

INSPECTION REPORT

HANDSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103549

Headteacher: Mr R. Shephard

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones

18462

Dates of inspection: 18th – 22nd February 2002

Inspection number: 223730

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Grove Lane
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr E. Lear

Date of previous inspection: March 2000

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9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector		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?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Handsworth Grammar School is a voluntary aided boys' school with some girls in the Sixth Form. There are 875 students in total, including 216 in the sixth form. A small number of students, including some female students, join the school's sixth form. Around 40 per cent of students are drawn from the locality near the school, with the remainder travelling from a wide area in and around Birmingham. Some 43 per cent of the students are from homes where English is not the first language. The other main languages spoken are Punjabi and Urdu. There are no students at an early stage of English language acquisition. There are 18 students on the special educational needs register including five with statements of special need, which is well below the national average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is nine per cent in the main school and two per cent in the sixth form, which is below the national average. Students are selected for entry to the school by examination and the attainment on entry is well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. It is improving and increasingly effective. It provides satisfactory value for money. The sixth form provision is cost effective. The leadership and management of the new headteacher are good and he is supported effectively by the senior staff and the governors. The teaching is good and students achieve well through Years 7 to 11. Students currently in the sixth form also achieve well. The school is well organised. Students develop very positive attitudes towards their studies and they behave very well. The school applies the principles of best value effectively to its use of resources and finances are now managed well.

What the school does well

- The new headteacher gives a clear direction to the school's work.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students achieve well and obtain very high standards in GCSE examinations compared to the national average.
- Students' personal development is very good. This ensures that they have mature and positive attitudes towards their work.
- Behaviour is very good in general and excellent in the classrooms, ensuring a very good learning atmosphere in most lessons.
- Relationships with teachers and between the different groups of students are excellent.
- Students receive good guidance and support and excellent careers education.
- There is excellent provision for extra-curricular music and instrumental tuition.

What could be improved

- Achievement in music in Years 7 to 9, which is unsatisfactory and the quality of teaching where it is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- The more effective use of information about students' attainment in order to set challenging targets for improvement.
- The quality of long-term planning in most subject departments, which is unsatisfactory.
- The effective use of the library to support learning.
- The accommodation for music, physical education and modern foreign languages.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school's improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection in March 2000 and the subsequent HMI inspection in September 2001. In the main school, National Curriculum test results in Year 9 have continued to improve. GCSE results have risen and in 2001, the average points score per student was in the top five per cent nationally. The work seen in the inspection confirms that students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in preparing for their GCSE examinations in Years 10 and 11. Students achieve well in the sixth form and in 2001 attained results that were well above average. Under the leadership of a new headteacher, the school is continuing to deal effectively with the key issues raised in the last report, but has some way to go in improving music and in using assessment information to best effect. The quality of teaching has improved. The school has improved its development planning and has good capacity and commitment to improve further as it has instigated better systems for evaluating its own performance. The school still does not fully meet the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	C	B	A		

On entry to the school, students' attainment is well above average overall. The school admits students with a wider spread of ability than most other grammar schools, taking students from the top 40 per cent of the ability range. As a consequence, their results do not compare well with other grammar schools. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests, Year 9 students' results were well above average in English and science and in the top five per cent nationally in mathematics. In relation to their starting points in Year 7, these students achieved satisfactorily in science, achieved well in English and very well in mathematics. GCSE results in the same year were in the top five per cent nationally and maintained a trend in results that has been above the national trend. This group made very good progress, achieving very well in relation to their starting points in Year 10. Compared to other grammar schools, results in Year 9 and 11 are well below average. Targets were not met, but students' achievement through Years 7 to 11 was good. Students are currently achieving well in relation to their starting points. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment in mathematics and achieve well in English and science. The work seen in the inspection is well above average in design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography and religious education. Standards are above average in art and design and information and communication technology (ICT) and broadly in line with the average in music and physical education. Only in music do students not achieve the standards they are capable of across the full programmes of study. In Years 10 and 11 students make very good progress and achieve very well in English, mathematics, ICT, and geography. In all other subjects, achievement is good, apart from physical education where those students taking the core programme make satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Students with English as an additional language (EAL) receive satisfactory provision and achieve well.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students show enthusiasm in their lessons and a very positive approach to learning. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in out-of-school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good behaviour in general and often excellent in lessons. Students know right from wrong and show very good understanding of the boundaries of acceptable conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is very good, and relationships with each other and with their teachers are excellent. The school provides students with good opportunities to exercise responsibility and they respond well.
Attendance	Very good. Levels of attendance are very high compared to the national average.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

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

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

The quality of teaching and the learning that follows are consistently good across Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The teaching observed was at least satisfactory in all but three lessons. There was a high proportion of good teaching and some excellent teaching was also seen, resulting in good learning overall.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects. They provide good role models and show commitment to the work they undertake.
- The quality of teachers' lesson planning is good throughout the school, both in the longer term and for individual lessons.
- The class management techniques of teachers are generally good and they use the time in the lessons effectively to ensure good learning takes place. Relationships are excellent.
- Teachers' expectations of students are usually kept appropriately high. This not only applies to students' behaviour and level of effort, but to the quality of their work.
- Teachers mainly use question and answer techniques well and the use of assessment is an improving area in the school. There are still some inconsistencies in the use of homework and in the frequency and depth of teachers' marking.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is effective.
- The teaching of students with special educational needs, those with EAL, and gifted and talented students, is good and these students learn effectively and achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, but statutory requirements not fully met in teaching of music and physical education and in the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
Provision for students with special educational needs	There is a very low number of students with special educational needs. Provision is satisfactory and these students make good progress and achieve well. The organisation of information about these students needs developing.
Provision for students with	Provision is satisfactory and these students achieve well because they bring a very

