the caring and supportive ethos noted at the time of the last inspection. This enables pupils to learn well and with confidence. On the whole, educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are very good. Pupils are valued by and well known to the staff. The pastoral system is very good and relationships between tutors and pupils are good. Form tutors, who move up the school with their tutor groups, provide continuity in care. Opportunities for individual discussions with pupils are good. Heads of year and their assistants are caring and provide tutors and pupils with good support. They work hard to give help and guidance to pupils who have academic or personal problems. Pupils' individual needs are met, for example, through the grouping of pupils by attainment levels and by specialist support. Inspectors confirm the parents' views that their children are well looked after at the school and that their needs are well met.
58. The identification of pupils with special educational needs is systematic and their progress is carefully monitored, both through standardised testing and through reviews of their individual education plans. The school fulfils its statutory duties to monitor and review the provision for pupils with special educational needs and to plan for transition to the next stage of education. The provision described in statements of special educational need is generally fully implemented. Pupils are carefully assessed with the help of a range of outside agencies. A proper register of pupils with special educational needs is maintained and all staff are kept fully informed of these pupils' needs. Pupils are carefully tracked by use of data based on a number of tests, including a variety of standardised tests and National Curriculum tests and assessments. The school has successfully established an inclusion centre to support pupils in Years 7 to 9 who have behavioural problems and others in need of short-term individual support. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and reviewed on a daily basis. The aim is to return all pupils to mainstream lessons as soon as possible and most pupils usually spend only a percentage of the school day in the centre. Pupils in the centre follow their normal timetables and all appropriate texts and materials are held in the centre along with subject schemes of work. The inclusion centre is a very good example of pupils being offered the best and most appropriate care.
59. The school has good procedures to ensure pupils' well-being, health and safety. Their welfare is well supported through the curriculum, including sex education and drugs awareness, and by visiting specialists. Child protection procedures are correctly in place. The designated person is a member of the senior management team who has received appropriate training and is knowledgeable in child protection matters. All staff are kept well informed of procedures. There is close liaison between the local authority's social services department and the newly appointed inclusion co-ordinator. Record keeping is systematic and pupils on the 'at risk' register are carefully monitored. The arrangements for first aid are good; several members of staff are qualified and a good number have received basic training. Records of accidents are well maintained. Pupils and staff are made aware of safety procedures for the use of materials, equipment and machinery. Each department carries out risk assessments and this work is carefully monitored by the school's health and safety officer. The fire alarm is tested regularly and good records are kept. Regular reports on health and safety are made to the governing body.
60. Pupils' personal development is actively monitored by the pastoral teams and through the reporting system. The school has good procedures for the monitoring and promoting of good

behaviour and the elimination of oppressive behaviour. Pupils understand the clear system of rewards and sanctions. Whilst the behaviour policy generally works well, it is not consistently applied; for example, the behaviour management of new or temporary teachers is weak in a few lessons. Usually the problems are caused by a few pupils but affect the learning of all in the lesson. Good behaviour is reinforced in many lessons, assemblies and through the examples of adults and sixth form students. The school has good systems in place to monitor and inform parents of behaviour. Pupils and parents say that reported incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour are dealt with effectively. Some sixth form students are trained as anti-bullying counsellors and are available to pupils to help and advise them with pastoral problems. Counselling and support services, including the use of an isolation room, are available for pupils who find it hard to control their behaviour. The governing body has a good overview of behaviour and is actively involved in behaviour management by interviewing pupils in imminent danger of fixed-term or permanent exclusion.

61. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Registration requirements are met and attendance information is appropriately processed. A member of the school clerical staff follows up absences by contacting home on the first day of absence. Spot-checks are used to detect any internal truancy. Holidays taken in term-time are discouraged. The pastoral team monitors patterns of absence and parents are contacted if there are concerns. The education welfare service is used well. Good attendance is rewarded. Attendance figures are regularly reported to governors who monitor attendance and set targets. As a result of the school's pro-active approach, attendance levels have now risen to 91 per cent.
62. An emerging strength of the school is the attention paid to the analysis of examination and test results. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when assessment procedures and the use of assessment information were having no impact on raising attainment. A comprehensive database is being established of pupils' attainment on entry and from national tests taken at the end of Year 9, and GCSE examination results. This, together with results from commercially produced assessment tests, creates information on which predictions for future performance can be based. At the core of the school's assessment policy are pupil tracking and the mentoring days which parents are invited to attend alongside their children. Subject teachers on three separate occasions in the year assess pupils' effort and attainment and provide pupils with an aspirational grade or level to work towards. Pupils are well aware of these grades, particularly in the two years leading up to GCSE examinations. The school is rigorous in its use of YELLIS, a national data gathering and analysis system, which provides reliable predictions about pupils' performance in GCSE examinations. There are good arrangements for form tutors and subject teachers to check regularly with pupils how well they are doing and whether they are doing well enough. The value of this is that pastoral and curriculum teams work closely together to support pupils' progress.
63. The potential benefits from this rich source of information have yet to be fully utilised by all departments. The intention is that they will use these analyses to evaluate individual pupils' performance, compare the outcomes of different teaching groups and set the school's performance against national figures. Good use of is made of assessment information to guide lesson and curriculum planning in some subjects. In art, English, geography, history, music and in timetabled ICT lessons, assessment practice is very good. In English, for example, assessment information is being used effectively to identify pupils who would benefit from working with literacy progress units. However, in other subjects the use of assessment information in planning teaching and learning has some way to go to match the best practice seen in the school. There is currently no assessment of pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum. Marking is effective and regular in most subjects and linked to GCSE requirements in Years 10 and 11. However, there are inconsistencies in marking in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Marking also provides pupils with guidance on what they need to do to improve the presentation of their work but not enough guidance is given on what pupils need to do in order to improve their subject-specific skills. The school meets statutory requirements for reporting pupils' assessments at the end of Year 9.

Sixth Form

Assessment

64. Procedures for assessing and guiding students' progress in the sixth form are good. Work is carefully marked on the whole. Teachers know individual students well and remind them of ways of improving their work in lessons. A significant minority of students who responded to the students' pre-inspection questionnaire thought that the school does not identify to them what they need to do to achieve their required grades. Inspection findings do not confirm these views. Targets are set for students in each subject and these are shared with students at an early stage of their course. Students are left in no doubt about their levels of attainment and targets. In most subjects teachers encourage the students to take responsibility for their own progress by providing them with the specifications for the qualifications they are working towards.
65. Tutors in the sixth form regularly monitor progress, inform students of achievements and agree targets. Students are able to relate to them well and receive help, advice and encouragement. Career service staff have a strong input in the sixth form, and advice for careers and further or higher education is of a high quality. Students are encouraged to use initiative and they share a high level of maturity and self-reliance.
66. The school is rigorous in its use of the ALIS, a national data gathering and analysis system, which provides reliable predictions about students' performance in the A2 level examination, and their progress against these predictions is carefully monitored. This careful monitoring by subject teachers of students' progress, and the effective use of target setting, contribute to the value being added in the sixth form. Analysis of results obtained shows that progress in the sixth form is above expectations and in recent years girls have achieved better than boys.
67. Information on academic progress and many aspects of personal development are well documented and form the basis of references for employers and universities, which are usually finalised in Year 13. Through formal reports parents are provided with clear information on the progress their children are making.

Advice, support and guidance

68. Students receive good advice and support in relation to their studies. The induction arrangements at the start of Year 12 provide a good introduction to the sixth form and its expectations of students. The personal, social and health education programme includes study skills, which assist students in taking responsibility for their own learning. Aspects of careers education are covered and visits are made to universities, to broaden horizons and help students to make decisions about their futures.
69. A significant minority of sixth form pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire thought that they were not well informed by the school and the careers advisers on future opportunities for them, and that they were not well informed about their progress in relation to qualifications they hoped to obtain. Inspectors could find no evidence to support these views and, indeed, when interviewed students stated that general guidance and support arrangements are good. The school offers good support and advice to all students. Careers guidance in the sixth form, as in the main school, is well structured and makes good use of the careers service. Two careers advisers come into school on a regular basis, one dealing with pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 and one dealing with sixth form students, to offer advice and help regarding their career choices. Sixth form staff and tutors are caring and very ready to give help and reassurance. The school makes good use of counsellors and local authority support services.
70. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are good. Sixth form students are very keen to attend school and are in the main punctual for lessons. All absences are rigorously followed up by tutors. The good support and guidance provided by the school contribute significantly to the very good progress students are making in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Main school

71. As at the time of the last inspection, most parents hold positive views of the school and are generally pleased with teaching, pupils' attainment and the quality of support and care provided. Buxton Community School is the first choice of very many parents and this is demonstrated by the fact that the school is over-subscribed. However, fewer than one in eight parents answered the pre-inspection questionnaire and only 19 attended the pre-inspection meeting of this very large school. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting were keen to underline that their overall views of the school were positive, as are the views obtained through the questionnaire. However, a significant minority of those responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were critical of the closeness with which the school works with parents, the information provided on the progress their children are making, homework and pupils' behaviour. Inspection evidence does not support these views. The school works very hard to support parents and keep them well informed about their children's progress. The school is keen to respond to parents' concerns, deals with their queries rapidly and informs parents of any action being taken. Parents are able to visit the school at any time to meet the headteacher or relevant staff to discuss their children's progress. An annual mentoring evening has been introduced for parents to discuss their children's academic and personal development with staff. Through interim and annual reports parents are provided with full details of their children's progress. In addition the excellent pupil planner provides a continuous means of communication between home and school. Form tutors and year heads monitor the planners, and most tutors are diligent in responding to any comments made by parents. Effective use is made of homework in most subjects.
72. Information provided by the school for parents is of good quality. The school produces a termly newsletter, which provides good information on the activities that the school promotes and on the achievements of pupils. The school prospectus is a very attractively produced document that contains all the information parents may wish to have before selecting the school. Pupils' annual reports are comprehensive and contain much information about what pupils have achieved, know and understand. However, reports do not give enough information on targets and what pupils must do in order to improve. The governors' annual report contains all the necessary information, including provision for pupils with special educational needs.
73. Parents' level of involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory. The school actively encourages parents to come to help but few are able to take the opportunity to do so. Where they are able to help, their work is much appreciated. Parents' events have been arranged and the mentoring evening and parents consultative meetings are well attended. Parents are very appreciative of these opportunities to meet with teachers to discuss their children's progress. Buxton School Parents and Teachers Association is a very active body whose members although small in number, are dedicated to providing additional resources for the school. They hold regular fund raising and social events.

Sixth form

74. A number of parents commented favourably on the sixth form; they like the continuity and pastoral support it provides, as part of the whole school. Sixth formers' views of the school are mainly positive. They enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise others to join. They feel the school helps them settle into the sixth form and that they are treated as adults. They feel several aspects could be improved: the information they receive on their progress and their knowledge of whom to go to if they have personal concerns. However, inspectors could find no evidence to support these concerns. Students interviewed during the week of the inspection thought that these views were most likely to have been expressed by students who had yet to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school for consultation meetings with tutors and other staff.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Main school

75. At the time of the last inspection in March 2000 the school was judged to be underachieving. The school strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning was unsystematic and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching was three times the national average. Some teachers had become disenchanted and did not show the inclination to improve. Although the headteacher and senior management knew the strengths and weaknesses of the school, the weaknesses had not been given enough priority for improvement. As a result, the quality of leadership was judged to be unsatisfactory. Shortly after the inspection there was a change of leadership at the school with the present headteacher taking up post in January 2001. The school shows considerable improvement since that time. This is principally due to the very good leadership the headteacher has provided.
76. The headteacher has brought to the school a clear sense of purpose, high expectations and well-conceived strategies for its improvement. These have been successfully communicated to all who are associated with the school with the result that staff morale has been raised. This, together with a strengthening of middle management, has underpinned the recent progress the school has made. The headteacher has high expectations of the staff and continually challenges them to evaluate their performance in order to improve teaching and learning and raise standards. Virtually all of the issues for action identified in the previous inspection report are being tackled successfully and some, such as leadership and management, are now strengths of the school. The headteacher receives very good support from his deputy.
77. Overall direction is clear and policies for equal opportunities and for teaching and learning underpin the work of the school. Annually, targets for results are agreed. These have exceeded predictions and the headteacher is keen to make the targets set for the school more challenging. The senior management team has also been extended and strengthened by the inclusion of two additional assistant headteachers. Senior managers work effectively as a team and share the headteacher's drive to improve the school. One of the first tasks undertaken by the headteacher has been to redefine the roles and responsibilities of senior managers, which were previously too diffuse. Each now has clear line management responsibilities through which middle managers, such as heads of department and heads of year, are held accountable to senior management. These are well understood by all staff.
78. Several new appointments have strengthened middle management since the last inspection and the overall quality of management provided by heads of department is now good. Leadership in art is excellent and ensuring that standards are maintained at a very high level in this outstanding department. Imaginative leadership and good teamwork in English are providing pupils with a wider range of opportunities to achieve, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The heads of geography and religious education, who took up post in September 2000, are providing very good leadership and having a positive impact on standards. However, although the head of department in science, who was appointed at the same time, has introduced a number of changes to bring about improvement, these changes have as yet been ineffective. As a result leadership and management in science are unsatisfactory. Good leadership is also seen in ICT, modern foreign languages, music, GNVQ and physical education, while leadership in design and technology is satisfactory. The strengths in management in history have been maintained since the last inspection and, although the very recently appointed head of department has not had enough time to make an impact on the department, he has already identified areas for raising standards further. The mathematics department has made good progress since the last inspection when it was judged to be underachieving. Temporary leadership in drama lacks the experience necessary to manage the department and put into place strategies to take the subject forward and is, as a result, unsatisfactory. The raising of standards of literacy has been given added impetus by the effective work of the literacy co-ordinator, who took up post in September 2001.

79. As at the time of the last inspection, the co-ordination of special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator together with the governor with responsibility for special needs and the education care officers make an effective team. Good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress and well-constructed individual education plans ensure that all staff are kept up to date and well informed of pupils' needs. There are link teachers between subject areas and the special needs department and in-service training is provided to help strengthen the work of teachers and care workers. Annual review procedures are efficiently managed and there are good links with parents. Management of the inclusion centre is good. The well structured policy and practice ensures that pupils attend on a formal referral basis. Monitoring and assessment procedures are good and there are good links with subject teachers to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the pupils' learning across the curriculum.
80. A major factor in enabling senior management to identify and tackle weaknesses and to help communicate the commitment to raising standards has been the establishment of methodical procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Central to these has been the systematic programme of lesson observations carried out by the senior management team. In order to ensure consistency in evaluation all members of the senior management team were trained in carrying out OFSTED-type lesson observations. The senior management team then engaged in an intensive period of lesson observations. This was seen as an essential first step in establishing the baseline from which improvement could be made. Following observation of all teachers, strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning were identified and strategies for improvement were introduced. This has proved effective and the quality of teaching and learning has been improved in most subjects. Although some heads of department engage in classroom observations, the practice is not uniform and the information obtained is not consistent. In order to continue this improvement, and to embed the systematic observation of teaching and learning within the process of school improvement, it is now necessary extend the senior management strategy to include heads of department.
81. The school is now making more effective use of assessment and examination information to compare the performance of individual subjects. This has helped to identify where a subject's performance falls below that of others so that steps can be taken to bring about improvements. This information is also used to set targets for departments and to make clear the headteacher's commitment to raising expectations and standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning.
82. There has been significant improvement in the governance of the school since the last inspection. The governing body is now very effective. It has a good committee structure and sufficient expertise to monitor the work of the school effectively. Governors fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities. The exceptions are collective worship, the full National Curriculum requirements with regard to the use of ICT in science and music, and the provision of religious education in the sixth form. Governors receive regular detailed reports from the headteacher and other senior members of staff, and make visits to the school to keep in touch with the subjects with which they are linked. Through these reports and visits governors have good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
83. The quality of financial management and planning is very good. Governors are actively involved with the headteacher and the senior management team in financial planning and monitoring and are given excellent support by the administration manager. The school has effective procedures to ensure that the principles of best value for money are applied for all tendering and contract arrangements undertaken. Good procedures are in place for monitoring the use of resources and all additional funding received by the school to ensure these are used for the intended purposes. Action has been taken to attend to the very few minor issues raised in the most recent auditor's report.

Resourcing

84. The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is good and most teachers are suitably qualified in their main teaching areas. There have been significant changes in staffing

at all levels since the last inspection. These changes have considerably strengthened provision in the school. The school was fully staffed at the start of the current school year in spite of some recruitment difficulties. However, there are problems in recruiting suitably qualified temporary teachers to cover teacher absence through ill health and this is having an adverse impact on teaching and learning. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. Close attention is paid to the identification of individual teachers' development needs and how these can be matched to school development priorities. Arrangements for the support and professional development of both newly qualified teachers and students undertaking initial teacher training are good and valued by participants, as are the induction arrangements for all new members of staff. However, support for newly qualified teachers in departments varies and is unsatisfactory in science. The number and quality of technical support staff are good and the team of education care officers provide very good support for pupils with special needs. The secretarial and clerical staff provide an efficient and welcoming school office. They contribute very effectively to the administration and organisation of the school.