EAL	positive approach to their learning. The formal assessment and recording of their specific needs require further development in order to set targets and track their progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision overall. Students' moral development is excellent. The provision for cultural development is very good, and spiritual and social development is good.
How well the school cares for its students	The school takes satisfactory care of students' welfare, health and safety. There is good educational support to monitor students' achievements and enable them to make further progress with their learning. There is a very good level of pastoral care, which is greatly appreciated by both students and parents.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	The school has a good partnership with parents. Parents are very pleased with the school and their involvement has a very good impact on their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Good. The new headteacher ensures a clear educational direction for the school's work. Senior managers make an effective contribution to the running of the school. There is still some way to go in developing the leadership role at subject department level.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's work. They are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities, but requirements to fully provide for collective worship are not met and provision in music and physical education does not fully meet statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Systems and strategies have been put into place to guide the school's progress and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. The school has recently instigated more effective means of evaluating its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staffing is good. Learning resources are adequate. Accommodation is mixed, but unsatisfactory overall because of poor facilities for physical education and inadequate rooms for music and modern foreign languages. The school applies the principles of best value well.

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 very good work ethic that helps their children to achieve well and to become mature and responsible adults. • The high level of pastoral care. • Students enjoy coming to school. • Very good relationships between students and between staff and students. • Teachers are very committed, supportive and know the students well, leading to a very good atmosphere. • Good extra-curricular activities with non-specialist staff joining in well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accommodation and the state of decoration. • One parent felt music could be better, though others said it is improving and the shortened lunch has made rehearsals difficult. • A number of parents would like more information on GCSE coursework requirements and deadlines early in Year 10 • More information on the curriculum for each year so that parents know what students are doing.

Inspectors endorse the positive views and the views about the poor state of some of the accommodation. Inspectors judged that parents receive satisfactory information on progress through progress cards, information evenings and annual reports, but insufficient information on how their children are achieving in relation to national averages. The school makes good efforts to work closely with parents. A few parents commented on the inconsistencies in discipline, but inspectors found that behaviour is very good generally and excellent in lessons.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 216 students. Of these, 22 are female students who joined at the start of Year 12 or Year 13 along with another 30 male sixth formers. There is a wide ethnic and cultural mix of students. Typically around 70 per cent of the school's Year 11 students stay on to join the sixth form, the remainder joining other post-16 institutions. In addition to teaching its own courses, the school also uses video-conferencing to broaden the courses offered. The school has closely defined entry requirements and the level of attainment of sixth form students is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provision is good and cost effective. Students are well provided for through a wide range of courses and many opportunities for their personal development. Results at A-level in 2001 were well above the average. In AS (Advanced Subsidiary) examinations, results were above average. Students achieved well. In work seen in the inspection, these good standards have been maintained. In nearly all subjects, students are achieving well compared with their level of attainment on entering the sixth form. This is as a result of the quality of teaching and learning which is good and often very good. The very good attitudes of the students contribute towards their good achievement. They receive very good support and guidance, especially in monitoring their progress. This contributes to the low drop-out rate at the end of Year 12 as they choose courses which suit them and with which they are satisfied. The management of the sixth form funding is good and meets the cost of staffing. The sixth form is managed satisfactorily.

Strengths

- Students make good progress in GCE AS and A-level courses and they achieve well.
- The school offers a good range of courses that match the needs and aspirations of the students.
- Students are challenged and stimulated by the good teaching they receive and benefit from the ways that teachers make themselves accessible for individual help.
- Excellent relationships exist between different groups of students and between students and their teachers.
- The school provides very good guidance and support, especially regarding higher education and careers opportunities.
- The school provides very good opportunities to students for their personal and social development. As a result, they have positive attitudes and display mature approaches to their work.
- Students make a good contribution to the life of the school and provide good role models to younger students.

What could be improved

- The quality of provision in economics and business studies.
- The completion and implementation of plans to co-ordinate the teaching of key skills.
- The quality of long-term planning in most subject departments.

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.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is good and students attain standards in line with the national average. The large number of students enjoy the subject and achieve well.
Biology	Good. Teaching is good and standards are in line with the national average. Students achieve well. A good field course enriches the curriculum.

Chemistry	Good. Teaching is good and students achieve well. Standards at A-level are in line with the national average.
Design and technology	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Students achieve well. Standards at A-level are above the national average. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject and work hard.
Business studies	Unsatisfactory. Standards and achievement in A-level examinations in 2001 were below average. Standards at AS-level were above average. Weaknesses in leadership of the subject are adversely affecting the standards of the work seen.
Economics	Unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are adversely affected by weaknesses in leadership and management.
Information and communication technology	Good. Good teaching resulted in standards that are well above average at both AS and A-level. Staff changes and insufficient specialist teachers adversely affect attainment in Year 12.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Teaching is good and so students make good progress. Projected grades are in line with the national average at AS-level.
Art	Good. Standards of attainment are high as a result of very good teaching. AS-level results were below average.
Geography	Good. Standards are above average in work seen and students achieve well. This is as a result of very good teaching.
Religious studies	Good. Teaching is good and students achieve well. They are well motivated and have very positive attitudes to their work.
English literature	Good. Standards are improving and in line with the national average. As a result of good teaching, learning and achievement are good. Students value the help they receive from their teachers.
French	Very good. Students achieve high standards as a result of very good teaching. They respond very positively to the high expectations of their teachers and appreciate the guidance they receive.