85. The overall quality of the school accommodation is good. The accommodation is well maintained and used well. The school is suitably modified with ramps and lifts so that pupils and students with physical impairments have full access to all areas. The public areas are well organised, with very good displays which reflect the positive ethos of the school and aspects of its work - for example, the outstanding work produced in art. All subject areas have good accommodation, with most departments located in adjoining rooms. However there is a shortage of storage space in most departments. In art and music the lack of adequate storage space leads to overcrowding in teaching areas. The design and technology department has recently been renovated to provide a much needed upgrading. The science block is scheduled for refurbishment in the near future. There is adequate office space for administrative, academic and pastoral staff. Provision for physical education is very good. The school has all weather football pitches, tennis courts, a running track and a sports hall. These and other facilities are well used by the local community and generate additional income for the school. The school has three separate dining areas, which cope effectively with the large number of pupils taking lunch in a short period of time. The site supervisor and his staff maintain the school premises in a very good state of cleanliness. Graffiti are removed immediately and this makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the school. However the work of the school cleaning staff is made more difficult by the inconsiderate behaviour of some pupils who leave chewing gum on floors both inside and outside the buildings. The effect of this on the carpeted rooms is obviously distasteful.
86. The school has adequate resources overall and effective use is made of them to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school has made a significant investment in the provision of computers both for teaching and learning, and for administrative purposes. To improve pupils' access to computers a phased programme to equip all subject areas with the latest technology, including interactive white boards, is being implemented. The appointment of an ICT manager is ensuring that the significant investment undertaken by the school in this area is effectively used and managed. Resource provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, and the recently established inclusion centre is well equipped to support pupils' learning. Within the learning resource centre, the learning resource centre has been improved since the last inspection and provides an increased range of resources for learning. A suite of computers has been installed and students make good use of these to support personal research. The learning resource centre staff provide very good support to teachers and students, and the learning resource centre is open throughout the day and after school. The replacement programme of fiction and non-fiction books has created a stock of books of excellent quality. The learning resource centre staff liaise with subject departments to ensure that the learning resource centre stock matches curriculum needs. This has been most effective with the recent initiative for the teaching of English in Years 7 to 9.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

87. The sixth form is effectively co-ordinated. A new head of sixth form took up post in September 2001 and is providing good leadership. The sixth form is distinct yet also an important part of the whole school. Sixth formers are known well individually and benefit from responsibilities they undertake. Many students contribute effectively to the school as a whole - for example, by undertaking lunchtime supervision duties, mentoring younger pupils and participating in school drama and musical productions. They also enjoy the special facilities in the sixth form study lounge. For example, the room is equipped with computers and a lunchtime sandwich bar has recently been introduced. Sixth form students make a significant contribution to the ethos of the school.
88. Curricular arrangements work well. The sixth form offers a good range of A-level and vocational courses. These suit the abilities of most students. The school is aware of best value in all practical matters. This is exemplified in the way in which the curriculum is enhanced by the introduction of distance learning courses in accountancy, sociology, law and economics.
89. The sixth form aims successfully to develop a culture of high achievement. Overall results are very high in comparison with schools nationally and represent very good achievement when account is taken of the attainment levels of students starting in Year 12. Bearing in mind that expenditure on the sixth form is contained within its income, which is a little below average, the sixth form operates cost-effectively.

Resourcing

90. Staffing arrangements are good. Whilst overall the number of teachers is in suitable proportion to the number of sixth form students, several small teaching groups have been afforded, to accommodate student choice. Teachers are suitably qualified for the courses provided. Inspection evidence indicates that teaching in the sixth form is better, overall, than lower down the school. Although sixth form teaching has been systematically monitored and evaluated by the senior management team, there is a need for greater consistency in monitoring and evaluation by heads of department. Overall resource provision for the sixth form is good and effective use is made of the available resources to meet the needs of the curriculum. A satellite learning resource centre has been created within the sixth form study lounge where students' can undertake independent work and research, including access to computers and the Internet. Students make very good use of the learning resource centre for independent research and study during their non-timetabled lessons. Provision for students seeking guidance and information about future careers, higher education and training beyond eighteen is good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. To raise further the standards of work, attainment and progress of students, the governors, headteacher, senior management team and staff should:

Main School

- Raise the standards of attainment of boys by ensuring that:
 - there is a school strategy for raising the attainment of boys
 - the strategy is implemented effectively in all subjects and monitored closely so that the best practice is identified and shared, and that the effects of the strategy on raising boys' attainment are carefully evaluated
 - there is a greater expectation of success and high achievement among boys, particularly in Years 10 and 11
(paragraphs: 4,6,10,93,11-118, 120,134,160,170,173,179,194)
- Raise standards in science by ensuring that:

- leadership and management are made more effective
- the head of department implements rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning so that strengths can be identified and shared and weaknesses can be tackled
- expectations of the achievements of boys and of all pupils in the middle and lower part of the attainment range are raised
- more investigative work is included in the schemes of work for Years 7-11
- more use is made of computers to meet fully the needs of the National Curriculum in science
- there are more planned opportunities for pupils to write about science so that learning and literacy are improved:
- marking is more rigorous and provides pupils with clear information on the standard of their work and what they must do in order to improve
- all pupils complete the tasks they are given during lessons and for homework

(paragraphs: 1,2,6,11,25,30,22-24,41,45,78,84,114-124)

- Improve teaching and learning in drama by:

- providing effective leadership and support for temporary staffing
- setting a clear educational direction in the subject and creating a sense of purpose in lessons
- revising the curriculum to provide more opportunities for pupils to exercise their powers of imagination and creativity
- teaching pupils how to evaluate their own and others' work in order to understand how to improve their work.

(paragraphs: 10-11,25,33,78,132-135)

- Further improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:

- all staff with management responsibilities are provided with appropriate training in the implementation of procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning
- there is regular and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning by middle managers in all subjects
- strengths in teaching and learning are identified and shared, and weaknesses tackled

(paragraphs: 30,33-34,63,78,120,124,135,150,177)

- Increase the use of ICT to support teaching and learning by:

- providing appropriate training to raise the levels of skill of all teachers in order to include the use of ICT in their subject teaching
- ensuring that schemes of work include planning for the teaching of ICT in all subjects
- increasing access to the computers available for teaching and learning

(paragraphs: 32,41,106,110,121,142,150,155,168,177,184,191)

- Increase the availability and use of computers in music so that National Curriculum requirements are met in Years 7 to 9.

(paragraphs: 41,142)

In addition, paragraphs 28 (numeracy), 19,22,134,149 (behaviour), 51 (collective worship), 53 (multi-cultural education), 34, 64 (marking and the use of assessment information) include weaknesses that have not formed the basis of 'Key Issues' identified above. The school should consider including these in the governors' post-inspection action plan.

Sixth Form

- Develop and implement a course of study in religious education to meet statutory requirements
(paragraph: 55)

- Increase the use of ICT to support teaching and learning by:
 - providing appropriate training to raise the levels of skill of all teachers in order to include the use of ICT in their subject teaching
 - ensuring that schemes of work include planning for the teaching of ICT in all subjects
 - increasing access to the computers available for teaching and learning(paragraphs: 16,213,220,225)

In addition, paragraph 72 (reports to parents) includes a weakness that has not formed the basis of 'Key Issues' identified above. The school should consider including this in the governors' post-inspection action plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	156
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7– 11							
Number	4	40	63	40	9	0	0
Percentage	3	26	40	26	6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	18	24	6	0	0	0
Percentage	4	36	48	12	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1150	132
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	125	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	45	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	171	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.1
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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	89	128	217

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	55	49
	Girls	85	98	74
	Total	120	153	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	55 (61)	71 (72)	57 (61)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15 (11)	44 (40)	22 (25)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	58	52
	Girls	101	100	80
	Total	153	158	132
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (72)	73 (74)	61 (69)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (35)	41 (38)	26 (35)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	106	103	209

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	43	100	106
	Girls	60	96	102
	Total	103	196	208
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (45)	94 (91)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41 (38.6)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	34	19	53

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	23.4	25.6	24.2 (17.9)	0	0	0 (6.8)
National	16.9	17.9	17.4 (18.2)	9.8	11.4	10.6 (2.7)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	100
	National	76

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	1129
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	92	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	643

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.6
Key Stage 4	23.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3248230
Total expenditure	3226873
Expenditure per pupil	2645
Balance brought forward from previous year	-4452
Balance carried forward to next year	16905

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1282
Number of questionnaires returned	153

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	58	10	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	55	3	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	54	18	3	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	59	19	2	1
The teaching is good.	18	65	11	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	56	10	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	41	8	1	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	42	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	54	10	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	35	50	5	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	7	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	51	8	2	12

Other issues raised by parents

Nineteen parents attended the pre-inspection meeting with the registered inspector. They expressed very supportive views of the school and drew attention to the improvement that has taken place since the appointment of the new headteacher. They feel that extra-curricular and sixth form provision are good and that the majority of students become more responsible as they progress through the school.

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

- All pupils leave Year 11 with a qualification in English.
- Teaching and learning are good and have improved since the last inspection.
- The imaginative approach to the curriculum in Year 11 offers a wide choice to pupils and enables them to gain additional qualifications.
- Teaching and learning in media studies, both in the timetabled course and in the compulsory units within the English GCSE course, are very good.
- The department is well led and managed and works well together as a team.

Areas for improvement

- The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are not high enough and do not reflect pupils' achievements.
- Some pupils' achievements and attitudes have been seriously affected by a lack of continuity in staffing.

92. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in English. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, pupils achieved standards below the national average and well below those of pupils in similar schools. Girls performed better than boys to a greater extent than nationally and both performed less well in English than in mathematics and science. There has been a downward trend in these results over the last two years, and after the 2001 results the department conducted a thorough audit of its working practices. The department then put into place a range of improvements including a revision of its curriculum to bring it in line with the new Framework for teaching English and the National Literacy Strategy. Together with more focused and rigorous teaching this is having a very positive effect on standards, and Year 7 pupils themselves say that their English lessons build well on literacy work in their primary schools. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs represents good achievement up to the end of Year 9, relative to their achievement on entry, which is below average.
93. To set against the disappointing picture of results at the end of Year 9 is the fact that attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in English was above the national average and above the average gained by pupils in similar schools. Girls performed much better than boys and the difference between them was greater than the national difference between boys and girls. Overall, pupils' results were better than expected given their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9. It is a major strength of the department's work that all pupils leave Year 11 with a qualification in English. Teachers work very hard with other agencies to ensure that even pupils with very poor attendance are enabled to gain a qualification. A much greater proportion of pupils than nationally is also entered for the English literature examination and this more than cancels out an apparently lower than average percentage of candidates gaining A* to C grades. Added to this is the high percentage gaining A* and A grades, almost double the national percentage. Results in media studies in the 2001 GCSE examinations were equally successful, with all candidates gaining at least a grade C. This positive picture of attainment at the end of Year 11 reflects the good achievement seen in most lessons and in pupils' work during the inspection.
94. After some years of entering high attaining pupils for GCSE English in Year 10, the department decided to enter the majority of the Year 10 cohort for the examination in 2001. As a result, over half of the pupils now in Year 11 have already gained a pass at Grades A* to C. This enables the department to offer a wide range of courses in Year 11. These are: English literature; media

studies; AS course in English language and literature for the highest attaining pupils who wish to begin advanced study early; key skills Levels 2 and 3, again normally taken in the sixth form; and GCSE English for those who wish to re-take the examination. This is a pilot year. The department intends to monitor carefully the progress and attitudes of these pupils before they decide whether the enriched diversity of the curriculum outweighs the disadvantages of the scheme, such as the lower proportion of A* and A grades in English.

95. Despite the disappointing results in 2000 and 2001 at the end of Year 9, inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils now in Year 9 is close to the national average because of good achievement throughout Years 7 to 9. Speaking and listening skills are much improved since the last inspection because planning now ensures that opportunities for structured speaking and listening are built into schemes of work.
96. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils now in Year 11 is above average. High attaining pupils are able to express and explain their ideas in depth and at length, coherently and fluently, and most pupils are confident and articulate. For instance, in one Year 11 lesson, pupils were preparing presentations on characters from the play, 'An Inspector Calls'. The teacher ensured that pupils listened actively by giving them a framework within which to make notes. Most pupils are able to communicate clearly with others in both formal and informal situations. In a very good Year 9 lesson, pupils with a range of special educational needs were able to express opinions about an incident and explain how they had reached those opinions. In another very good lesson, Year 7 pupils gave excellent presentations about aspects of the school, which had been carefully planned over several lessons. They used a variety of media to deliver these presentations, which were entertaining and confident.
97. The department continues to address pupils' reading experience and skills. Reading is promoted through use of the learning resource centre, paired reading schemes, visiting authors, activities for such events as World Book Day and the Carnegie Book Award shadowing scheme. Pupils are able to access the reading matter they meet in lessons. High and average attaining pupils read poetry and other literature, exploring the writers' intentions and identifying how these intentions are conveyed to the reader. A Year 10 class examined in detail a poem by Carol Ann Duffy, analysing her use of the extended metaphor. Lively group discussion of the poem extended the pupils' understanding of its complexity and enabled them to approach a similar piece of writing with confidence and enjoyment.
98. Pupils' writing skills are improving because the department is now ensuring that pupils gain a more objective understanding of how good writing works. They analyse the work of other writers and are expected to write extended commentaries on their own work. Teachers support pupils' writing with resources that give sound advice on how to structure their writing. By Year 9 lower attaining pupils are able to communicate clearly, using some lively vocabulary and with reasonably accurate spelling and punctuation. By Year 11, high attaining pupils write fluently and coherently, using a wide range of techniques to engage and interest the reader.
99. Most pupils continue to display positive attitudes towards their lessons, although a few have been seriously disaffected by a lack of continuity in staffing, which the department has worked hard to alleviate. Pupils settle quickly to their work and concentrate well. They want to do well and succeed. They are helped to achieve this by the improved quality of teaching since the last inspection when teaching was mainly satisfactory. Teaching is now good overall, and almost a third of lessons observed had very good features, more often in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. One of the main reasons for this improvement is the way in which teachers are helping pupils to become independent thinkers and learners. This has been achieved partly through the increased use of exploratory and structured talk in lessons so that pupils can develop and clarify their own ideas. This policy is further supported in many lessons by a focus on the specific requirements of national tests and examinations. Teachers refer regularly to ways in which high marks can be gained, and they offer model answers to demonstrate good practice. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to identify the features of model answers, which related to the mark scheme used by examiners and this increased their knowledge of examination techniques. Teaching is equally good in media studies, which is offered both as a GCSE option and within the

English department's enriched Year 11 curriculum. The subject enhances pupils' understanding of the media and develops their critical and analytical skills. Pupils demonstrate an awareness of market audience and the persuasive techniques used in advertising and learn how to edit videotape using computer software.

100. The department is well led and managed. The head of department is creative and imaginative and leads a closely-knit team of teachers who plan and work together very effectively to develop and improve provision. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Good improvement has been effected in the curriculum, in teaching and in the way pupils' achievement is tracked and monitored. The department is well placed to effect further improvement, particularly in the attainment of pupils in the end of Year 9 tests.

Literacy

101. Standards of literacy are average and enable most pupils to access the full curriculum in most subjects. Pupils have satisfactory reading skills and are able to access the reading matter they meet in lessons. High and average attaining pupils are able to explore the writer's intentions and identify how these intentions are conveyed to the reader. All pupils are encouraged to extend their research skills through the use of a range of information resources. Pupils' writing skills are improving because the English department is now ensuring that pupils gain a more objective understanding of how good writing works. They analyse the work of other writers and are expected to write extended commentaries on their own work. Teachers support pupils' writing with resources that give sound advice on how to structure their writing. By Year 9 lower attaining pupils are able to communicate clearly using a range of different styles, employing lively vocabulary and with reasonably accurate spelling and punctuation. By Year 11, high attaining pupils write fluently and coherently, using a wide range of techniques to engage and interest the reader in both their narrative and non-fiction writing.
102. Improving standards of literacy are being promoted through the increasing use of appropriate strategies in many subjects, accelerated by the recent appointment of a literacy co-ordinator. Although some subject areas have been slow to recognise that they need to teach the specific styles of reading and writing that pupils need for success in the subject, other subjects are making very effective contributions to pupils' levels of literacy. For instance, in art and geography, pupils are expected to use the learning resource centre for research from a variety of sources. Most departments display key words and recognise that they are responsible for teaching the specific terminology of the subject. The next focus is to be on presentation and correct expression. To underpin this and to support teachers, the literacy co-ordinator is to run sessions on grammar for those teachers who feel that their own knowledge is insecure. A major development in the improvement of literacy skills is the way in which most subject areas now accept that speaking and listening skills underpin much of pupils' learning. Since the last inspection most departments have built into their planning more opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their knowledge and understanding through structured talk.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Steady rise in standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Brisk starter activities and clear objectives in lessons.
- Very good provision for pupils with special needs.
- Teaching and learning, which is now good in most lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades at GCSE.
- The attainment of boys at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- The use of ICT in lessons and in coursework.