In other work seen across the sixth form, a similar pattern emerged, where students studying on GCE AS and A-level (A2) courses are making good progress and are achieving well in nearly all subjects. This is as a result of the good quality of teaching, the positive attitudes to work of the students and their good study skills. Teaching is often very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school provides very good support and guidance for students in the sixth form. Excellent relationships exist between teachers and students. Teachers know students very well and give very good advice and guidance on personal as well as academic issues.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. Sharing of responsibilities for managing aspects of the sixth form has effective outcomes. However, there is a lack of a clear and firm overview of organisation. Long-term planning of most subject departments is inadequately developed. The sixth form is very well staffed. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. Good procedures have been developed to monitor and support students' academic progress. Equality of opportunity is

	promoted in line with the school’s aims. The sixth form is cost effective and retention rates are high.
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STUDENTS’ VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is good. • Teachers are readily accessible for help. • Courses suit their needs and aspirations. • They receive good support and advice on post-school options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their treatment as mature and responsible young adults. • The school’s response to the views of the sixth form. • The provision of enrichment activities for their social development is inadequate.

These views on what could be improved emerged from a questionnaire, which was completed by a minority of students. Interviews during the inspection revealed that the students hold significantly more positive views than the questionnaire responses revealed. The team felt that the opinions expressed in the questionnaire represented an early response to the systems and discipline that the new headteacher has introduced and do not reflect the views of the sixth form now that routines are embedded. Students’ concern that they are not treated as mature and responsible young adults appears to be a reaction to the introduction of supervised free study periods and the lack of facilities in the sixth form common room. Students do enjoy life in the sixth form. They find that teachers are very accessible for help, and that they are encouraged to study independently. A significant number of students feel poorly informed about the progress they are making, but inspectors feel that the review system is rigorous and helpful. The team found that sixth form students have good provision for enrichment activities.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

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 school reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to “very weak”.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. When they join the school, students have levels of attainment that are well above average. However, the school operates within an LEA system where the proportion of students selected to attend grammar schools varies from the highest attaining five per cent to the highest attaining 40 per cent of applicants. This school admits students from the highest 40 per cent. As a result, their performances in tests and examinations compare very favourably with the national average, but do not compare well with other grammar schools, since most do not admit students from as broad a band of ability. In 2001, the results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were in the top five per cent nationally, but well below the average of other grammar schools. The results in the Year 2001 GCSE examinations were in the top five per cent nationally, but the average points score was well below the average of all grammar schools.
2. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students, the proportion reaching level 5 or higher was in the top five per cent nationally in English, mathematics and science. The proportion reaching level 6 or higher was well above average in English and in the top five per cent nationally in mathematics and science. Compared with other grammar schools results were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. In relation to their starting points in Year 7, these students achieved satisfactorily in science, well in English and very well in mathematics. Overall, students achieved well and added significant value from their starting point in Year 7 to the end of Year 9. Over the past five years the trend in results has been above the national trend.
3. In the 2001 GCSE results, the average points score per student was in the top five per cent nationally and maintained results that have been consistently at that level over the past five years. Over that time, the trend in results has been above the national average. Compared to other grammar schools, results are well below average. This group made very good progress, achieving very well in relation to their starting points in Year 10. The strongest subjects were English literature, French, history and mathematics. The weakest subjects were biology, combined science, geography and physics.
4. The work seen in the inspection reflects current students' continuing good progress in Years 7 to 9. Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment in mathematics and achieve well in English and science. Standards of work seen of students in Year 9 are very high compared to the national average in mathematics and are well above average in English and science. The levels of attainment of students when they enter the school vary in other subjects of the curriculum and are below average in art and design, design and technology, and physical education. By the end of Year 9, the work seen in the inspection is well above average in design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography and religious education. Standards are above average in art and design and ICT and broadly in line with the average in music and physical education. These standards reflect students' good levels of achievement through Years 7 to 9. Only in music is achievement unsatisfactory because students do not achieve the standards they are capable of across the full programmes of study.
5. In the work seen in the inspection, students' levels of attainment by the end of Year 11 are very high compared to the national average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. Levels of attainment are well above average in all other subjects of the

curriculum other than in the core programme in physical education, where standards are broadly average. Overall, students currently in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in relation to their starting points. They make very good progress and achieve very well in English, mathematics, ICT, and geography. In all other subjects, achievement is good, apart from physical education where those students taking the core programme make satisfactory progress.

6. Students who have special educational needs are few in number. Their attainment matches that of other students in their age group, both in lessons and examinations. Students with special educational needs in the main school and in the sixth form progress at the same rate as other groups of students because they are well motivated and receive good support in the classroom.
7. The school has recently identified students in each year who are the highest achievers and/or have particular talents. An action plan is in place to provide more specifically for these students and to encourage them to meet their full potential. Increasingly, good provision is made in extra-curricular activities. This effective extension of the curriculum to stretch and challenge these students is gradually being extended to lessons in the classroom. The systems are developing well and the school is monitoring the progress these students make. It is an area of developing strength and these students currently make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
8. A large proportion of students, amounting to around 40 per cent of students in the school, come from backgrounds where English is not their first language. Within these groups there are no students whose English is at an early stage of acquisition. The attainment of students with EAL is broadly in line with all other students and the school monitors carefully the progress they make to ensure that they achieve well, in line with their peers.
9. Standards of literacy are well above average and very high in Years 10 and 11. Students read fluently and with good expression. Their levels of understanding are high. Their skills are very efficient, allowing them to find relevant information quickly. Standards of writing are well above average. Many students have very high standards, consistently producing accurate work that is clear and engaging. A very small number of students are at average standards: their control of standard English expression is not secure; they make occasional spelling and punctuation errors; and a lack of helpful connective phrasing undermines the coherence of their work.
10. The overall level of students' numeracy skills is well above average. This is partly due to standards on entry, but also to provision within the mathematics department, and to the students' positive approach to improving their standards. Although detailed planning for the contribution to be made by other departments is only just beginning, there are a number of subjects which already provide significant support. In geography, for instance, students handle data competently, and they use scales on maps to make measurements of distance. In ICT students use formulae to program cells when using spreadsheets in Years 7 to 9. Extensive and effective use of numeracy occurs in science. Students make frequent measurements during practical work, and they use graphs to analyse their results; this includes the identification of anomalies. Skills of data analysis are high in science, for instance in investigative work. A number of subjects already have references to numeracy within their planning, for example in geography. This is good practice as it raises teachers' awareness of the potential for contributing to students' numeracy development.
11. In 2001, the school set an overall target for improved GCSE results. The target of an average GCSE points score of 60 was not reached and the score obtained, 58.5 points, was the same

as for 2000. However, this group of students achieved very well when compared to students in all schools who started Year 10 with comparable Year 9 National Curriculum points' scores. The targets set for the next group of students have taken closer account of their prior attainment and the standards they have reached in their progress through the school to date.

Sixth Form

12. Results in 2001 GCE A-levels were well above the national average when compared to all maintained schools, as measured by the average points score obtained. The results are higher than those of recent previous years and maintain an upward trend over the past three years. Very few students took the Advanced Supplementary course and their results cannot be compared to national averages with sufficient validity. At GCE A-level, male students performed significantly better than female students. The school has analysed the results and this shows that students achieve well having made good progress from their starting points. However, there was some underachievement on the part of some female students. The low numbers of female students in the school means that the poorer results of a few students had a disproportionate effect upon the scores as a whole. As a result, they were significantly lower than the male students' scores.
13. In 2001, there was some variation between students' performance in different subjects. In most subjects, students achieved at least satisfactorily, and in a number of subjects, students' levels of achievement in relation to their prior attainment were good. In mathematics, chemistry, history and general studies in French and in German, students added significant value as they progressed through the courses and achieved well. In most other subjects, the value added was positive, although not statistically significant, and students' levels of achievement were satisfactory. In business studies and in English, students underperformed in relation to their prior attainment.
14. In 2001, students were entered for the new examination at GCE Advanced Subsidiary level. There is no data for comparing grades, but comparison can be made between the average points score obtained in subjects and national averages. These comparisons should be treated with caution since the national data has not yet been finally validated. Subject specific comparisons show that students gained well above average points scores in biology, computer studies, design and technology, French and German. Results were above average in chemistry, business studies, history and psychology. Results were broadly in line with the average in mathematics, physics, English and general studies. They were below average in economics, art and design, geography, music and religious studies.
15. In the work seen in the inspection, in the subjects focused on in the sixth form, the standards that students are currently attaining are well above average in computer studies and above average in biology, chemistry, design and technology, art and design, French and geography. In all other subjects, standards are broadly average. Students are achieving well across all subjects apart from economics and business studies, where students' levels of achievement are satisfactory. In the work seen in the inspection, the female students are now achieving as well as their male peers, and in some subjects, for example, biology, chemistry and modern foreign languages, they are achieving higher standards.
16. Overall, standards in key skills are good. Standards in communications are very good in English, history and biology and good in the rest except economics, business studies, mathematics and physical education where they are satisfactory. The application of number is good or very good in most subjects. For instance, in design and technology, students are required to analyse research data using graphs and charts. Students also use data in physical education, and in modern foreign languages they collect and analyse data from the Internet.

Standards are satisfactory in economics, business studies and English. Nearly all subjects promote study and problem-solving skills well. Students work together particularly well in English, geography and design and technology. ICT skills are generally good in the sixth form with most students showing good confidence and competencies in using a range of software programs to effectively communicate information. For example students show very good word-processing and desktop publishing skills and the use of spreadsheets when presenting information in their coursework. In almost every subject students use the Internet well to research their topics and are very successful in using search engines to identify the appropriate web site for their needs. All students have very good practical skills in using the network, selecting the appropriate programs and in managing their work files on the network system. However, business studies, economics, mathematics, art and physical education have not yet adequately developed programs for encouraging the use of computers. A structured and planned key skills policy is not yet in place. The school has very recently appointed a co-ordinator to audit the key skills teaching. She will manage a pilot scheme for a small cohort of Year 12 students from September 2002 before a plan is implemented.