103. Standards of attainment in national tests in mathematics at the end of Year 9 show a steady upward trend, slightly exceeding national averages yet comparable to attainment at similar schools. In 2001 boys' performance was close to the national average, while girls' performance exceeded the national average. Pupils' test results were well above those for both English and science, and represent good progress and achievement through Years 7 to 9.
104. At the end of Year 11, GCSE examination results in mathematics are now close to the national average with girls again outperforming boys. There has been a marked increase over the past five years in the percentage of grades A* to C which pupils obtain. A number of pupils also achieve good results in GCSE statistics. Nevertheless, the 2001 subject residuals in both mathematics and statistics indicate that pupils did slightly less well in mathematics than in other examination subjects taken.
105. In work seen during the inspection the attainment of pupils in the vast majority of lessons in Years 7 to 9 was above average. No significant difference in the performance of boys and girls was evident either in lessons or in work scrutinised. Exercise books showed much careful setting out of written tasks, with many pupils taking pride in the presentation of their work. This was evident in calculations of percentages and decimals, in the calculation of areas of shapes including circles, and in application of Pythagoras, where clear layout of calculations helps accuracy. Attainment in algebra was patchy, more successful where original expressions are first displayed prior to simplification or factorisation than where pupils try to write answers down directly. Many well-constructed diagrams, graphs and cumulative frequency charts were seen in work on data handling, although again less effective by pupils who took less care. Good use is made of self-assessment checklists on which pupils indicate during work on a topic when they 'understand and can do'.
106. At the end of Year 11 pupils take GCSE courses at higher, intermediate or foundation levels. A small number of lower attaining pupils take a Certificate of Achievement. Inspection evidence showed the attainment by both boys and girls to be now more consistent with expectations, although in some lessons the lack of sustained application and concentration of some pupils, mostly boys, did inhibit progress. The quality of written work varies. Some excellent processing and analysis was seen but all pupils, not only those in lower sets, do need to appreciate that the poor setting out of work is often linked to lack of success. Good progress and understanding were shown by Year 10 pupils in a lesson on graphing simultaneous equations, but in another Year 10 lesson pupils experienced difficulty with plan and elevation diagrams because of an inappropriate lesson structure. In a Year 11 lesson, higher attaining pupils were swiftly moved through work on transformation geometry and tree diagrams and made good gains in knowledge and understanding as a result. A Year 11 lower attaining class achieved well in a lesson on bearings, including two-stage processes, and in estimation and measurement of angles. The encouragement and support provided by the teacher helped a Year 11 class, made up of pupils with special educational needs, to make good progress in the manipulation of number and the measurement of area. GCSE statistics projects revealed good understanding and clarity in presentation of charts. However, there was no evidence of use of information technology to aid computation and presentation.
107. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good in a large proportion of the lessons observed. In most lessons pupils were motivated, enthusiastic and determined. Relationships are good and pupils work effectively and responsibly in pairs and small groups. For example, in one Year 8 lesson it was necessary for pupils to move around the classroom collecting data. This was done purposefully and sensibly. In lessons where lapses in behaviour did occur these were usually tackled quickly and progression maintained. However, in a few lessons excessive calling out or other distractions by some pupils disrupted teaching and learning. This occurred in one Year 9 lesson, for example, where class management was ineffective. The majority of pupils show respect for each other, and in particular towards pupils with special needs, who are well integrated with their peers.
108. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Teaching is now good, overall, and sometimes better. Most lessons commence with a

brisk starter activity that secures pupils' involvement from the outset. The activities may involve rapid mental arithmetic problems, revision of recent work or preparation for subsequent work. Teachers and pupils enjoy these activities. Lesson objectives are clearly displayed and, when teaching is at its best, the main learning activity is sharply focused and well structured. In these lessons learning objectives are achieved and pupils make good progress. Particularly good examples were seen in a Year 7 lesson on factors, a Year 8 lesson on areas of trapezia, and the Year 11 lesson on bearings and on tree diagrams. Confident and knowledgeable teaching, often assisted by gentle humour, leads to successful learning outcomes. However, in an unsatisfactory Year 9 algebra lesson the learning activities were not well matched to pupils' attainment levels. As a result inappropriate demands were placed on a number of pupils who experienced genuine difficulty in understanding the concepts involved. This created disaffection and a lack of interest in the lesson. Similarly in a Year 10 lesson, lower attaining pupils rapidly lost concentration and interest because they were unable to tackle learning activities that were too difficult.

109. Good use is made of resources to support teaching and learning. For example, the overhead projector was used effectively in a Year 11 lessons on transformations and in a Year 10 lesson to illustrate the graphing of simultaneous equations. Calculators were rarely used in the lessons observed. Instead pupils were expected to perform calculations mentally or on paper. This is good preparation for the non-calculator requirements in examinations. Lower attaining pupils use printed number squares to aid calculations and are encouraged to use calculators only to check their results. The numeracy skills of pupils are extended at all levels of attainment. The individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs are considered in lesson planning and well-planned support is provided for pupils attending the inclusion centre.
110. Although statutory National Curriculum requirements are met, not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Some classes may book a computer room to undertake occasional mathematical activity such as spreadsheets or Logo. However, there was no evidence of the use of ICT in any of the pupils' books or projects scrutinised, nor in classroom displays. The lack of use of computers in GCSE statistics is a significant shortcoming. Schemes of work are detailed and provide teachers with good guidance.
111. The department suite of rooms is well equipped and decorated with good displays of pupils' work. Textbook resources are sufficient though many pupils are not able to take books home: homework often has to be completed on photocopied sheets. It is not easy to store these sheets and this can make revision difficult. A considerable amount of assessment information is made available to all teachers in the department. This information includes National Curriculum test scores, cognitive test scores and GCSE examination results, together with information from the regular internal tests and assessments. However, the detailed tracking and evaluation of pupil performance are at an early stage of development. The very recently appointed head of department is keen to further promote the raising of standards and recognises the need to use assessment information more effectively. In the last inspection the department was judged to be underachieving. Since that time there has been considerable improvement in teaching and learning together with several new teaching appointments and the restructuring of teaching groups. The starter activities, the clearer focus on learning objectives, and the use of a summary at the end of lessons have all contributed to the improvements that have taken place. The department is now in a good position to make further improvement.

Numeracy

112. Standards of numeracy are average, overall. The mathematics department is making good progress in implementing the Key Stage 3 strategy for numeracy, and work in Year 7 is well linked to work done previously in the primary schools. Teachers share the learning objectives with pupils and frequently lessons begin with an oral or mental starter, often linked to the main focus of the lesson. Pupils are able to undertake most basic calculations without the aid of a calculator. Pupils are able to convert between fractions, decimals and percentages with confidence. Pupils have sound estimation skills. They use mathematics appropriately in aspects of shape and space, use graphs to display data and have a good understanding of probability. Extension

activities are provided for the highest attainers, while additional support is provided for lower attaining pupils.

113. A whole-school approach to the development of numeracy across the curriculum has yet to be implemented. Pupils apply their numerical skills effectively in a number of subjects - for example, in geography pupils use four-figure references and coordinates in map work. Effective use is made of symmetry, enlargement and scale in art. Numeracy skills are developed through measurement and calculations in science and design and technology, and the analysis of pulse-rates is taught in physical education. However, although there are opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their numerical skills in several subjects, these skills are not being developed in a systematic way in all subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The very good quality of the best teaching
- The procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress
- The achievement of the highest attaining pupils

Areas for development

- The overall quality of teaching and learning
- The leadership and management of the department
- The achievement of boys and of pupils in the middle of the attainment range
- The use of ICT in order to raise standards and to meet National Curriculum requirements fully
- The monitoring and support of new teachers

114. In National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, pupils' attainment in science was below the national average and well below average in comparison with similar schools. Pupils' performance was at the national average between 1998 and 2000 and showed the same pattern of improvement as the national results. However, in 2001 results declined. In general the results of boys and girls are very similar. Pupils' performance in science is below their performance in mathematics but similar to their performance in English. Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 show that on entry to the school, boys' standards in science are below average while girls standards are average.
115. In 2001 pupils were entered for the GCSE examination in physics, chemistry and biology as well as double award science. A much smaller proportion of the pupils overall gained an A* to C grade compared with the national results and the proportion was similar in 2000. These results are below the national average and below those of similar schools. Boys did significantly less well than girls. The performance of pupils following the double award science course was well below average, particularly for boys, and significantly below their performance in the other subjects taken. The highest attaining pupils studying biology and physics achieved well and gained an above average proportion of A* to C grades in the 2001 examination, while in chemistry achievement was satisfactory and results were close to the national average. Most pupils gained A* to G grades, although the proportion doing so was a little lower than the national figure.
116. Inspection evidence shows that overall standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. In lessons and in work seen in Years 7 to 9 pupils' practical and investigative skills, as well as their knowledge and understanding of science are below average. Their learning about inheritance and electric circuits is too brief and not of a high enough standard. Practical work about forces and burning magnesium is below average and cells are drawn inadequately with important features omitted. Much work is incomplete and graphs are drawn without titles or labels. When teaching is well planned pupils do well and achieve a good understanding of, for example, ideas about magnetism. The work of higher attaining pupils is well above average. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, about gravity higher attaining pupils were making rapid progress in finding out how quickly things fall.
117. The overall standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 are also below average. During Years 10 and 11 higher attaining pupils achieve standards that are equivalent to the highest GCSE grades. They display a very good understanding of graphs that show the relationship between speed and time, and practical work about enzymes and digestion is very well done. In Year 11 work about electronics is also of a good standard. However, the work of middle and lower attaining pupils on, for example, electric circuits, current and voltage is not detailed enough. Some work is incomplete and superficial in its approach; this was the case, for example, in a Year 10 lesson about drugs and alcohol. The practical and investigative skills of most pupils are below average. In Year 11, pupils' knowledge of the ways in which rocks are formed is about average, as is Year 10 pupils' understanding of genes and chromosomes. Boys in the middle and

lower part of the attainment range do less well than girls and this includes pupils with special educational needs.

118. The standards of literacy and numeracy of pupils in Years 9 to 11 in science are below expectations. Pupils are often very willing to answer questions but their ability to express scientific ideas is limited. The highest attainers write fluently and accurately about science - for example, when describing the digestion of a sandwich, but the majority of pupils need more guidance on how to record their work accurately and how to explain their ideas clearly in writing. The situation is similar with graphing and numerical calculations: these are done well by higher attaining pupils but inadequately by most others.
119. The behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are satisfactory overall. At their best pupils are critical of and interested in explanations of the science they are learning. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, they were willing to give tentative answers to difficult questions about genetics, and in Year 9 on the effect of gravity and weightlessness. When teaching is at least satisfactory they are competent, co-operative and safe workers. During practical sessions they follow instructions carefully and take care of the equipment that they use. In lessons where planning is inadequate and learning activities are not well matched to pupils' attainment levels they lose interest and become disrespectful to their teachers. This type of behaviour is also likely to occur when lesson objectives are not made clear and pupils are uncertain about what they are supposed to do. Education care officers provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs and the small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups are fully involved in all lessons.
120. The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching in a quarter of all of the lessons observed during the inspection was unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory teaching was linked directly to pupils' underachievement in science; it was not confined to any particular year group. Some, but not all, of the unsatisfactory teaching was associated with inexperienced or temporary teachers. Teaching was slightly better in Years 7 and 9, where more good teaching was observed than in Years 10 and 11. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows too few examples of investigative work, and teaching of this aspect does not meet the scientific enquiry requirements of the National Curriculum. There are many books and folders in which pupils' work is incomplete and untidy without a teacher's insistence through marking that this should be put right. The poorly organised and incomplete work of a significant number of pupils is of little use for revision and has a negative affect on their achievement in science.
121. In the best lessons teachers' planning is very good. Lesson activities are challenging and well suited to the needs of the pupils. In a Year 11 lesson on electronics, for example, the highest attaining pupils made good progress because the learning tasks were demanding. Similarly, in another Year 11 lesson, on light and reflection, lower attaining pupils, including many with special educational needs, made good progress because the learning tasks were well matched to their attainment levels. In such circumstances relationships between teachers and pupils are good and as a result pupils gain in self-esteem and confidence. They are prepared to answer difficult questions and to work with determination. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson in which pupils had to find out about conditions on the moon. Discipline in these lessons is generally is good and based on mutual respect. Teaching is interesting and stimulating and pupils are therefore attentive. Because instructions are very clear pupils have the confidence to tackle difficult ideas, as in a Year 10 lesson on changes in a gene pool for example. When this occurs, pupils are genuinely interested in explanations of science. When teaching is satisfactory or better, teachers use question and answer sessions at the beginning and end of lessons to check on pupils' progress and understanding. In a Year 11 lesson, good use was made of the Internet to find out about the adaptations of animals and in a Year 9 lesson, effective use was made of a CD-ROM to enable pupils find out about the moon. In these lessons pupils of all attainment levels learn the research skills fundamental to progress in science. Overall, however, not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.
122. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lesson planning is inadequate, expectations are too low and explanations or summaries are too brief. In these lessons, pupils do not know what to do and behaviour deteriorates. This happened in a lesson about magnesium in Year 8, for example, when

pupils made little progress because they understood little of what was being taught and were unable to complete the task they had been given. In these lessons teachers do not check that pupils understand the learning tasks or the explanations they have been given. Classroom management is often weak, with too much inappropriate and inattentive behaviour ignored.

123. The department has not made enough progress since the last inspection. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 is still below average and that of pupils in similar schools. In Year 11 the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A* to C in GCSE examinations remains below average and lower than the proportion gained by pupils in similar schools. The standards of literacy of lower attaining pupils are below expectations and pupils' achievement is still adversely affected by unsatisfactory teaching. Progress in tackling these issues is too slow. A well-designed system for recording pupils' progress, identifying underachievement and setting targets has been introduced recently and risk assessments are now carried out thoroughly. An effective system for recording pupils' progress using National Curriculum levels has been introduced and targets for pupils are set and reviewed systematically. In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, new lesson planning requirements have been introduced. These are detailed and include information about risk assessments and the use of ICT. However, there is not enough ICT equipment in the department and it is not possible to teach the part of the National Curriculum that specifies the use of computers to collect store and retrieve information.
124. Both the leadership and management of the science department are unsatisfactory. There is too much inconsistency in the implementation of school and department policies. The reading demands are too light and pupils, other than the highest attainers, do not have enough opportunities to write about what they have learned in science lessons. New strategies are being used to promote discussion in the classroom and to improve oral responses. These are used well by some teachers but not by others. Raising pupils' standards of literacy is essential if pupils are to improve their achievements in science and gain better grades in examinations. Short investigative or problem solving activities are used rarely, but there are plans to extend this type of work. The consequence of these deficiencies is that pupils make less progress than they should and too many do not gain the GCSE grades of which they are capable. Marking is regular but inconsistent in its use of targets. More challenging activities that offer pupils opportunities to take responsibility and become independent learners have been introduced in some lessons. However, the unsatisfactory monitoring of pupils' progress has allowed poor and unsatisfactory work to go unchecked, particularly between Years 7 and 9. This group of pupils use folders and the demands of organising and recording their work are too great for many of them. Not enough progress has been made in developing consistently good standards of teaching and more rapid improvement is needed if standards are to be raised quickly to those achieved by pupils in other subjects. During their first term newly qualified teachers in the department did not receive enough support.

Expressive Arts

Within the school's curriculum structure, the subjects of art, music and drama are grouped together to form the department of expressive arts. The subjects are organised in this way in order to reinforce the links between the three arts subjects and to strengthen the contribution that each subject makes to the development of pupils' and students' aesthetic awareness and understanding. The linkage is best seen in projects which can draw on the three subjects - for example, in dramatic productions, exhibitions, musical recitals and community-based arts projects. However, although during the inspection there was some evidence of links being made between the three subjects - for example in collaboration between music and drama to produce the introductory music and final scene for a short dramatic extract - there was no evidence of these links being made in a continuous and systematic way.

ART AND DESIGN

The provision for art is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Consistently very good and sometimes excellent teaching leads to outstanding achievements at the end of Year 11
- Very good leadership, setting high standards throughout the department
- The very good attitudes and behaviour that pupils display in lessons
- The excellent displays of pupils' work in the public areas of the school

Areas for improvement:

- The use of computers to extend curriculum provision
- Provision for the cultural development of pupils
- Some resources are in need of replacement
- The storage facilities for large-scale three-dimensional work

125. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. Pupils' attainment on entry is consistent with national levels and they make very good progress through Years 7 to 9. This is confirmed by teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 and 2001, and by inspection evidence. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that pupils learn the essential basic skills of drawing, painting and three-dimensional construction and modelling through Years 7 to 9. Sketchbooks show a high standard of annotation that starts in Year 7. Pupils are well prepared for the GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average, as reflected in the very high standard of attainment in GCSE examinations. The very good and sometimes excellent teaching across the school ensures that the full creative potential of pupils is exploited and leads to some exceptional individual achievements.

126. In lessons and work seen during the inspection attainment by the end of Year 9, is above expectations for the age group. Pupils in Year 7 know the primary colours and how to mix secondary colours and hues. They produce colourful compositions using paint and oil pastel, blending colours effectively to model form through light and shade in their observational studies. Pupils with special educational needs make the same good progress in lessons as others. However, lower attaining pupils lack the experience and fine motor skills to ensure a good finish to their compositions. This is not always picked up and improved on by teachers. The poor quality and inappropriate choice of many of the brushes make it difficult for pupils to work neatly in colouring their good drawings. In Year 8 pupils know and can explain the basic principles of one-point perspective. They can name two Cubist painters, recognising the geometric patterns that emerge in their work. Higher attaining pupils work in fine detail in texture studies, using pencil, chalk, crayon and biro to explore mark making. In a very good lesson in Year 8, for example, pupils made rapid progress in learning the principles of Surrealism. They learned both the language and the imagery of the Surrealist movement. Three-dimensional studies, based on the work of Magritte, are particularly striking. Pupils can identify and name Picasso's 'Weeping Woman' and comment on the abstract simplification of his approach to painting. The excellent teaching seen in Year 8 ensured that every pupil was included and that pupils with statements of special need made the same very good progress as others. Pupils in Year 9 measure carefully and draw neatly in their studies on linear and picture perspective. On occasion their creative freedom is constrained by the design element of perspective drawing, but the majority learn the principles of perspective drawing effectively. Very good progress is made in observational drawing, as drawing skills are improved under the expert guidance of teachers.

127. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 11 pupils make very good progress in their GCSE coursework. Year 10 pupils can manipulate light and shade very effectively in tonal drawing. The more able show well-developed skills in creating textures, from coarse elephant hide to delicate fish scales and leaf veins. Some individual pieces of colour work, inspired by the work of Rousseau, are visually very powerful. A mask project enabled pupils to study ethnic masks and build their own mask in a structured way that brought in a wide range of given and found media,

leading to individually striking masks that can be used in school theatre productions. Pupils study and make notes on the work of important artists such as Dali, De Chirico, Braque, Rousseau and the French Impressionists. In Year 11 pupils research their chosen artist, writing perceptive critical studies of their life and work. The work of the more talented pupils is exceptional, often stretching across two and three-dimensional media, showing creative accomplishments well beyond their years. The wide-ranging work of one talented pupil includes an excellent self-portrait, formed by using computer generated photo pixels as the basis of her large completed study. Her work overall is of an outstanding level of achievement. Pupils look at the de-construction and re-construction techniques of analytical Cubism and Constructivism, becoming familiar with the splintered and fractured images they copy before using the techniques in their own work. More able pupils push the techniques to the limit as they explore their broken images, looking for new compositions.

128. Throughout the school the large majority of pupils enjoy art lessons and are positive in their approach to the subject. On occasion, some pupils in Year 9 become bored and lose interest in their work, sometimes disrupting others, but the standard of behaviour is overwhelmingly very good in lessons, reflecting the high expectations that teachers have of both behaviour and work. Very good relationships characterise the majority of lessons and pupils are enabled to develop their work along their own lines as they mature, becoming more or less independent learners by the end of Year 11.
129. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. It is often excellent in Year 8. On occasion, in Year 9, teaching is no more than satisfactory as a small number of pupils challenge the experience and management skills of the teacher. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well, working from long-term modular plans that build on skills term by term. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject and use their own personal and professional skills to motivate pupils, exploiting their creative and technical potential to the full. Quick-fire question and answer sessions enable teachers to check on learning and challenge the thinking and speaking skills of the pupils. Fine art is taught in a thorough and stimulating way, with enthusiasm and a flair for teaching the more difficult, critical aspects of art. Teaching is confident and lessons are managed and paced effectively, to ensure that the best use is made of the time available. The very high standards set in the department lead to some excellent achievements. The department sets examination targets that are exceptionally high, but realistic, given the evidence from the inspection.
130. The department is a strength of the school. The teaching team is led very effectively and works well together to improve standards year on year. The department makes a very effective contribution to the creative arts faculty, supporting the annual school theatre production in practical ways. The curriculum is well planned, but does not have a sufficiently wide cultural base, nor does it yet include computerised art as a teaching module. Very good use is made of annual visits from local artists in residence and of the relatively few visits made to museums and art galleries. Accommodation is sometimes restricted when used for larger classes, but it is well used for work and displays. The storage facilities for large-scale work, in particular three-dimensional work, are severely limited. Teachers retain their practical interest in art, often using their own work to extend and personalise critical studies. Displays of work around the school are of a very high standard, appropriately celebrating the excellent work of the department.
131. The department has made a good improvement since the last inspection. It has maintained its high standards of teaching and levels of achievement and remains the best performing subject in the school. GCSE examination grades have improved and resources have improved to a satisfactory level. A careful analysis of examination results is now made in order to improve the planned curriculum. National Curriculum levels are being introduced effectively and targets and predictions are sharper. Technician time has been increased and is well used to support the work of the department.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieved above average standards in the 2001 GCSE examination in drama.

Areas for improvement

- The overall quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory.
- There is a lack of experience and leadership to support temporary staffing.
- The quality of provision has deteriorated since the last inspection.

132. Attainment in drama in Years 7 to 10 is below the expected standards. In Year 11 attainment is close to the national average. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils achieved standards above the national average, but temporary staffing arrangements are resulting in a lack of experience and leadership within the department and standards are falling.
133. Pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 10 is currently unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons they find it difficult to leave behind the world outside the drama studio and absorb themselves in the drama. Pupils have limited knowledge of dramatic terminology and conventions. For instance, a Year 10 class were unable to remember the term 'tableau'. Mime skills are weak. In warm-up sessions in Year 9 and 10 lessons, pupils were asked to perform short mimes to the class. They were inhibited and embarrassed and some were reluctant to participate. Few made any real attempt to focus on the task, being more concerned with what others thought about their efforts. Some pupils in Year 11 approach their work imaginatively, although in the lesson seen only one of the three groups working on a polished improvisation achieved satisfactory standards of performance. Other groups worked at a very leisurely pace, showing little understanding of how to build on and refine their improvisations.
134. Many boys in particular lack concentration and regard drama lessons as playtime rather than as an opportunity to develop their creativity and imagination. Their approach is often too physical and they lack self-control and discipline. In a Year 8 lesson the teacher worked hard to keep them focused on a task connected with their English work on 'Romeo and Juliet' that some found challenging. However, in a Year 9 lesson the teacher allowed pupils to spend too much time on activities that had nothing to do with the lesson, and achievement and behaviour were both unsatisfactory.
135. This erosion of the standards observed since the last inspection has occurred because of the temporary nature of staffing and because the temporary teacher has received insufficient leadership and guidance. Schemes of work are taken directly from a commercial publication which has not been geared to the needs of the pupils and which does not meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. This is contributing to the unsatisfactory quality of teaching. In addition, lessons are taken at a slow pace, often as dictated by pupils, and do not contain enough variety or offer work that is sufficiently demanding or interesting. Pupils are not being taught how to evaluate their own and others' work in a constructive manner. In a Year 9 lesson, when asked to comment on one group's performance, pupils focused on areas of weakness rather than being guided into identifying strengths first. This left the group demoralised and resentful rather than developing their ability to recognise how to improve their work.

MUSIC

Overall the quality of provision in this subject is **good**.

Strengths

- All teachers have a very good subject knowledge
- The quality of teaching is good or better
- The use of assessment to guide curriculum planning
- The monitoring of students' progress
- The quality of the instrumental teaching
- Regular performing opportunities in and outside school

Areas for improvement

- The number of computers and midi-keyboards in the department
- The range of multi-cultural instruments in the department
- The number of pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments
- The amount of secure storage space for instruments

136. Teacher assessments show that by end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils matches national expectations. In the 2001 GCSE examination, the percentage of pupils obtaining A* to C grades was in line with the national average. These results include eight pupils from Years 9 and 10 who took the examination early. Many of the pupils achieved higher grades than those predicted by the results they obtained at the end of Year 9. The results for 2001 were similar to those achieved in 2000, but above those gained in 1999. In 2001 boys performed better than girls.
137. Inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Year 9 to be broadly consistent with national expectations. No significant differences were observed between the standards achieved by boys and girls. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is based on practical work so that all pupils, whatever their ability, can join in enjoyable musical activities and achieve a reasonable standard. In Year 7, pupils develop basic keyboard and rhythmic skills by playing 'Pentatonic March', for example, and devising their own rhythmic boxes. They listen to short musical extracts and begin early evaluation of the pieces using the elements of music as key words for their sentences. In Year 8, pupils explore the structure of music – for example, through listening to and playing a minuet by Haydn. This is generally followed by research into Indian music, which enables the pupils to use the techniques discovered to compose their own pieces in this style. In the spring term the music and drama departments combine to produce the introductory music and final scene for a short dramatic extract. Lessons observed during the inspection were spent preparing for this event, with some pupils writing the lyrics for a song; one higher attaining group also composed the music for it, whilst others used simple computer skills to write their own melodies. Pupils in Year 9 learned to play a keyboard piece called 'Gilding' in which they discovered examples of two composition techniques, repetition and sequence. They developed their song writing skills by learning the twelve bar blues chord pattern and writing lyrics in the blues style. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good
138. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are consistent with national expectations. Pupils follow a two-year course, which prepares them well for the GCSE examination in music. This involves Year 10 pupils listening to and analysing a wide range of musical styles and composing short pieces using the techniques discovered. A mini-disc of recorded examples revealed the progressive nature of the work covered as the pupils explored and composed in the styles of classical and minimalist composers, twelve tone and popular composers, until their first original compositions emerged. Year 11 compositions show a continuation of this work as the pupils are enabled to develop their compositions by the skilful guidance of their teachers. Pupils also develop their performance and listening skills. The majority of pupils in Years 10 to 11 achieve satisfactorily, whilst the higher attainers achieve well.

139. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Activities are designed to be accessible to all pupils, and this enables special educational needs pupils to produce good results, thus boosting their esteem. Provision for the higher attaining pupils is good. Regular monitoring of pupils' performance by the teachers and appropriate target setting provide continuous challenge, which enables the pupils to make good progress. Higher attaining pupils receive extra challenge not only from the instrumental lessons, but also from regular rehearsals and concerts. The numerous events held both in and outside the school are a strength of the school.
140. Attitudes and behaviour in music lessons in all year groups are good and sometimes very good. This is due to the friendly but professional approach of the teachers and their ability to build good relationships with the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to achieve their best and to enjoy their music. They respond well to the clear explanations of teachers and quickly settle down to their learning tasks. They rise to the challenges set by teachers and concentrate well in lessons. Relationships are good and this is particularly evident in group work, where partners will help one another, often without being asked.
141. Teaching is good. Teachers skilfully involve all pupils and students in a series of interesting musical activities and celebrate worthwhile results. Using carefully phrased questions and encouragement they make sure that pupils and students discover musical knowledge for themselves. Through experience and carefully worked out strategies pupils become more confident in activities which involve performing unprepared pieces in front of the class – improvisation, for example. Lessons are well planned and generally contain a variety of activities. Good use is made of time limits, which help the pupils to remain focused so that tasks are quickly accomplished. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and this is used to good effect. Homework is set regularly for all year groups, and consists mostly of practice for the next lesson or assessment. When homework requiring research is set, there is no procedure for writing this up in exercise books, nor do the pupils make additional notes of points that emerge in discussion.
142. Although some teaching rooms are cramped when larger classes are being taught, the department accommodation is satisfactory. However, there are not enough computers to enable the department to teach the full National Curriculum. This has an effect on the availability of resources and expertise for GCSE and A-level work. There are not enough full sized keyboards and not enough non-pitched and pitched percussion instruments. Due to a lack of multi-cultural instruments a popular extra-curricular activity, the Samba Band, will have to cease as it is becoming difficult to borrow the instruments the band uses on a regular basis.
143. Since the last inspection the department has successfully tackled the issues raised in the report. Under the good leadership of the head of department, pupils and students are now benefiting from the tracking that takes place as part of the assessment and recording procedures. These include the regular setting of targets for all pupils after the assessment of each unit of work. Regular recordings are made of pupils' and students' compositions and performances and these are used not only for assessment purposes, but also as teaching examples. Lessons now have a variety of activities, and the use of key words is beginning to influence pupils' and students' oral and written work. The curriculum is well planned and provides good progression. Approximately 100 pupils take advantage of the instrumental lessons provided by the Derbyshire Music Service. Such is the standard of these lessons that one member of the school recently played with the National Youth Orchestra, and other instrumentalists regularly participate in rehearsals organised by the Derbyshire Music Service. The department organises or is invited to participate in a wide range of concerts and other musical events, thus providing further extension opportunities for the higher attaining pupils and students.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths.

- Improving trend in examination results at the end of Year 11
- Standards of attainment in electronics and food and nutrition
- Good use of assessment information for target setting
- Well planned schemes of work in Years 7 to 9
- Course provision in Years 10 and 11

Areas for improvement.

- The monitoring of teaching and learning
- The matching of learning activities to the attainment levels of all pupils
- Implementation of control and computer-aided design and manufacture in pupils' work
- Pupils' graphical and written presentational skills

144. As reflected in recent teacher assessments, standards of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 are consistent with national expectations overall. Girls usually do better than boys but not significantly so. A minority of pupils achieve the higher levels. Pupils enter the school with a varied level of experience in design and technology and make good progress from Year 7 to 9. Pupils use a wide range of tools and equipment safely and confidently. They work in a range of materials including wood, metal, plastics and food technology. There is also a module of work in electronics but control is not covered adequately and is taught in Year 8 only to an introductory level. Good work was seen in all areas of the department with design folders and workbooks showing good use of colour, a good range of research ideas, neat drawings and use of information communication technology in presentation of work. This was seen in a Year 7 graphics module where there was a good range of lettering styles in a packaging project, in a Year 8 food technology project looking at nutritional values in a balanced diet, and in a Year 9 mechanisms project where pupils were researching different forms of motion, including linear and rotary. Where the work is weaker it is mainly due to poor presentational skills, using pens for drawing, weak annotation of sketching and poor written work with spelling errors.
145. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, both boys' and girls' results were close to the national average. There were differences in performance between the separate design and technology subjects, with electronics and food and nutrition performing particularly well and resistant materials less so. Good results were also achieved in child development. The achievement of most pupils was at least satisfactory, when attainment at the end of Year 9 is taken into consideration.
146. Inspection evidence shows standards of work in Year 11 to be consistent with national expectations across all specialisms. There is good and very good work in electronics and food and nutrition and the standard of practical work in resistant materials is usually good. Design folder work is generally weak and pupils have difficulty in recalling previous work and identifying materials used. Presentational skills are weak and there is a lack of depth in research. Work in some folders shows an over-reliance on commercial material for ideas and in others work is incomplete or unfinished. Examples of good work were seen in an electronics project investigating a circuit security system for a music centre. Pupils' work in food also showed careful research into how products from other countries influence food choices, while in child development Year 10 pupils had carried out good investigations into toys and books for young children.
147. Pupils taking the GNVQ engineering course are working to a satisfactory standard overall. Practical work is usually of good quality, as seen in a mild steel centre punch and a copper dish, which was particularly well done. Pupils understand processes experienced such as knurling and planishing and can discuss their work confidently.
148. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are usually good. They work well together and respond positively when suitably challenged. There are some instances of distraction and inattention during teacher

explanations and demonstrations. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and by education care officers when these are provided. All pupils show enthusiasm and enjoyment in practical activities.

149. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the best lessons pupils are well motivated and good progress is made. This was seen, for example, a Year 7 lesson, where pupils were learning basic cooking skills in making a crunchy crumble, and in a Year 9 electronics lesson where pupils were making simple circuits in a charity money-box project. Similarly good progress was made in a Year 10 food lesson where pupils were working on the nutritional values in a balanced diet. These lessons had good pace, effective planning and good classroom management, with effective use of time and resources. Lessons that do not reach this standard have many positive features but teaching strategies are not always well suited to the needs of pupils and in these circumstances the management of pupils becomes less effective. There is also some loss of time due to pupil inattentiveness. Most lessons are well planned and offer a good mix of theory, design work and practical activities.
150. Department leadership is satisfactory. All documentation is well prepared and provides good guidance to teachers in the department. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 11 have recently been reviewed and are well planned to provide progression and continuity. Assessment information is used well for target setting procedures. However, the monitoring of pupils' work is inconsistent as are the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Control and computer-aided design and manufacture does not feature enough in pupils' learning experiences and there is a need for continued in-service training to develop teachers' skills in these areas. The marking of pupils work is regularly completed and is usually helpful and supportive. Literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory and there is evidence of the use of ICT in their work.
151. Accommodation is good overall. Most rooms are adequate in size, have good displays of pupils' work and provide a stimulating learning environment. However, the teaching of two groups in one large workshop can present difficulties. The department occupies two separate areas of the school and this does have disadvantages in terms of developing a collective team approach among staff. Although resources are adequate there is a shortage of computers, and facilities for control and computer-aided design and manufacture are inadequate. There are no safety lines on floor areas around machinery in workshops.
152. Improvements since the last inspection include the use of data in assessment and target setting, reviewed schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 and a standard approach to the design process. A GNVQ engineering course has been introduced. Control has been introduced in Year 8, although this element is still a weakness. Presentational skills remain weak in some areas and, as at the last inspection, there are weaknesses in resistant materials.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching
- High levels of achievement and GCSE examination results that are well above the national average
- Work is well matched to the needs of pupils at all levels of attainment
- The leadership and management of the department
- The very good attitudes of pupils

Areas for improvement

- Links with the community
- The use of ICT
- The variety of writing styles, particularly those of boys, in Years 7 to 9

153. Overall, pupils at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are attaining standards that are above national averages. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that both boys' and girls' attainment was above average. In the GCSE examination in 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining the higher A* to C grades was significantly above average and the attainment of girls was particularly high. All pupils achieved a grade in the A* to G range. The results pupils gained in the GCSE examination, when compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9, indicate that they achieved above expectations. There has been an upward trend in GCSE examination results in geography for the last four years.
154. In work seen during the inspection pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is above national expectations. Geographical mapping and number skills are put in place in Year 7 and revisited in Years 8 and 9. In Year 7 pupils can measure distances and heights on maps and use coordinates and by Year 8 they can construct and interpret graphs of various types to a high degree of accuracy. Pupils in Year 9 can recognise and describe geographical patterns and explain the reasons for them. In a very good Year 9 lesson pupils responded well to the enthusiasm of the teacher and were able to identify physical, social and economic location factors for industry in an area of the U.S.A. Pupils in Year 9 can take notes effectively, draw accurate graphs, construct tables and calculate costs. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson when lower attaining pupils were able to calculate the cost of steel manufacture at various locations. Pupils' factual writing is good but their range of writing styles is limited. In Year 11 pupils show good subject knowledge and use the technical vocabulary of the subjects with accuracy. Both boys and girls are able to explain the links between human activity and its impact on the environment.
155. Pupils use ICT for word processing coursework and some make use of the Internet to research geographical issues. However, not enough use is made of this technology. Inspection evidence shows that higher, middle and lower attaining pupils in all year groups are achieving well. This very good quality provision for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is a strength of the department.
156. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work. They show trust and confidence in their teachers and respond well to their enthusiasm for the subject. Behaviour in lessons is never less than good and often very good. Pupils can think for themselves and work independently and in small groups. In a good Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils worked very co-operatively in groups and listened to each other's views on suitable places to locate a Saxon village.
157. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory and usually is very good. Teachers' planning is thorough and they share the learning objectives with pupils. Well-produced and carefully selected resources motivate pupils and retain their interest. For example, in a Year 9 lesson with lower attaining pupils, particularly good use was made of a range of attractive resources on the Exxon Valdez incident as part of a unit of work on Alaska. Teachers have extensive subject knowledge and use interesting examples and analogies to enliven lessons and capture pupils' attention, the whole delivered with a good measure of humour. In a very well planned and delivered Year 10 lesson the teacher provided excellent materials including samples of vegetation and rocks from the area being studied. The management of pupils is excellent. Teachers have high expectations, both of learning and behaviour, and pupils respond to these by making good progress and achieving well.
158. The very good leadership and management of the department and the commitment of a strong team of experienced teachers have had a significant impact on standards in geography. Teachers organise their rooms well and make good use of overhead projectors, videos and whiteboards. A wider variety of teaching strategies could be used if access to computers was made easier.
159. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection has been good. Teachers' expectations continue to be high, work is well planned and a wide range of teaching strategies is used. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored effectively and teachers share best practice. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 have been revised and key assessments have been identified which are used to give pupils feedback on the level they are working at. The head of department has a clear vision of how to improve the department further and, supported by a team of very good

teachers, has the capacity to achieve it. The department is training good geographers, not just teaching geography

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11
- Consistently good teaching
- The good progress that pupils are making

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys
- The provision and use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- Opportunities for younger pupils to make visits to places of historical interest

160. Assessments carried out by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that the percentage of pupils attaining at the expected level is above the national average. This represents a slight rise over the previous year when attainment was also higher than the national average. In 2001 the attainment of girls was considerably higher than that of boys and the disparity was greater than that seen between boys and girls nationally.
161. The attainment of pupils in the GCSE examination in 2001 was significantly above the national average for pupils attaining grade A* to C. The percentage of pupils attaining the two highest grades, A* and A, was also above the national average. There has been a steady rise in the percentage of A* to C grades over the past five years. In 2001 the attainment of girls was considerably higher than that of boys and by a greater margin than that observed nationally.
162. Overall, on entry to the school in Year 7 pupils' attainment in history is close to average. Attainment in English, which requires similar literacy skills to those needed in history, is below average. Pupils enter the school with varied experience of the study of history. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment in history is good. This reflects the good progress and achievement of pupils through Years 7 to 9. Pupils make particularly good progress in using historical source material to enhance their knowledge and understanding and in basing their own conclusions about the events of the past on their knowledge of historical facts and situations.
163. Pupils' attainment in history at the start of their GCSE course is above average and by the end of Year 11 their attainment is significantly above the national average. In 2001 nearly all pupils reached their predicted grade and a third of pupils exceeded the grade predicted for them. Pupils make good progress during Years 10 and 11, particularly in the way in which they interpret a wide range of historical source material in order to present a balanced picture and also in their understanding of the way to approach examination questions in order to maximise the marks they are awarded.
164. In work seen during the inspection the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 was above national expectations. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of a range of historical facts, situations and personalities. They have clear understanding of key historical skills such as the ability to trace the causes and effects of the situations they study. All pupils use accurate historical detail to explain and justify their opinions, and the use of such detail by higher attaining pupils is very full and thorough. All pupils understand a range of source material, and average and higher attaining pupils interpret this accurately. A class looking at contemporary writing and cartoons of the Peterloo incident were able to draw some conclusions about where to attribute the blame for this. Higher attaining pupils use independently more demanding sources of information, such as statistical data and contemporary cartoons. All pupils use a good range of methods of recording their knowledge and understanding, such as diagrams and charts as well as independent writing.
165. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils in Year 11, who are still some months away from their examinations, is above what is seen nationally. All pupils show very good

awareness of the skills, which are necessary in order to maximise the marks they receive for their coursework and in the examinations. They produce a range of good notes, which are very useful for revision purposes. All pupils make good use of individual research, especially in their local study. Their use of historical source material is thoughtful and thorough. All pupils make good use of the many opportunities they are given to join in discussions in order to increase their own understanding by comparing it to others'. For example, a class studying the work of William Harvey were able to write a group essay by sharing their ideas on this and comparing their conclusions. Lower attaining pupils find some of the specialised and very unfamiliar vocabulary very challenging, although they show good awareness of the need to use correct and precise terminology.

166. The attitude of pupils to history is good. In lessons the response is always at least good and in half the lessons seen it was very good. In one lesson it was excellent. Pupils respond to the good range of activities in lessons with enthusiasm and nearly all pupils are eager to participate. They show good concentration and perseverance: for example, a class learning about life in Nazi Germany found both the unfamiliar vocabulary and some of the ideas very difficult to grasp but maintained high concentration nonetheless and made good progress. Pupils want to earn the approval of their teachers and work hard to this end.
167. The quality of teaching overall is good throughout the age range. In all lessons seen the teaching was at least good and in about half it was very good. In one lesson it was excellent. In Years 7 to 9 teachers' planning is good, with clear objectives for what they intend the pupils to learn. These are shared with the pupils, who know what to expect and what is expected of them. There is strong emphasis on the use of key words so that pupils build up a useful and accurate historical vocabulary and make good progress in using it consistently. Teachers provide their classes with a wide range of carefully thought out activities, which stimulate and maintain the interest of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Teachers make good use of questioning to encourage pupils to think hard in order to extend their understanding and pupils are sometimes surprised by the progress they are able to make. Teachers offer good support to pupils with special educational needs, promoting their good progress. However, when dealing with particularly challenging concepts teachers do not always plan to meet the needs of all pupils and on such occasions lower attaining pupils or those with special educational needs remain reliant on the support of their teachers in order to make a start on the task. Throughout the age range the marking of work is good, offering pupils clear advice on how to improve. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is particularly strong and teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ensure that explanations are crystal clear. There is strong emphasis on how to approach and structure written answers and pupils are given very good advice on this.
168. The very recently appointed head of department has had insufficient time to make an impact on the work of the department but has already accurately identified several key areas for development if attainment is to continue to rise. For example, boys' attainment remains much lower than that of girls and this disparity has yet to be tackled in a systematic way. Linked to this is the fact that, although there are clear schemes of work for each topic, these do not identify opportunities for the teaching of key literacy skills. There are clear structures in place for the regular assessment of pupils' attainment and these are now usually linked to National Curriculum levels. However, not enough use is made of the available information on attainment to modify the curriculum or to set specific targets for pupils. The schemes of work do not identify opportunities for the use of ICT and little evidence of the teaching or use of these skills was seen during the course of the inspection. Although teaching resources for history are generally good, access to computers is difficult and little is done to promote their regular use. There is a limited programme of historical visits for pupils in Year 10 and 11 but none for pupils lower down the school and not enough use is made of the resources of the locality.
169. This is a successful department and one that has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Progress has been made both in standards of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in those specific areas where some issues were raised. Teachers now make more use of National Curriculum levels when marking work, and use them consistently in formal assessments. A good range of source materials is available, and there are sufficient textbooks for pupils to have

the use of one each. Books are supplemented most effectively by the use of additional resources that are produced on a regular basis by all teachers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in the information and communications technology department is **good**, but the use of ICT other subjects is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Good teaching, underpinned by the good subject knowledge of teachers
- Good subject management, accommodation and resources
- High levels of use of computers at lunch and other times
- Pupils are well motivated and use the computers with confidence
- Good use of assessment information to improve pupil performance

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of attainment in all years
- The co-ordination of ICT across all subjects
- Access to and use of ICT in all subjects
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9

170. Teachers' assessments show standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2000 to be at national expectations. The 2001 results show a continued improvement at the end of Year 9, and are at national expectations and above. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved since the last inspection, when they were below expectations. Boys' attainment at the end of Year 9 is close to expectations, while girls' is above.

171. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were below the national average for A* to C grades. ICT was not examined externally in 2000. In 2001 pupils performed less well in ICT than in some other subjects they took. Boys' results in particular were significantly below their performance in other subjects. A number of reasons account for the underachievement of pupils in the 2001 examinations. Inadequate resources at the beginning of the course led to the sharing of computers by pupils and a lack of access to computer facilities for eleven weeks in Year 11. This problem has now been rectified and teachers and senior managers have worked hard to improve resources and raise standards.

172. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are rising in Years 7 to 11. Overall, achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' standards improve from being consistent with expectations in Year 7 to above in Year 9. Pupils use computers well to present and organise information. These are the aspects of ICT in which they have most opportunities to work. Work observed in lessons, coursework and discussions show pupils achieving well in Years 10 and 11. The improved facilities give pupils better access to computers. This has led to better standards of work in lessons and the production of coursework that meets examination criteria. Standards have also improved because of additional time given outside lessons by pupils and teachers to pupils' coursework. This is also beneficial to pupils with special needs, whose achievement is satisfactory as a result.

173. By the end of Year 9 pupils show competence in basic operations, such as calling up software and retrieving work, and using the keyboard and mouse to enter information into a spreadsheet table. They are able to use the charting tool to create good quality graphs and charts with accurate labelling that indicates the purpose of the work. Higher attaining pupils include good detail in evaluating their work. Pupils of all attainment levels have a secure grasp of the techniques they need to use because they are able to practise these in different contexts over Years 7 to 9. However, pupils with special educational needs in a Year 8 lesson had difficulty in evaluating their work on a holiday brochure due to weak literacy skills. The majority of pupils

undertake homework tasks diligently. Girls achieve higher levels of competence in ICT than boys. Pupils make effective use of the Internet for research.

174. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 are consistent with national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in a good Year 11 lesson, for example, responded well to the enthusiasm of the teacher. They demonstrated clearly that they understood the requirements of the analysis section of the major coursework assignment and had the necessary ICT skills to complete the tasks. They used the Internet to access relevant web sites and displayed competence in word processing and the use of desktop publishing. GNVQ ICT work in Year 10 shows that pupils are capable in their use of computers skills and produce much individual work of good quality. This work includes, for example, posters for charity events, reports making use of graphics to display information and agenda for meetings.
175. The overall attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are particularly enthusiastic in their approach to lessons. All pupils enjoy using computers. Neither boys nor girls dominate the computers. They listen well to the instructions, guidance and explanations of teachers. They work well together and are willing to support each other. This helps to develop their independence and enables teachers to provide individual support to those pupils in most need. Pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special needs, are fully included in lesson activities and join in well. Higher attaining pupils are willing to support others when they encounter difficulties in practical activities. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour have a positive impact on improving standards of attainment.
176. Teaching and learning in timetabled ICT lessons are mostly good and sometimes very good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge that helps the flow of lessons. They ask questions in a way that gives pupils scope to think creatively about their work and provide appropriate assistance when pupils encounter problems. Learning targets are related well to the National Curriculum and teachers make them clear to pupils. Teachers provide clear explanations of learning targets and the techniques that have to be used in order for the targets to be achieved. Effective use is made of the whiteboard for this purpose. As a result, pupils are very clear about what they have to do and why. Work is often introduced in an enthusiastic and energetic way, which is effective in encouraging a similar response from pupils. Teachers show good classroom management skills. They are firm but respectful to their pupils. Regular checks are made on individual pupils' progress in lessons and pupils receive good support and guidance. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are provided with assessment guides and encouraged to assess their own work, and suggest ways in which it can be improved. However, while higher and middle attaining pupils are able to make valid assessments of their own work, pupils with special needs educational needs find this task difficult because the resources used are not well matched to their learning needs. Teachers make good use of the technical vocabulary of the subject. This helps to develop pupils' command of the specialist vocabulary and consolidates understanding. Marking is effective and usually includes clear targets for improvement. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good use of this information to improve their work. Homework is used effectively to link lesson activities. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson, for example, where there was good continuity with previous lessons as pupils created a presentation book targeted at young children.
177. The leadership and management of the department are good. Staff are well deployed and accommodation is used effectively. There is very good teamwork and a strong commitment to developing the use of computers in enhancing learning and raising pupils' attainment. There is a good awareness of what need to be done to secure the required improvements and work has begun towards achieving these. However, there as at present no strategy for monitoring and assessing the use of ICT in all curriculum subjects. There are good opportunities for pupils to use computers for individual work. The machines available in the learning resource centre and those in the computer rooms are well used during lunchtime and after school.
178. The overall rate of improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The number of specialist ICT teachers has been increased. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 has risen and is now consistent with national expectations. Standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11 are

also close to national expectations. A number of new developments have been introduced, including GNVQ ICT in Year 10 and key skills ICT courses. The ratio of computers to pupils has improved from the last inspection, although it is still slightly below national average. There is at present no school strategy to ensure that all subjects have access to and make use of computers to support teaching and learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in French and German is **good**.

Strengths:

- The good quality of teaching and learning in French and German
- The improving GCSE examination results in both languages
- Very good leadership and management of the department and strong team spirit
- The very good use of assessment to monitor and support pupils' progress

Areas for improvement:

- The number of pupils studying a language in Years 10 and 11
- GCSE results in German
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- The opportunities for pupils to meet native speakers of French and German

179. In 2001, pupils' overall attainment in French and German at the end of Year 9 was, according to teachers' assessments, below the national expectation, although higher than in previous years. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher GCSE grades A* to C in French in 2001 was slightly below the national average, as were the grades gained in the range A* to G. These results were higher than in the previous year. Girls attained higher results than boys, although both boys and girls performed less well than in most other school subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C in German was also higher than in 2000, but remained well below the national average. The grades attained at A* to G were similar to the national average. Boys and girls attained similar results in German, lower than the grades they achieved in other subjects. Nearly all pupils entered for either French or German in 2001, so their combined achievements compared favourably with those found nationally.
180. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils currently studying French and German in Year 9 now attain standards consistent with national expectations. This is due to a recent Improvement in teaching methods and more accurate methods of assessment. Most pupils arrive in school with little or no knowledge of European languages but are soon able to follow lessons conducted in French and German, understand simple tape recordings and read short captions and statements in their textbooks. From learning to exchange everyday greetings and courtesies, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, progress in Years 7 and 8 to talking with their teacher or a partner about themselves, their families and their daily life. The small minority of pupils who speak English as an additional language are well included in lessons and learn fast. By the end of Year 9 pupils have started to use appropriate tenses and structures to refer to the past and the future. They adopt various styles of writing to produce posters, informal letters and short dialogues about shopping, finding the way and ordering a snack in a café. Pupils use number frequently and usually accurately for dates, times of day, prices and simple calculations.
181. In Years 10 to 11, due to the use of disapplication from the National Curriculum, a minority of pupils choose to study French or German for the GCSE. Lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, reinforce the language they have learnt earlier, acquiring the basic skills of talking and writing about themselves and about situations they might encounter while living abroad. In mixed attainment classes they join higher attainers in extending their range of expression by increasing their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. A minority find the work hard and produce little. Most pupils develop good listening skills, especially when teachers speak French and German continuously. The most able linguists speak confidently, giving their opinions about school uniform or care of the environment. Pupils of all abilities are creative in making tourist brochures, some using computers to research and present the information. By the end of Year 11, the highest attaining linguists evoke the humour and disappointments of past experiences such as work placements or family holidays.
182. Pupils' attitudes to learning languages are mainly good. Most lessons have a busy and productive atmosphere, especially where there are short dialogues, paired work or team games

provide a frequent change of focus. Pupils appreciate the chance to use French and German for real purposes such as simulating train travel or shopping. Lower attainers appreciate the slower pace and firm management of lessons adapted to their needs. Pupils of all ages and abilities enjoy watching their classmates perform and many willingly join in the presentations and summary of lessons. Occasionally, when exercises are too lengthy or not matched to the spread of ability, a minority find the tasks too hard, or get bored and lose interest. Most pupils opt not to study a language beyond Year 9, but those who do are usually well motivated to succeed.