17. Students gain many benefits from the wide range of enrichment activities in the sixth form. The good opportunities offered to sixth form students to take responsibility encourage them to become more confident, independent and caring. They are expected to involve themselves in the life of the whole school and readily do so. As house captains and prefects, they help to organise competitions and act as trained counsellors and form helpers for younger students. They support the teachers well at Open and Speech Days, participate in assemblies and chair the school council. They make good role models for younger students. The two-day 'Challenge of Management' for all Year 12 students helps to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills. There are very good opportunities for students to involve themselves in drama and musical activities through the various bands. Their social experiences and horizons are also widened through science, museum, art gallery and theatre visits including a computer studies trip to France and a physics visit to Jodrell Bank. Many students have raised money for charities such as for the Macmillan Nurses and the Indian Earthquake appeals. Some students also help develop community links by helping in local primary schools. However, there are few opportunities to experience the world of local business as there are no business links, work experience and currently no Young Enterprise scheme.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

18. As at the time of the previous inspection, students have very good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is very good generally and often excellent in lessons, ensuring a very good working atmosphere. They enjoy school and attendance is very high in comparison with other schools. A few parents expressed concern about behaviour, but inspectors found very few problems. Nearly all parents agreed that their children like coming to school. Students with special educational needs have a very positive approach to learning. They have good relationships with their teachers and fellow students and involve themselves well in lessons.
19. In lessons, students usually have very good attitudes and this has a strong impact on learning. They concentrate and listen very well to teachers and respond well to questions. Students across the ability bands and those with EAL and students with special educational needs are interested and well motivated. In most activities there is a high level of application and enjoyment, independently and collectively. Students' confidence in their own ability is evident and nearly all take pride in the presentation of their work. Students in Year 7 are particularly keen to please their teachers. They enthusiastically offer their responses to teachers' questions in mathematics, for example, and are keen to volunteer to read in front of the class. Students persevere until tasks are complete. Homework is usually completed and handed in on time and there are only a few examples of incomplete coursework in Year 11.

As they go through the school, students' learning skills develop and they take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

20. Behaviour in lessons is often excellent, especially in subjects students enjoy such as English, French, German and history. Students behave very well at break times. The Year 10 students who attended a musical workshop at a local centre outside school were a credit to the school. Students value their place in school and there have been no exclusions for a number of years. They look after resources and equipment very well and pay good heed to health and safety requirements. They show good respect for their school environment. There is little evidence of graffiti or vandalism and litterbins are well used.
21. Relationships across the school are excellent. Students have a very high degree of confidence in their teachers and form excellent and constructive relationships with them and with each other. Different groups of students work extremely well together. Students greatly appreciate the friendly working atmosphere in the school that is conducive to good learning. Students share resources very well in science and design and technology, for example, and co-operate very well in pairs and groups in practical and academic activities. They willingly help each other when asked, for instance in a Year 11 mathematics lesson. Their spiritual development is very good. They listen considerately to each other and have high regard for each other's feelings, values and beliefs. Boys in Year 9 and Year 11 read their poems and sonnets in English with great sensitivity while others listened with due respect. Students are polite and trustworthy and very courteous to visitors and teachers. They have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and incidences of bullying are rare.
22. Students' personal development is very good. Most parents believe the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Students enjoy the good opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. Students represent each other on the year and school councils and develop a good sense of social and community responsibility. A student in Year 9 has been elected to represent Birmingham in the UK Youth Parliament. Year 11 students assist prefects with monitoring duties. Up to 20 students of all ages in the main school enjoy the opportunity to assist a local primary school by listening to readers before school twice a week. The school has a surplus of Year 7 students volunteering to help out at 11+ examinations. Students support the wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities well and this has a good impact on students' personal development. Two plays are performed each year and support for musical activities is very good. There is an orchestra, a Big Band, two quartets and guitar, wind and strings groups. One hundred students of all ages took part in the Christmas concert of music and dance as performers and technicians. Students have assisted at the 'Classroom in the Park' over the last three summers as performers and helpers. Students represent the school well on visits to theatres and curriculum field trips. As part of their GCSE art coursework, several Year 10 students painted murals in a local children's hospital. Some students enjoy the residential visits to France, Germany and Prague. There is satisfactory support for a range of charities each year. These have included the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, Red Nose Day, Children in Need and the Indian Earthquake Appeal.
23. Students like coming to school. Attendance is very high in comparison with other schools and unauthorised absence is well below the national average. A significant number of students were absent on the Friday of inspection week because it was the festival of Eid, but this is unusual. Punctuality is mostly good, but a small number of Year 10 and 11 students are late for school each morning. Some teaching time is lost at lesson changes and this impacts adversely on learning in practical subjects such as physical education and design and technology.

Sixth form

24. Students in the sixth form have very good and often excellent attitudes towards study. They are mature and well motivated. Their behaviour is exemplary and personal development is very good. They have good learning habits and work well independently, taking responsibility well for much of their own learning. Relationships between one another, with younger students and with staff are excellent and constructive. The high degree of confidence that students have in staff contributes positively to the good learning in the sixth form. They have a high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and are developing into mature and responsible adults. Students play a very important role in the running of the school community and provide very good role models for younger students. Sixth form students act as mentors to new students in Year 7 and perform their prefects' duties diligently and with respect, duly earning the admiration of younger students and peers. Senior students organise several charitable fund-raising events each year; they organise and lead house competitions and run the school council very effectively. Female students are welcomed into the sixth form and gladly accept some responsibilities. Their Asian dance performance was one of the star turns at the Christmas Concert. Five of the students visited a school for the deaf to celebrate Diwali in October. A small but dedicated hardcore of students participate in extra-curricular activities. Sixth form students represent the school very well on field trips and European trips.
25. Annual attendance figures are good, but attendance during the week of inspection was lower and in some lessons unsatisfactory, especially on the Friday of the festival of Eid. Attendance in Year 12 is better than in Year 13. A small number of students arrive late for school each morning. Students are developing a good degree of independence and the vast majority have very good skills to enable them to continue their learning in adult life.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching is good. Nearly three quarters of teaching is good and in over a quarter of lessons, very good teaching was observed. Some excellent teaching was observed in a few lessons. There was some unsatisfactory teaching seen in two lessons and one poor lesson in the main school. The impact made by the good teaching is seen in the levels of achievement among students currently in Years 7 to 11 and the good quality learning that is taking place. In nearly all subjects, students achieve well. The overall quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 where there is a greater proportion of good teaching and no unsatisfactory teaching. Only in music in Years 7 to 9 were students judged not to be achieving well enough. The overall teaching provision made for students with EAL and those students with special educational needs throughout Years 7 to 11 is also good and ensures that they make good progress and achieve well.
27. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all but three lessons observed, good or better in two thirds of lessons and very good in around one third. Of particular note is the excellent teaching received by students taking instrumental lessons in music. The quality of teaching is very good overall in history. In the core subjects, teaching is good in English, mathematics and in science. In most other subjects the overall quality is good. It is satisfactory in ICT and religious education. In music, the teaching is unsatisfactory overall. The preponderance of good and better teaching ensures good learning and that students achieve well through these years.
28. The overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is also good. It follows the same pattern, but with no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Around four fifths of the teaching observed was good or better and a quarter was very good. Excellent teaching was seen in two lessons.

Students receive very good teaching in English and good teaching in mathematics and science. Teaching is good in most other subjects. In physical education, individual lessons are conducted to a standard that is satisfactory, but the full programmes of study are not covered and this makes the overall teaching provision unsatisfactory. Students' learning is good in Years 10 and 11. Because the students are so well motivated and keen to succeed, they achieve very well in relation to their starting points.

29. The highest attainers and those students identified as gifted and talented receive good teaching and achieve well. The school is currently using Excellence in Cities funding effectively to improve the teaching provision these students receive. At present, much of the work has focused on extending and enhancing opportunities outside the day-to-day lessons. However, well-formulated plans are in place to ensure that the classroom teaching received by these students takes more account of their particular needs and promotes their learning in the specific areas of their gifts and talents. This is a good response to the criticisms made in the recent HMI report. Students with special educational needs receive good teaching and they achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. While there is a large proportion of students with EAL, none are at an early stage of acquisition of English. These students too achieve well in response to the good teaching they receive.
30. The teaching received by different groups in the school is good. The school has a strong commitment to equal opportunities. A policy has recently been put in place. It needs further updating to take account of recent legislation. All serious incidents are followed up and dealt with promptly. The school carries out an analysis of assessment data by gender, ethnicity, language and religion in Year 7 and in external examinations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The analysis shows that there are no significant differences in attainment between groups overall, although Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean students did slightly less well in English at GCSE in 2001, and Pakistani students slightly less well in English in National Curriculum test in Year 9. The data and information is not yet used by departments to set challenging targets for groups of students. The school's approach to inclusion is effective in ensuring that all have equal chances to learn well and achieve their potential.
31. Teachers show a high level of commitment to their work and provide good role models for students. They generally have a good level of knowledge and understanding of their subjects. This subject knowledge is used to good effect to allow teachers to respond to the students' needs as they arise. The quality of teachers' lesson planning is good throughout the school. In the most effective lessons the teachers' detailed planning ensures that students are clear about what they need to do and this leads to very good learning. In a Year 11 design and technology lesson, the teacher's own subject expertise was used to very good effect in supporting students individually as they prepared examination project work. Here the teacher used good knowledge of the requirements of the examination to help the students use their time to best effect. In addition, the lesson started with a description of the lesson objectives. As a result, students knew precisely what was expected of them and there was a shared commitment to the lesson. Students learned well and at pace and improved their technical vocabulary. They made good progress and were rightly pleased with their achievements.
32. The class management techniques of teachers are generally good and they use the time in the lessons effectively to ensure good learning takes place. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson where students worked in small groups, a look or a word was enough to keep all on task. The lesson was very well organised to ensure that all students made the best use of time as they explored how voltage varies across different resistors in a circuit, then derived an equation from their results that allowed them to apply their learning to other circuits. The work was at a high level, demanding and interesting. The students made very good progress and the quality of their learning was very good.