183. The quality of teaching and learning in French and German is good throughout the school. Teachers are fluent in French and German and usually present their pupils with a lively, authentic model of language to copy. Occasionally they use English more than they need to, so that pupils' listening is less well developed. Teachers have very good knowledge of National Curriculum and examination requirements. They plan their lessons carefully to exercise pupils' skills in turn and build securely on their previous learning. Their expectations are usually high, even when classes contain many pupils with special educational needs. Teachers encourage pupils to work co-operatively, often making worksheets and materials that pupils use in preparing conversations and discussions about ideal holidays or the environment. They make good and often imaginative use of conventional audio-visual resources to re-create situations such as a doctor's surgery and where possible encourage pupils of all ages to research and produce lengthier projects using computers at home or in school. Teachers have good personal knowledge of their pupils' abilities and potential achievement, derived from short tests, regular and supportive marking, and eliciting oral responses in class. Their assessment of pupils preparing for external examinations, including those with special educational needs, is thorough and accurate. Teachers use homework well to extend and prepare the work done in class. Many well-organised, attractive exercise books and wall displays reflect pupils' pride in finished work, although a few boys and girls produce untidy or incomplete pieces.
184. The department is very well managed and has a strong team spirit. Teachers work hard, and have the backing of the school's senior management. Newcomers are well supported and advised, so they quickly make good contributions to the department's work. Teachers are committed to raising standards, while encouraging more pupils to obtain a language qualification in future. Responsibilities are equitably shared and all members of the department have good opportunities to contribute ideas. The curriculum the school offers is sound but basic. The opportunities for older pupils to meet native speakers are good but very limited. Additional planning and development would ensure that talented linguists are better catered for. Teachers take advantage of chances to develop professionally, including the observation and evaluation of colleagues' lessons. They have improved the quality of their teaching and assessment since the last inspection, but need more training in the use of computers to support teaching and learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils and students achieve well, particularly in examinations
- Examination results are above average
- The overall quality of teaching is good
- Pupils and students have generally positive attitudes to learning

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment information in curriculum planning
- Curriculum organisation in Years 7 to 9
- The use of ICT in teaching and learning
- Planning to match the needs of the full range of pupils' capabilities in lessons

185. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that standards are below average, with boys ahead of girls. This is not entirely confirmed by inspection findings. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 7 to 9 are generally consistent with expectations and by the end of Year 9 the majority are reaching expected standards. This represents good achievement in comparison with their starting points in Year 7. However, as at the time of the last inspection, the curriculum is planned to include too wide a range of activities, which tends to restrict the depth in which they can be taught. Consequently, few pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels.
186. In the majority of lessons, boys and girls are taught together in groups representative of a wide range of ability in physical education. Teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils in their classes but are not always able to stretch them all sufficiently well. Most boys and girls reach expected standards in badminton and hockey, and girls reach expected standards in dance. In badminton, pupils understand the conventions of the game and its scoring arrangements. Most know which shots to select in games but are not always able to use them well enough to move their opponents around the court and play winning shots. In dance, girls work well together in their groups and are reasonably adept in composing routines, which match the changing dynamics of the music, though often lacking variation in other respects. Most pupils have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and can measure, record and analyse changes in pulse rate. However, although they know how to prepare for physical activity, they are not always given enough opportunity to take some responsibility for this part of the lesson for themselves.
187. Despite a slight fall in 2000, results in the GCSE examination in physical education have been above national averages and show steady improvement since 1998. In 2001, all candidates successfully gained A* to G grades and with most achieving the higher A* to C grades. Girls were more successful in obtaining the highest A* grades, but there was otherwise little difference in the relative success of boys and girls. Pupils did better in physical education than in most of their other GCSE subjects.
188. In work seen in Years 10 and 11 in compulsory physical education lessons, standards are consistent with expectations and pupils achieve well. Both boys and girls reach average standards in learning advanced skills and tactics in badminton. Pupils who follow the GCSE course now reach slightly above average standards in their theory work, where well-designed resource materials prepare them well for examination demands. Their understanding of the principles of training is good, and is underpinned by energetic participation in well-planned practical experiences. Pupils who choose to follow the Junior Sports Leader's Award course reach standards that meet course expectations well, in organising competitions and officiating in minor games. Standards seen in basketball in Year 10 are below average. Boys and girls are enthusiastic performers but lack the consistency and accuracy in basic skills, and depth of understanding of tactics needed to work at the level expected for their age.
189. Pupils who have special educational needs make generally good progress. Teachers know them well and adapt the learning to meet their needs. Progress is particularly good when pupils who have a physical disability are able to receive additional help from their support assistants and this also boosts confidence. Pupils who have particular talents are able to develop their skills further through participation in the very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities that are provided. A significant proportion of pupils take part in team games, individual activities and inter-form competitions and there is a good measure of success at local, area and sometimes at national level.
190. The vast majority of pupils have very good attitudes to learning and enjoy their lessons. They are co-operative and their behaviour is good. Pupils in Year 10 examination classes, for example, demonstrated considerable maturity and responsibility in leading others in preparing for physical activity. Pupils in these lessons were quick to support and appreciate each other's efforts. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils persevered well and coped with a demanding physical activity despite difficult weather conditions. The attitudes of a minority of pupils are less positive. They do not

listen carefully to instructions and are slow to respond to teachers' questions. This slows the pace of lessons.

191. The quality of teaching and the learning has improved since the last inspection and is good throughout the school. Teaching is more consistently good in examination classes where the teachers' knowledge and the use of very good quality resources combine with pupils' motivation and willingness to work hard, to ensure good learning. Homework is set regularly in examination classes and usually consolidates or extends learning well. A good feature in some groups is the way that pupils are expected to log each homework task together with its mark and teacher's comment. There is some inconsistency in the quality of marking, the best examples clearly showing the pupils how to improve their work. Important strengths of the teaching generally are the good relationships that teachers have with pupils and the friendly but firm control that they exercise, which result in high levels of activity. The technical language of the subject is well taught in most lessons. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson the pupils were beginning to use words such as 'control' and 'tension' when identifying quality in each other's balances. Activities provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in planning and evaluation as well as performance, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. In the most effective lessons pupils were sharply questioned at the end in order that they could assess the progress made towards the learning objectives identified earlier. This was illustrated well in a Year 8 badminton lesson, for example, where despite some initial hesitation from pupils, skilful and probing questioning led them to a clear understanding of their progress in the lesson. It also enabled them to begin to relate their achievements to National Curriculum levels, and so increased their motivation to do well in future. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons, learning was hurried because the teacher tried to include too many activities or did not manage the pace of the lesson well. Although planning is good, insufficient emphasis is given to the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. More use could be made of ICT, particularly for examination classes.
192. Leadership and management of the department are good overall. The recently appointed head of department has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject and is beginning to develop good procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching through a programme of classroom observation. Strengths identified at the last inspection, including the strong commitment to outdoor activities, have been maintained and most of the issues raised then have since been resolved. However, although facilities are generally very good, the artificial playing surface still requires more frequent maintenance. The information gained from the analysis of assessment information, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is not yet used well enough in curriculum planning. The curriculum is now enhanced by the provision of sports leaders award courses that enable older pupils and students to use their talents to help younger pupils, in their own school and elsewhere.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The overall provision for religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Attainment at GCSE in both short and full courses
- Work is well matched to the attainment levels of all pupils
- The good quality of teaching
- Pupils' commitment to their studies, especially in Years 10 and 11
- The leadership and management of the subject

Areas for improvement

- Greater emphasis on the development of literacy skills

193. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is consistent with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils entering the school show a wide variation in their knowledge and understanding

of religious beliefs. By the end of Year 9 students show a good understanding of how religion and beliefs affect everyday life and of Christian beliefs and practices. They produce good accounts of the life of Christ and show clear understanding of how He demonstrated His divinity through miracles. They understand very well how primitive religions evolved myths to support their knowledge of natural phenomena, and how societies such as the Aztecs turned those myths into ritual practices such as human sacrifice. They know how and why religious symbols evolved, as in the five 'Ks' that Sikhs adopt. In discussion many pupils, particularly the more able, show an ability to discuss and apply moral and ethical issues, which is not readily apparent in their written work.

194. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2001, taking short and full course entries together, were above the national average. For pupils gaining A* to C grades, girls' results were significantly above the national average, and boys' results were slightly above. These results represent a very significant improvement over the last four years. Pupils' attainments at the end of Year 11 compare favourably with other subjects and add value to the school's overall performance. Girls' results are particularly influenced by their preparedness to produce extended writing.
195. By the end of Year 11, students' attainments exceed the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. They understand different arguments for the existence of God and use appropriate vocabulary. They show a good understanding of the nature of belief and how belief based on faith differs from that based on fact and can apply these ideas to Christianity. They learn about places of worship and can describe the architecture and furnishing of a Christian church. Higher attaining pupils understand Christian symbolism. Pupils, including those with special needs, understand well how different groups of Christians view social and moral issues such as contraception and abortion.
196. All students make good progress during Years 7 to 11. Students with special educational needs also make good progress. Pupils, including those for whom religious education is not a subject they particularly enjoy, work with a sense of purpose and take a pride in what they produce. Girls show greater confidence in their written work, although both girls and boys are equally prepared to make oral contributions to lessons. Although there are weaknesses in boys' written work, they make good progress in the development and expression of ideas. The display of key words enables pupils to develop appropriate vocabulary and terminology. The pace of lessons and regular information about their progress help pupils to consolidate what they learn. A growing number of pupils are keen to undertake a full course GCSE at the end of Year 11 and to pursue their studies into the sixth form.
197. Teaching in religious education is good overall and in nearly half the lessons seen it was very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Particular strengths within teaching are the pace of lessons and the high expectations, which challenge pupils to produce good work. Pupils are always clear about the learning objectives for the lesson. In the best lessons, an enthusiastic and direct style encourages pupils to think and keeps them firmly focused on the lesson. In many lessons, time is divided between four or five well-structured activities, which helps to sustain pupils' concentration. Pupils' understanding is frequently assessed and reinforced, which enables them to consolidate their learning. Good class management helps pupils to settle down to work quickly, even when they arrive at the lesson in a noisy manner. Minor disruptions are handled sensitively. Work is well matched to the needs of lower attaining pupils through the teacher's use of language and in some cases simplified worksheets are used. Some pupils with statements of special educational needs receive additional in-class support to help them to keep on task. Although work in books is marked regularly and encouragement given through written comments, inaccurate spellings are too frequently left uncorrected.
198. The curriculum fulfils Locally Agreed Syllabus requirements and closely follows the non-statutory national guidelines. The GCSE short course is taught to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 and an increasing number of pupils follow the full course. This enables the school to comply with statutory requirements and ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. The time allocated to religious education, one hour per week, is sufficient to enable the new scheme of work to be taught effectively. Pupils' experiences are enhanced by educational visits to the multi-faith centre in Derby. At present, however, there are too few opportunities for pupils to meet representatives of

other faiths. The curriculum has been enriched with programmes of visits and with the use of ICT both to enhance presentation of pupils' work and to research topics on the Internet.

199. The religious education department is very well managed. The recently appointed head of department has brought very real strengths in terms of curriculum planning, teaching expertise and, through his role as an experienced examiner, has a clear perception of what pupils need to do to achieve success. Schemes of work have been revised and enhanced with systematic assessment based on local and national expectations. Some very good resources have been developed, including differentiated worksheets, and the head of department ensures that these are used effectively. Particular care has been taken to analyse examination data and to track the progress of pupils in order to maximise pupils' targets for achievement. The focus on raising standards is constant, for instance in the provision, which is being planned for gifted and talented pupils in Years 10 and 11. Most important of all is the head of department's role in stimulating the quality of teaching through demonstrated expertise in a range of appropriate strategies, not merely within the religious education department but on a whole-school basis.
200. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. The department has carefully addressed each of the areas for improvement referred to in the last report, and provision for religious education has now become one of the strengths of the school.

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

In the inspection, 13 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.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	2	0	2	100	52	1.0	0.7

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	27	56	43	100	87	6.6	5.8
Biology	15	47	34	100	88	5.7	5.3
Physics	8	88	40	88	88	7.8	5.7
Chemistry	3	33	43	67	90	4.7	5.9
Full Design and Technology	7	43	30	100	91	6.6	5.4
Economics	9	22	36	78	89	3.9	5.5
Art and Design	9	89	46	100	96	9.6	6.6
Media Studies	3	0	31	100	93	4.7	5.5
Music	4	75	35	100	93	8.5	5.7
History	14	64	35	100	88	7.6	5.5
Geography	7	86	38	100	92	8.3	5.7
Psychology	8	38	34	88	87	5.0	5.3
English Language	6	67	30	100	91	8.0	5.3
English Literature	16	75	37	94	95	8.1	5.9
French	1	100	38	100	89	10.0	5.6
German	1	100	40	100	91	8.0	5.8
General Studies	53	36	30	87	85	5.3	4.9
Physical Education	10	50	25	100	92	7.6	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered mathematics in detail, including A and AS-levels. In sciences, the focus was on biology and physics, but chemistry was also sampled. In chemistry, only three students were entered for the 2001 A-level examination and results were below the national average. Overall, students did less well in chemistry than in the other subjects taken. Inspection evidence shows that course work for the AS examination is not demanding enough. Teaching in the one chemistry lesson observed was satisfactory. The lesson was well prepared and students learned the principles used to name organic compounds, they were able to use these principles to work out the names of a variety of compounds.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Results at GCE A-level are consistently above the national average and rising
- Results at GCE AS levels are above the national average and in further mathematics they are well above average
- The good range of mathematics courses provided for students
- Teaching is consistently good across all mathematics courses
- Students are well motivated and work hard

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies
- The marking of students' work
- The introduction of a number key skills course
- The number of students proceeding from AS to A2 level

201. Standards in mathematics have risen since the last inspection. In 2001 the standards achieved by students at GCE A-level A to B grades was well above the national average, with males achieving the greater proportion of these higher grades. All students achieved grades A to E, well above the national average. However, the performance by male students in previous years was inferior to that of female students. The 2001 student performance at AS levels was very encouraging with 19 students gaining an A to E grade. Just under a third of these students gained an A to B grade, the greater proportion of these being gained by female students. Eight students have returned to complete the A-level course and a further two students will re-sit their AS modules this year. The all-male entry in 2001 for AS further mathematics achieved well above the national standards with both students achieving an A grade. In 2001 students re-taking the GCSE examination improved their grades.

202. Students currently studying mathematics are achieving very well. For example, the two students in one of the Year 13 groups received good tuition on the differentiation of parametric equations. These students went on to use this method and successfully determined the equations of the tangent and normal to the associated curve. The students in the other Year 13 group were effectively taught the method by which to integrate a complex relation of two functions, but the choice of which function to differentiate and why was not sufficiently probed by the teacher to ascertain that students were secure in their understanding of this part of the method. The clear teaching of mathematical methods is evident in students' work with appropriate supporting questions. However, there is little evidence to show that students have been encouraged to think about different approaches to the solutions to problems. In planning lessons teachers need to take account of the increasingly wide range of students' ability in their groups, planning appropriately for their intellectual and creative development as well as the consolidation of their learning through practice questions.

203. Year 12 students have made a positive start to their courses and, from the sample of work seen, are consolidating and building on their experience gained at GCSE level. For example, students were extending their knowledge of solving quadratic equations other than by factorisation. Effective teaching enabled these students to use the completion of the square method to determine the movement of a function with confidence. Students in one of the groups, working through a range of problems associated with constant acceleration, were able to use Newton's second law of motion successfully to achieve the force acting on an object. However, some of these same students experienced initial difficulty with applying vector notation to work out the magnitude and direction of forces associated with projectiles. Teachers need to consider in their planning the skills, knowledge and understanding students require before tackling new work.
204. Teaching in the sixth form in all lessons was good or very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and experience effectively in teaching the methods needed to solve standard problems in each module. However, in a number of these lessons, students were not challenged sufficiently by their teacher about these methods and why they work. If they were challenged in this way students would be more likely to develop a greater insight into how and why these methods work and if not why not. For example, in a discussion about using a linear interpolation method the teacher was able to identify students' difficulties in this Year 12 group and deal with them effectively. Opportunities for more open discussion and student participation in lessons would enhance the current range of teaching and learning styles used. In all lessons students receive effective individual support, praise and encouragement. This enables them to consolidate their learning and move on with greater confidence.
205. Although students' work is marked and assessed, written comments are often restricted to praise and generalities, particularly in Year 13. The work of students in Year 12 is more comprehensively marked and the diagnostic assessment by teachers enables students to be more aware of their weaknesses and how they should go about improving their standards.
206. The enthusiasm shown by teachers for the subject has considerable impact on students and their attitudes to learning. Students are attentive, work well together, share ideas and support and help each other. The atmosphere in lessons reflects the strong positive relationship that has been forged between students and their teacher. This was particularly noticeable through the responses given by one Year 13 student to questions posed by the teacher. This student demonstrated a growing depth of subject knowledge and understanding. Students are confident in using ICT and graphical calculators with work associated with functions. Their written work is improving in its fluency and accuracy, and is well presented. They are encouraged to make good use of the school's learning resource centre and thus develop good independent learning habits.
207. The good teaching and learning that is occurring in the sixth form is the result of good curriculum leadership and supporting departmental policies. The department undertakes a thorough analysis of students' prior attainment to determine the level of support they may need; the information is used to inform curriculum planning and to ensure that students become effective learners. There is currently no discrete application of number key skills lesson for students in Year 12 or Year 13, which would be of particular benefit to those not studying AS mathematics. Students studying mathematics are able to submit the coursework component of the statistics module for assessment under this award.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Well-prepared and demanding teaching
- The high levels of achievement of many students
- The interest and enthusiasm of many of the students
- Good preparation for examinations

Areas for development

- The performance of boys
- The examination grades achieved by students following the AS course
- The achievement of students who begin the course with lower levels of attainment
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning

208. In the 2001 A-level examination all of the pupils passed and nearly half of them gained an A or B grade. These results were well above the national average and a great improvement compared with the previous year. The higher attaining students gained grades that were better than those predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades but all lower attaining students did not gain their predicted grade and some did not do as well as they should. Girls' performance was, overall, well above the national average, while boys' performance was at the national average. The progress of girls was particularly good. In the AS level examination in 2001, most pupils passed with some gaining the highest grades, but there was a minority who did not gain the grades of which they were capable.
209. Inspection evidence shows that students' knowledge and understanding of biology are above average: for example in Year 13 students' presentations about the structure of the intestine and the functions of enzymes found in it were detailed and appropriate for the highest grades at A-level. Students understand how the nervous and hormonal systems are used to control the process of digestion. In Year 12 students displayed good practical skills in their work about the properties of enzymes writing careful and accurate accounts of their work. Practical work about gene technology is carried out carefully and thoroughly. In Year 13 students develop a clear understanding of the features of the surfaces through which animals breathe and the reasons why these features are important. Students use statistical methods effectively during their work and use mathematical models to show how a gene pool is made up. Many students are able to explain their ideas articulately and accurately; literacy skills are very good.
210. Teaching is very good. Teachers' high expectations and excellent relationships with their students create a classroom ethos in which students work hard and are confident that they have the support of their teachers. Lessons are well planned and contain demanding and interesting activities that keep students' attention and give them confidence about their examination performance. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and they use question and answer sessions very well in order to ensure that students know exactly what they have to do in their practical sessions and to check regularly on their understanding of what is being taught: for example, students ideas were used very well in a lesson in Year 13 in which students described their own ideas about digestion and about breathing. Good use is made of information sheets to support students' work in the classroom; these include diagrams of cells and information about genes and chromosomes. Homework is used well, particularly when students prepare talks for use in a later lesson. Examination questions are referred to regularly so that students are well prepared for them.
211. Because teaching is very effective both male and female students make very good progress during their lessons in both Year 12 and Year 13. Careful explanations of scientific techniques in a lesson about gene technology ensured that students carried out practical tasks successfully. Interactive discussions based on demonstrations of lungs and breathing mechanisms in other animals gave students chances to contribute their ideas; question and answer sessions were

used well to check on and improve understanding about the way in which breathing mechanisms or, in another lesson, enzymes work. Good use is made of instruction or information sheets so that students use their time well.

212. Students' attitudes to their work are very good and their behaviour is excellent: for example, during practical work they are careful and responsible with the materials that they use. During all of their lessons they show themselves to be highly motivated. The majority are always interested in trying to understand difficult ideas that they come across and they ask questions to further their understanding. They are very co-operative and capable of organising their own work in groups, showing initiative, for example, during practical work about breathing mechanisms. Students are very willing to explain their ideas and most do so articulately and accurately. Their teachers foster these skills by listening carefully and creating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom. In some lessons, girls appear more willing to answer questions than boys.
213. Since the last inspection good progress has been made: teaching is no longer unsatisfactory or too frequently dominated by the teacher, and very good use is made of a wider variety of teaching methods. There are more opportunities for independent learning, such as the reading research carried out before a lesson in which students had to give short talks. Expectations of hard work and development of understanding are very good. Examination results have improved and more students choose to study biology. Little use is made of ICT during lessons and students do not benefit from the learning opportunities provided by this equipment. Access to computers for private study is good but, in the learning resource centre, there are insufficient books for additional reading.
214. Management of the subject is good. Records of students' progress are detailed; they are used very effectively to check on and discuss future progress, and to provide support through setting targets. Students feel very confident in the support that they receive. Changes to teaching methods have been made and new courses introduced; these courses and methods of teaching are now being evaluated and can be changed if necessary.

PHYSICS

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

Strengths

- Well-prepared and demanding teaching
- Very good preparation for examinations
- High levels of achievement of many students
- The interest and enthusiasm of many of the students

Areas for development

- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning

215. In the 2001 A-level examination nearly ninety per cent of the students gained an A or B grade; this is very high compared with the national average. Many students gained better grades than were predicted on the basis of their GCSE results having made very good progress during the sixth form. In 2000 results were also well above the national average. In the 2001 AS examinations all students passed and more than 60 per cent gained a grade A or B; this is also well above the national average.
216. Inspection evidence shows that students' knowledge and understanding of physics are well above average. In Year 13 students understand how to carry out calculations about the way in which a spring stretches, they know what will happen if the spring is over-extended and they have a very good appreciation of the need to make a series of repeated readings when finding out how springs stretch and contract under different loads. They were able to predict what would happen if the load on the spring changed and what the relationship between the load on the spring and its movement

would be. During work about the way in which light bends when passing through a glass block students mastered the mathematical explanations of the changes to the beam of light; in this work they reached standards appropriate for high grades in the A-level examination. Much of the students work shows a very good grasp of mathematics. In Year 12 students' work shows a very good understanding of ideas about forces, their direction and how to calculate the direction of a force produced from two forces acting in different directions. Work about speed and acceleration is of a high standard.

217. Teaching is very good. High expectations and excellent relationships are characteristics of science teaching in the sixth form. The classroom atmosphere is one in which students are expected to work hard and with good support from their teachers. Lessons are well planned; good use is made of time so that students make good progress. Lessons contain demanding and interesting activities for example, about electric fields, that keep students' attention and give them confidence about their examination performance. Teachers' have very good subject knowledge, which they use effectively. They check that students know exactly what they have to do in their practical sessions and monitor work in progress. This was done effectively, for example, in a lesson in which electric circuits were used to find out if there is a relationship between voltage and the current flowing in the circuit. Good use is made of information sheets to support students' work in the classroom and they are expected to use the Internet for further research. Homework is used well particularly when students prepare plans for coursework for use in a later lesson. Frequent references are made to past examination papers so that students become develop confidence in tackling them.
218. Students make very good progress because teaching is very effective. Careful explanations of scientific techniques in a lesson about voltage and current in Year 12, for example, ensured that students carried out practical tasks successfully. The same lesson provided a good example of the effective use of questioning to check on students' understanding of the way in which electric circuits are made and ammeters and voltmeters are read. Teachers make good use of instruction or information sheets and this helps students to structure their learning activities and make the best use of time.
219. Students' attitudes to their work are very good and their behaviour is excellent. When engaged in practical work they are careful about safety and behave responsibly when they handle materials. Students are highly motivated and keen to learn. They are prepared to persevere when they are grappling with complex ideas. Students work hard and co-operative fully with their teachers and other students. They show themselves to be capable of organising their own work. They are willing to explain their ideas and this they do clearly and accurately. This is fostered by the supportive atmosphere that teachers create in lessons.
220. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made: teaching is no longer unsatisfactory and students are given more opportunities for independent learning. Very good use is made of a wider range of teaching methods. There are high expectations that students will work hard. Examination results have improved and more students choose to study physics. No use was made of ICT during lessons and students do not benefit enough from the learning opportunities provided by computers. Access to computers for private study is good but there are not enough books in the learning resource centre to support students' personal research and study adequately.
221. Management of the subject is good. Records of students' progress are detailed and used very effectively for target setting and for monitoring students' progress. Some students, whose work is not good enough, receive additional support though learning contracts and access to the learning support system. Students are appreciative of the support they receive. Changes to teaching methods have been made and new courses introduced; these courses and methods of teaching are now being evaluated.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on design and technology.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths.

- Good teaching.
- Good results over recent years.
- Industrial practice in teaching methodology.
- Good choice of projects undertaken.

Areas for improvement.

- Develop the use of CAD/CAM in students work.
- The use of industrial visits as a support to learning.

222. Results in the 2001 A-level product design course were well above average for students achieving A to B grades. All students were successful in gaining grades in the A to E range. Standards in design and technology have risen since the last inspection. Results over recent years have been above average, with the majority of students gaining success in most years.

223. Attainment in lessons and work seen is above average at AS levels and average at A2 levels. Students make good progress: in a Year 12 lesson, for example, considerable gains in knowledge and understanding were made in learning the techniques of vacuum forming and investigating the properties of metals under heat treatment. Male and female students achieve well in Year 12 and produce design folder work of a high standard. In the 'retro' radio project students made a careful selection of commercial material and provided good examples of contemporary and older influences in design. Good use is made of ICT in students' research. In Year 13, a particularly interesting project was based on the development of the Dyson floor cleaner. Here, students displayed a good understanding of the cyclone system and its power of suction. The aesthetic and functional features of this product were also analysed and the design folder work for this project was above average. In the same year, however, the initial sketches and ideas for a modern coffee table were of an ordinary standard and the amount of work below that required at this stage of the course.

224. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Lessons are planned well to include small group and individual teaching and this generates good learning, particularly in Year 12. Teaching also encourages independent learning. This was seen, for example, in students' research on the use of space by well-known architects and the impact of geometric shapes on furniture design. Students are encouraged to discuss their work and they do this confidently. They demonstrate a good understanding of the design processes and analytical skills required for this level of work. They apply themselves well and have good attitudes towards the subject. They take good advantage of opportunities for working after school hours and teachers make themselves available for guidance.

225. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Students' work and progress are monitored regularly. Industrial practice is now incorporated into teaching methodology and the choice of projects now undertaken is a result of coursework being analysed and reviewed in an attempt to raise standards and achievement at the higher grades. The weakness at present is a lack of computer-aided design and manufacture experience in students' work. Industrial visits would add a further dimension to students learning.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on business studies.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- The positive effect of teaching on students' progress
- The use of assessment to monitor students' progress
- Young Enterprise and work experience enable students to consolidate and apply their knowledge in new situations

Areas for improvement

- The development of schemes of work to include provision for the students at all attainment levels
- The number and availability of textbooks to support independent study

226. Standards in both AS and A-level level business studies courses are, overall, consistent with course requirements. Some students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are above expectations. In the first AS examination in 2001 students' attainment was consistent with national averages, with one third achieving above their predicted grade and a small minority of students below. The standards reached by current Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and written work, are above expectations for a small minority of students, and consistent with expectations for others. This reflects their previous levels of attainment. Case studies, for example, those used to develop an understanding of problems faced by a national retail company, show satisfactory progress by both male and female students in the development of written work. However, the work of some lower attaining students is not always complete.
227. In lessons all students collaborate well and make good progress in understanding the impact of effective and ineffective management on communications, but they do not readily make links with previous work on hierarchies and span of control. The written work of Year 12 students shows that they make good progress in understanding marketing objectives and sampling techniques. In both years the majority of students take pride in their work: written work is clearly presented, notes are well organised and they maintain personal dictionaries of business terms, which support the development of business literacy. In lessons, Year 12 students are confident when they take part in discussions and give oral presentations to the whole class. They are developing an understanding of leadership styles and they make good progress in the challenge of synthesising information into a more concise format.
228. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Very good subject knowledge, linked with strong industrial experience, provides a solid basis for students to develop their understanding. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are shared with students. A wide range of timed activities with increasing challenge maintains pace, ensures that students are engaged throughout the long lessons, and sustains concentration. A mix of brainstorming techniques, group work, and individual student reflection are well supported by teacher interventions, with constant review of objectives. Probing questions to develop student understanding have a positive impact on learning. There are good opportunities for students to develop key skills. For example, students communicate their findings orally and use computers to enhance written presentation. They work well with other students to collaborate and develop ideas. Links with local business are developing through visits, speakers, work experience and Young Enterprise, enabling students to gain first-hand knowledge of the business world. Tracking of progress is good and takes account of prior attainment, class work, homework and examinations, although specific targets for improvement to raise attainment are not set.
229. The assessment of written work is conscientious and positive and students receive very good guidance on how a piece of work can be improved. Students monitor their own progress against

targets and comment generally on how they can improve for example, on the need to concentrate or revise more thoroughly.

230. Students enjoy business studies. Relationships are very good and they listen attentively and respond with enthusiasm both to other students and to their teacher. Over half of Year 12 students benefit by taking part in the Young Enterprise scheme and one company, which recycles household goods into handbags and cushions, has been recommended for a national award for innovation.
231. There is a newly appointed and enthusiastic head of department who provides clear direction for the subject. There is a strong commitment to success and continued improvement, and the analysis of data is improving. Schemes of work are being newly developed and reviewed as the course progresses, although there is currently a lack of guidance on planned teaching and learning styles to meet the needs of the most and least able students. Accommodation is used well to encourage collaborative work. There is bookable access to a computer room and computers are also available in the student common room, although this is a less popular option for students because of distractions. Resources are growing but there are insufficient textbooks to support independent learning. Support from local business is very good, and the department is benefiting from sponsorship and gifts of equipment. The planned introduction of a GCSE course in Year 10 for the next academic year will provide a good basis for sixth form work

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The AS level ICT course, which is being offered for the first time this year, was sampled. Inspection evidence shows that Year 12 students are achieving well with their AS-levels work. Teaching is good, overall and standards are consistent with course requirements. Students' work shows good breadth and depth in the topics covered. Sixth formers do not make enough use of ICT in all their other subjects, although applications are discussed in their key skills course.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The AS-levels and A-level courses in physical education were sampled. Sixth form students who follow the A-level course achieve high standards. This is in keeping with recent examination performance. In 2001, A-level results were high in comparison with all other schools and students did better in physical education than in the other subjects taken. Only three students sat the AS-levels examination in 2001 and all three obtained the higher A or B grades. The work of the students currently following the AS-levels course is above expectations for this stage of the course. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and sometimes very good, although students' work is sometimes too closely directed by the teacher. The regular testing of students' knowledge, understanding and skills at frequent intervals helps to consolidate their learning.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on GNVQ health and social care, as this is a stand-alone course offered at Intermediate and Advanced levels at Buxton School. This course was being planned at the time of the last inspection and has now been introduced.

Health and Social Care

Overall, provision for health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching by well-qualified and experienced teachers
- Work is well matched to students' needs
- Students' attitudes to the course are good and they behave well
- Good management and co-operation have ensured good planning of the new course
- Students have good opportunities for work experience

Areas for improvement:

- Students' oral contributions to lessons

232. In 1999 the health and social care Intermediate GNVQ results saw four students gaining distinction. Health and social care was not offered in 2000 or 2001. Past attainment by students in health and social care courses has been very good.
233. Students in Year 12 have spent just over a term in the course and, taken overall, achievement is good. All of the ten students who started the course in September 2001 remain committed to it. The standard of students' attainment on entry to the course in Year 12 is varied. Students generally enter the course with lower average GCSE scores than for other sixth form courses in the school. The current students are the first to experience the new course and have only just taken the January unit tests. A comparison of Year 12 students' coursework with their GCSE grades shows that they are achieving well. They have been well informed about the subject in advance and have good attitudes. Many of the students expect to continue in the field of health and social care either for the next stage of their education or for employment.
234. Students' coursework is thoughtful and well presented, with some effective use of ICT. A few students' files are not as well organised as others. A lesson on health and social care structure showed that most of the Year 12 students understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care. Higher attaining students show more critical ability in their coursework and in lessons, for example, in the work on discrimination. Files show that students are able to give a good account of what they have learnt in the communications unit and how it relates to work placements, such as at pre-school situations. Assignment work seen on communications is of a high quality. Files also indicate that students' summarise information from a wide variety of sources. Discussions with students indicated that they are making good progress in developing their independent study skills and in understanding the criteria for their assignments. Students make good progress in lessons and are achieving well over the course.
235. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have strong knowledge of their subject and use a range of teaching skills that leads to effective learning. There is good planning for lessons and good long-term planning of the course. All lessons have clear aims and have introductory activities to stimulate interest. Lessons run according to plan and this helps student learning. Students are given good guidance, for example, about what to look for when visiting an outside organisation, so they are very clear about exactly what needs to be covered. Teachers have high expectations of the students, and try hard to encourage learning that goes beyond simple responses and bland statements. There is a high level of individual support for the weaker students and extra challenge for the most able. There is a good range of resources and external visits. Homework and class work is intertwined well. While teachers encourage oral work in lessons, discussion is not a strong aspect of the course. By good interaction with students, teachers are providing reinforcement of the care values in the subject. Standards of behaviour, attention and motivation are good in all lessons. There is too little discussion and whole-class involvement in some lessons when teachers provide all the input. Students have good access to the school's learning resource centre during study time and use it well.
236. Teachers of health and social care are well qualified. The enthusiastic head of department ensures that all staff involved in teaching GNVQ's are well informed of developments within the subject. Assessment procedures are very good. Students benefit from regular progress reviews. Students' work experience is well structured.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of this report is on A-level courses in art. Sixth form drama, media studies and music were also sampled.