33. The teachers are effective in ensuring that students behave well. They are helped by the positive approach of students so that behaviour is always very good and often exemplary. The relationships that teachers engender with students and between students also help to ensure classes where students expect to work hard and enjoy their work and they learn well. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, it is clearly linked to poor facilities and inappropriate lesson material. For example in music, while students continue to behave well, their passivity disguises poor levels of progress being made and inappropriate challenge for the wide range of musical experience and attainment present in the classes. Much of the teaching throughout the school that is satisfactory relies too heavily on a restricted teaching style being adopted. In such lessons, the students continue to work well and to make satisfactory progress. However, the opportunities given for students to take some responsibility for their own progress or to become more independent in their approach to learning are limited. This issue is currently being tackled. The recently established working party on teaching and learning has well-formulated plans to extend the strategies and styles that all teachers use to engage students more in taking responsibility for their own learning.
34. Teachers' expectations of students are usually kept appropriately high. This not only applies to their behaviour and level of effort, but to the quality of their work. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, the teacher was very positive in encouraging students to concentrate and to take pride in their performance when reading aloud. As a result, the reading was fluent, expressive and appreciated by the listeners. This produced an excellent working atmosphere where students with EAL and with special educational needs had their own expectations raised of what they could achieve and worked hard and learned very well. The excellent relationships in the class were used to good effect when students evaluated the work of their peers and very good progress was made in the lesson.
35. Teachers mainly use question and answer techniques well. In the best lessons, this consolidates students' knowledge, keeps them involved and informs the teachers' own judgements as to how well students understand new work and make progress. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher used recently completed homework to provide a springboard into the material to be covered. As well as exploiting the students' curiosity, this also had the effect of reinforcing the importance of homework. In this lesson the teacher used clear and focused questions to clear up the difficulties that some students had experienced in completing a problem in algebra. Further excellent board-work took the algebra forward and additional exercises were set to ensure real challenge for the gifted and talented students present in the class. By the end of the lesson, very good learning had taken place, the students had been stretched and their enjoyment for mathematics enhanced. They played their full part in this by behaving very well and showing their very good attitudes towards learning.
36. The use of assessment is an improving area in the school. Currently it is satisfactory and there are some areas where teachers use assessment effectively based on the fact that teachers know their students well, both their strengths and their weaknesses. However, teachers do not use assessment information well enough in setting short-term targets for students to guide their progress over the longer period. There are still some inconsistencies in the way teachers mark students' work, and the frequency with which marking is undertaken. In the best practice, students' work is marked thoroughly and to a pattern that all teachers in a department use and students know. Overall, this aspect of teachers' work is currently satisfactory. The setting of homework is satisfactory overall, but the same sorts of inconsistencies still occur in a minority of cases. There is some very good practice where homework is set regularly and to a timetable to extend the work of the classroom. In other cases, homework is not used effectively and the homework timetable is not followed closely enough.

37. Students with special educational needs are generally well taught because their teachers have a clear idea of how to help them, and specialist support, where available, is very good. As a result, students make a confident contribution to the lesson activities and they achieve successfully. However, teachers are not able to make effective use of students' individual education plans in their lesson preparation because targets are not well focused.
38. The teaching of basic skills is effective overall. The school is making good progress in systematically teaching literacy skills across a range of subjects. Subject teachers effectively enhance the students' accurate use of specialist vocabulary. There is less effective emphasis on the development of good reading and research skills. Although at a relatively early stage there is better provision for the development of writing skills as teachers across other subjects in the curriculum give close attention to this aspect of teaching literacy. The impact is clearly seen in the high levels of literacy seen across the subject areas. The mathematics department is leading in the development of students' numeracy skills and the teaching of numeracy skills is very effective. There is now a greater awareness of the National Numeracy Strategy and the training for all teachers has ensured that they now have a clear idea of how they can contribute. In order to develop greater consistency across the school, draft whole school policies on numeracy and on the use of calculators have been produced and well-formulated plans are in hand to disseminate good practice.
39. The teaching of ICT skills by subjects across the curriculum is at an early stage of development. There is some good practice, for example in teaching word-processing skills in English and modern foreign languages and in the application of digital photography in art and design. Research skills using Internet web sites are taught effectively in history, and teachers in design and technology make good use of more advanced software. The teaching of Latin makes good use of relevant software for the purposes of language development. However, the planned and systematic use of ICT to support learning needs further development and higher order skills such as controlling effects or movements and modelling real or imaginary situations are not supported outside the separate ICT course.
40. The school has improved its teaching quality since the previous inspection and there is now a greater proportion of good and very good teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching. As a result, the quality of learning is good. The work undertaken by the new headteacher, governors and senior staff to consolidate performance management in the school is making a clear impact. This process is now complemented by a more rigorous and systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluating of teaching in general. This approach is new and marks the impact of the new headteacher. It also represents a good response to the criticisms made in the last report and the subsequent HMI report. The systems and strategies to monitor and improve teaching are now effective in improving teaching quality and reducing the amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Areas identified as weak have improved as teaching quality has been raised and staffing problems have been resolved. This is the case across the main school including religious education and music. In the former, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed and in the latter, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is less. There is a clear indication of good capacity to improve the quality of teaching further, and the working party that has been established is making good headway in ensuring that students' learning experiences are improved by widening the approaches taken by teachers.

Sixth form

41. The quality of teaching is good overall in the sixth form and leads to good learning. The teaching observed was good or better in around four fifths of the lessons and very good or better in over a quarter. Of the 62 lessons observed, two were unsatisfactory. The overall

quality of teaching in the subjects that were focused upon for the inspection was good. In art and design, teaching is very good. It is satisfactory in business studies, economics and physical education and good in the other subjects. Other subjects in the sixth form provision were sampled. In history, physics and German, the individual lessons seen were good and the quality of teaching observed in a music lesson was excellent. The impact of this good teaching is reflected in the quality of learning and the achievement of students currently in Years 12 and 13. Where levels of achievement were previously too low, these have improved, for example in English and business studies. Where previously achievement levels were satisfactory, these levels have been maintained, for example in economics. In all other subjects, either good levels of achievement have been maintained or levels have improved and are now good, for example in biology.