DRAMA

In the 2001 A-level examinations all three candidates gained a pass grade. Current Year 13 students achieved lower grades than expected in the AS1 examination at the end of Year 12 and all failed one of

the written papers. However, the response to this has been rigorous and students' attainment in a Year 12 theory lesson was as expected at this stage in the course. The practical skills of Year 13 students are good. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall, and good in theory lessons. In the Year 12 lesson observed, the level of discussion was high and the teacher constantly challenged students to make good intellectual effort. Students showed very good understanding of Artaud's theories of drama and were able to relate them both to other theories and to their own practical work. In the Year 13 lesson, the teacher used questions effectively to encourage students to think critically about and improve their own performances. Students' performances of scenes from Charlotte Keatley's play 'My Mother Said I Never Should' showed good understanding of dramatic techniques and a developing ability to create and sustain character.

MEDIA STUDIES

Standards in media studies at GCSE AS level are above course requirements. Teaching is consistently good. In the two media studies lessons observed, careful preparation enabled students to explore a variety of media techniques with confidence. In this practical lesson, students produced an interactive programme designed to encourage deeper understanding of a collection of artefacts in Buxton Museum. During this process students learned to use a range of computer technology and digital and video cameras. The work produced was of a high standard. Another group of students are working with Channel 4 Television to produce a documentary on life in the sixth form and this work is of a professional standard. media studies is a well-structured course co-ordinated by an enthusiastic and capable teacher. There are good links with the British Film Industry who provide much needed additional resources.

MUSIC

In the 2001 examinations, both the AS and A-level examination results were well above national averages, although only small numbers of students were involved. Inspection evidence shows overall standards in Years 12 to be generally consistent with course requirements. The backgrounds of present these students are in popular music and consequently the teachers have chosen course options that are based on this style. In the lesson observed students were comparing the instrumentation of 'West End Blues' and 'Four', pieces of similar origin but different outcome. They then performed 'Waterloo Sunset' by Oasis, and discovered the strong links in the piece to classical music through appropriate questioning by the teacher. This discussion showed that students have yet to develop the ability to use their musical knowledge fully in discussion and analysis. Students in Year 13 are following a similar course, but show the benefit of the extra year of study in their discussions and response to listening exercises. Standards are above course requirements. Students make perceptive comments about pieces of music to which they have just listened, and use previously learning to help them make valid suggestions regarding the composer of the pieces. Teaching is good and as a result students' achievement in Years 12 and 13 is also good

ART

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

Strengths:

- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement in lessons and very high attainment in public examinations
- Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject and very high expectations of standards of work
- The commitment of students to their work and the excellent intellectual and creative effort they put into it
- The leadership of the department and the strength of the teaching team

Areas for improvement:

- Studio space for students to engage in independent work
- Access to and use of computers to increase opportunities for digital art and animation

237. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are very high and amongst the highest five per cent of schools nationally. In 2001 the proportions of students gaining the higher grades A-B in both the AS and A2 level examinations were well above national averages and the highest in the school. The trend in results has risen more rapidly than national trends over the past three years and all students have passed successfully, with no grade below D. Very high expectations, very good and often excellent teaching, along with the students' interest and commitment to their work, are at the heart of the consistently high standards of achievement in the department.
238. In lessons and work seen during the inspection attainment at the end of Year 13 is well above course expectations. Teachers' assessments and predictions indicate a further improvement in examination results this year. Students make good progress from their GCSE examinations, completing excellent, well-presented personal studies of artists such as Klimt, Rousseau, Degas and Lautrec, as they extend their fine art research. All students make good use of the Internet and the very good collection of resource books available. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of art, using it to guide students across a wide field of fine art influences. The high expectations of written work, which start from Year 7, ensure that students are able to annotate their sketchbook work fully and effectively, and can complete lengthy studies of artists whose work they choose as key influences on their own. Students can recognise and name the key genres in art and can name artists and art movements within them. Their critical skills are well developed through excellent teaching that challenges their perceptions of their own and others' work, enabling them to make confident use of critical judgements through the language of art. In one lesson, their comments on Picasso's 'Guernica' showed critical perception and a deep interest in the social and historical background of the painting, as they unravelled the anguish, pain and horror of war depicted in the painting. Girls tend to be more confident in making observations about an artist's work, but the observations of boys and the work that develops from them, is generally very imaginative and challenging. Standards of drawing are very high and students are confident in using pastel, watercolour, oil and acrylic in producing colourful and interesting compositions for their examination portfolios. Their life drawing and painting has been effectively developed through the weekly life drawing classes and has led to rapid improvement in observational skills and drawing techniques. All students are confident in working on a large scale and in different media, often mixing them in their compositions and constructions. Some individual pieces on display show a maturity of approach that is well beyond expectations for students at that stage. Although there are limited opportunities to explore digital art, one student is building up a 'power point' presentation of his own work, which includes some manipulation of images using the computer. Some students make good use of photographic studies, but the darkroom is not fully used to explore and develop photographic techniques for artwork.
239. All students are well motivated, have very positive attitudes towards their work and pursue their studies rigorously. They show maturity in discussion and considerable technical and creative imagination in their work. Teachers expect very high standards of behaviour and application to work and students respond well to those expectations. The standard of presentation of completed work is excellent and the whole school benefits from students' work on display in public areas.
240. The quality of teaching is never less than very good and is often excellent. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan and prepare lessons well and are very effective motivators of students. They are artists in their own right and use their own skills very effectively to improve the skills of their students. Teaching is confident, thorough, imaginative and well informed. Through very good relationships and a clear enthusiasm for teaching art, they bring out the full creative potential of students and ensure that their examination results reflect that potential. Excellent opportunities are provided for students to evaluate their own work critically, as well as that of the teachers and the many well-known artists they study. Teachers use the language of art fluently and constantly reinforce and challenge the students' use of key words. In discussion, students show confidence and clarity in explaining what they are doing and what has influenced their work. Excellent use is made of the work of male and female artists in exploring and comparing the different gender representations of the human form.

241. The teaching team is strong, well motivated and led with a very clear sense of purpose and direction. They have an excellent capacity to further strengthen standards and improve the work of the department. The curriculum ensures that the subject is explored in considerable depth, although its cultural references are in need of further development, to include more of the primitive cultures and a wider span of our multi-cultural community. The annual exhibition of examination work, held at the local gallery and museum, and the annual visit of artists in residence, along with the weekly life drawing classes and visits made to museums and galleries, ensure that students have a full personal and social experience of art that prepares them well, should they wish to go on to further and higher education in art. There is no separate studio area for students and this makes it difficult for them to work on their compositions in their spare time. There are severe restrictions on the storage of large-scale work, in particular three-dimensional work. The department has no suitable computers for art and the use of computers for digital artwork is unsatisfactory overall.
242. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection, maintaining its very high standards and increasing the uptake of students to the AS and A2 courses. The A2 pass rate has improved to an outstanding level.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on AS and A-level courses in history. Geography, religious studies and psychology were also sampled.

GEOGRAPHY

A-level results are well above average. In 2001, A-level results achieved by both males and females were very high in comparison with national figures. All students gained a grade C or above and six of these pupils have gone on to study geography at university. The very high level of attainment in geography has been sustained over the last three years and is a result of very good teaching. Students in Year 13 demonstrate a very good understanding of global patterns and processes. In a fast-paced and challenging Year 13 lesson, for example, in Year 13, students gave extended explanations and examples of changes in the character and location of the global economy. Sixth form students show understanding of more complex concepts such as geographical modelling. They can interpret and recognise trends in data. For example, in a Year 13 lesson the teacher recounted his experience of seeing a machine for recording the proportions of red and green skin on apples as an aid to quality control.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The school has recently introduced an A-level course in religious studies, but the first cohort does not sit public examinations until this summer. Inspection evidence shows that students demonstrate very good understanding of the complex theological arguments of early Christianity. They can debate religious topics rationally and with reference to their own experience. Students following the AS and A-level courses in the sixth form are able to discuss complex issues such as early Christian debates on the paradoxes of evil and suffering. Students can relate theological issues to their own experiences. The school has yet to develop a core course in the sixth form, which would meet statutory requirements. Teaching is very good in the sixth form. The AS and A-level courses are suitable to the needs of the students and provide good continuity from the GCSE course.

PSYCHOLOGY

The numbers of AS and A-level students are growing and examination results are generally close to the national average. In 2001, both the AS and A-level results were average. These results broadly reflect standards seen in lessons. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some that is good. Teaching strengths include much enthusiasm for the subject and very good subject knowledge. Students are provided with very good support and guidance and become mature learners who are capable of independent study. Students participate well in lessons and are keen to share their understanding of psychological theory

and explore new ideas. In a few lessons the pace slows because too much time is allowed for small group activities that are not challenging enough. By Year 13 students develop a good grasp of the technical language of the subject and this aids their progress.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment at A-level are very high
- Students make very good progress
- Teaching is very good, with high expectations that students carry out independent research

Areas for development

- More consistent reference in written answers to the ideas and opinions of well known historians

243. Standards in history have risen since the last inspection when they were judged to be well above average. In 2001 the attainment of students in their history A-level was very high. The percentage of students attaining the two highest grades was considerably higher than the national average and all students attained a grade in the range A to E. The average points score of students was significantly higher than the national average. These results represent a considerable improvement over the previous three years. The results at AS level at the end of the first year of the course were lower than expected for some students, and those whose results were ungraded left the course without proceeding to take the subject at A-level, which has resulted in there being a very small group taking the subject in Year 13.
244. Students make very good progress in meeting the considerable demands of the A-level course. A very large majority exceeded the grades predicted for them, some by a large margin. They make particularly good progress in using their knowledge and understanding to inform their understanding of work currently in hand and in presenting balanced, well-structured arguments.
245. In work seen during the inspection attainment was well above what is seen nationally. Students have very clear understanding of the complex issues that they study. They make perceptive links between topics and are able to trace the effect of one upon another. They make very effective use of their understanding of what examiners are looking for in an answer to structure their work in a way that will gain them high marks, placing strong emphasis on their evaluation and interpretations of historical events and situations. Students put forward well-balanced arguments, showing understanding of the need to present a cogent view of ideas that they do not necessarily share in order to make an objective evaluation. Their preparatory thought, research and planning of their written assignments is very thorough, especially in their personal studies that show clear evidence of initiative and detailed research. Students' notes are very thorough and they make constructive use of the additional documentary information with which they are provided, annotating and supplementing it with additional ideas of their own. Students have clear, accurate recall of previous learning and make good use of historical references in class discussion. All students develop a clear, fluent written style and some write with considerable authority. Although students show interest in the ideas of well-respected historians in class discussion, their written work makes very limited reference to ideas other than their own.
246. Students take a very active part in lessons, responding very positively to their teachers' high expectations of their involvement. Despite their eagerness to contribute, the approach of students to their work in lessons is thoughtful and well considered, making good use of discussions to gather additional information and to compare their own ideas with those of others. They work hard in lessons, showing a very focused response to the activities in which they are engaged.
247. The standard of teaching of history in the sixth form is very good. Lessons are planned and resourced to involve students as much as possible, since teachers have very high expectations of the students' own input into lessons and do not "spoon feed" them with information. Teachers use their very good, confident subject knowledge to exemplify and add interest to the more demanding parts of the course and students respond well by maintaining high levels of interest and commitment. There is an expectation that students will research for themselves much of the basic information, which is a major factor in their high standard of factual understanding and

recall. In the teaching there is a strong emphasis on matching the requirements of specific examination questions to the way in which the answers are planned and structured, and students have good understanding of examination techniques. Teachers give good guidance and advice on their approach to individual research. The marking of students' work is a strength; it is very substantial and informative, acting as a useful reference source and giving strong advice on improvement. The students themselves feel that they are very well taught in the sixth form. They are aware of and enjoy the fact that different teachers have different teaching styles and come to history lessons knowing that they will be interested and involved.

248. The very recently appointed head of department has had insufficient time to make an impact on the provision for history in the sixth form and has only recently begun to identify areas for development, the most significant of which is to increase the numbers deciding to take the subject in both Year 12 and 13. All teachers involved in the teaching of A-level are well qualified and experienced to meet the demands of the course. Resources are good and are in the process of being updated by books specifically designed to address the needs of the new sixth form courses.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature, but English language, media studies and modern foreign languages were also sampled.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English language A-level results in 2001 were well above average and students did better than expected, when their GCSE results are taken into account. One English language lesson was observed. In this well taught lesson, close analysis of a speech by President Mandela led to students gaining a very good understanding of rhetoric and discourse. Teaching is good; the course is well planned and teachers give good guidance to students on improving their work.

MEDIA STUDIES

Standards media studies at AS level are good with all students already well on course to achieve pass grades. Teaching is good overall. In one media lesson careful preparation enabled students to explore a variety of media techniques with confidence. In this practical lesson, students produced an interactive programme designed to encourage deeper understanding of a collection of artefacts in Buxton Museum. In the process students acquired skills in the use of digital and video cameras and produced work of a high standard. Another group of students are working with Channel 4 Television to produce a documentary on life in the sixth form. This work is of a professional standard.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Small numbers of sixth form students have successfully entered for French or German at A-level since the last inspection. In the 2001 A-level examination, the one candidate in French gained an A grade as did the one candidate in German. Those entered for AS level German attained a range of grades that are consistent with the national average. The small number of students taking A-level courses thrive in the well structured and energetically taught lessons. Students that have the opportunity to live and work in Germany are markedly more confident and articulate than those whose studies are confined to the classroom. In both French and German, students build rapidly on the language learnt for GCSE, progressing from domestic and teenage concerns such as healthy living to wider social and moral issues, including rights and responsibilities and population migration.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Overall, the quality of provision in English literature is **excellent**.

Strengths.

- Very good teaching
- Excellent subject leadership and the effective use of a good range of learning resources
- Students make very good progress from the end of the GCSE course and are achieving high grades at A-level
- Excellent use of assessment
- Very good relationships encourage students to share ideas freely and work in a mature and businesslike manner

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to increase the number of students taking the subject in the sixth form
- The sharing of innovative teaching styles across the department

249. Standards in English literature have risen since the last inspection. In the 2001 GCE A-level examination, results were well above average, with three quarters of students achieving A to B grades. Students who took the AS level examination in 2001 also achieved well above average, with all students achieving A to E grades. For the third year in succession, English literature is the school's highest performing subject. All students achieved a full grade higher than their predicted grade based on their GCSE performance. There is no significant difference between male and female students.

250. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirms these high standards. Attainment in speaking and listening is very good. The students are articulate and make concise pronouncements when asking questions and explaining their views. Students read with insight and display highly developed critical skills. Standards in Year 12 are well above average. In one Year 12 lesson students discussed the homiletic tradition in 'Doctor Faustus'. In this lesson students learned the key features of the homily and its relationship to the sermon. These students have just started their A-level courses yet have already moved towards the awareness of structure and language in shaping the meaning of a text. Higher attaining students are able to cross-reference and analyse a variety of ideas, this was particularly evident in coursework on 'The Duchess of Malfi', where the highest grades were achieved. However, lower attaining students need to develop their vocabulary further to enable them to tease out the ideas in the text more lucidly.

251. In Year 13 students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Students' achievement is well above average especially in their oral responses to texts. In a Year 13 lesson students sensitively explored the emotional and psychological focus of Pat Barker's portrayal of the character of Siegfried Sassoon in the novel 'Regeneration'. In this lesson students read with insight and displayed highly developed critical skills and, by using the textual evidence, they were able to respond in role as a psychiatrist. These students actually 'relived' the text and, as a result, their understanding of the writer's technique and purpose developed rapidly. The achievement of both AS and A-level students is very good. All students appreciate the work of their teachers and respond with enthusiasm and a commitment to succeed. Students' work is well organised, with large volumes of research notes, seminars and reviews of text. This shows good independent learning and very good progress in developing critical skills. They demonstrate a high level of application and the ability to work under pressure. Students work well together: strong purposeful relationships are a feature of all lessons.

252. Teaching is very good and occasionally excellent, with some strikingly good features. All teachers have thorough knowledge of their subject: they read around their subject and the prescribed texts and are able to offer their students a huge range of additional references. They all have high expectations of their students. Planning is of high quality and teachers use their understanding of

students' needs to prepare lessons and pass on expertise and mastery of literacy skills to their students. The planning carefully incorporates the criteria upon which the students will be assessed. The students are quick to recognise these and use them expertly in their own essay plans. The whole is therefore a truly shared experience – teachers and students working in tandem and producing a standard worthy of a postgraduate seminar. The students respond appropriately to these very challenging demands and this leads to rapid progress in the development of both analytical and writing skills. The very detailed assessments demonstrate the commitment that teachers have to assisting the students' improvement. A good example of this is the sensitive annotation of 'The Handmaid's Tale' where the difficult concept of freedom in Atwood's novel was so clearly elucidated that students understood the wider issues. It is the high standard of interaction that encourages students to gain confidence in manipulating ideas. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in the development of students' oral skills and in their range of reading.

253. The leadership of the subject is excellent. All teachers are well qualified and experienced. The head of department is enthusiastic about the exploration of literature in its richest sense. It is this clear commitment to the effective teaching of literature that has led to the excellent planning of the curriculum. There is a strong commitment to improving standards. The team's detailed analysis of examination results, combined with the rigorous tracking of students' progress, ensures that teachers and students share a joint vision of success. The department continually reviews its courses in order to find new ways in which to promote sixth form courses.