42. There are no students in the sixth form on the register of special educational needs. The highest attainers and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress and attain well above average results in their A-level examinations. Students with EAL make good progress in line with their peers. The progress made by male and female students is now not significantly different. This represents an improvement on the standards obtained by female students in the 2001 A-level examinations, which were significantly lower than those of the male students.
43. In the best lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a clear structure that focuses on building up students' knowledge and understanding and leads them on to extend this process to studying independently. For example, in a Year 13 biology lesson, the students presented individual studies on the topic of the eye. The teacher was able to bring out the points that needed greater emphasis, amplifying where necessary to give rise to some very good learning. The teacher's own deep subject knowledge was used to good effect to constantly challenge the students to think about their work as they responded to demands to justify and explain their assertions. The lesson was both informative and stimulating and the group made very good progress and demonstrated the very good levels of achievement made over the duration of the course.
44. Teachers have very good relationships with their students and this enables them to demand and challenge. The students respond well to this approach and show a keenness to take part in sharing their knowledge. For example in a Year 12 geography lesson on the development of distinctive ecologies, the students took a full part in sharing their own observations and comparing their own findings with those of the teacher. They took a mature approach in the lesson, demonstrating very positive attitudes towards their learning. A harmonious working atmosphere was thus engendered by the very good relationships existing. A feature of this lesson and others that stimulate the students in the sixth form to achieve as well as they do was the very good quality of the course and lesson planning and the obvious enthusiasm of the teacher.
45. The very good relationships that exist, allied to the very positive attitudes shown by students, result in classrooms where there is a good climate for learning. This enables teachers to question the class, a group or an individual, confident that the answers can be taken up and lead to further consideration of the questions posed. Teachers are adept at assessing their students in this manner and gauging their understanding. Teachers use procedures for assessing students' longer-term attainment that are satisfactory overall. They ensure that regular reviews are undertaken, with students contributing to the process of evaluating their own level of achievement as they progress through Years 12 and 13. Following the review process, teachers negotiate appropriate learning targets with students in the light of their performance and their aspirations. This is good practice and there are strengths in some subjects such as chemistry, French and German, but there are weaknesses in others, such as

business studies. Systems and strategies have been put in place to raise standards of teaching further by providing students with well-informed intermediate targets and projections of the grades they are capable of attaining. This is an area of developing strength in the teaching of sixth form students, and the use of an effective commercial programme to inform the process has just started.

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

46. Overall the quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. The school has taken some positive steps to rectify the concerns raised in the previous inspection. There is a wider range of options in Years 10 and 11, and the provision for religious education now meets statutory requirements at both key stages and is taught as a short GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. However, the curriculum does not fulfil statutory requirements in all subjects. Students do not currently receive their full entitlement to all the programmes of study in music, as singing is not provided at both key stages. Students doing the non-examination course in physical education in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their full entitlement as they are not following the full programmes of study of the National Curriculum. The school still does not meet the statutory requirement relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
47. The curriculum provided for students in Years 7 to 9 is broad and offers courses relevant to the needs of nearly all students. It includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social education. The curriculum is broadened with the offer of German and Latin in Years 8 and 9 as additional languages. ICT is well provided for all students as a separate subject for Years 7 to 9. Students are given an additional English lesson in Year 7 to promote literacy standards and a separate group is identified in Year 8 to receive further support in English. However, this denies them the opportunity of studying an additional language. Also, there is an imbalance in allocation of time to some subjects. English lessons barely meet the recommended share in Years 8 and 9. The low share of time and the use of single periods are constraining achievement in design and technology. In art, the learning and progression of skills for Year 7 and 8 students are being hampered by having only 50 minutes of teaching time every fortnight. The school is aware of these issues and has plans to address them. Citizenship is not yet provided and an audit of subject areas is being conducted with a view to plan its implementation.
48. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a satisfactory range of courses and opportunities for all students to broaden their experiences. All students study a broad common core of subjects, including three science subjects and short courses in GCSE ICT and religious education. Students can study up to ten GCSE subjects, covering all the requirements of the National Curriculum including three options, providing a free, but guided choice. Personal, social and health education is satisfactorily provided as a separate subject for all students. Citizenship is not yet provided, although there are plans in place for its introduction after an audit of subjects. The provision for literacy and numeracy is good. There are certain weaknesses in terms of the balance of curriculum time. Design and technology has less than the recommended time allocation, as has English and the three option groups. Science, on the other hand, has a significantly high allocation of a quarter of curriculum time. Once again, the school's curriculum planners are addressing these issues to ensure a more equitable and relevant distribution of time. The full programmes of study are not being covered in music and in the core provision of physical education.
49. There is a good provision of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum. The wide range of opportunities encourages students to participate and develop their personal and

social skills. The performing arts make a strong contribution: music provides good opportunities for students to develop their musical talents and interests. Many students learn an instrument and many attend various rehearsals before, during and after school. There are many drama activities including a club, an annual production, theatre visits and performance groups coming into school, such as the Royal Ballet and a workshop on 'Of Mice and Men'. These enhance the curriculum and stimulate involvement and interest. There is a good range of well-supported team clubs in sport at lunchtime and after school, many staffed by non-specialists. Inter-school and inter-house matches are taken seriously and provide opportunities for sporting achievement. Lunchtime and after-school clubs flourish, such as chess, technology and outdoor activities, and as boosters in subject areas, such as science and mathematics. There is a good range of visits: Years 8 and 9 visit the Czech Republic annually, there are science trips to Jodrell Bank and RAF Cosford, and visits to museums and art galleries. However, there are no longer visits locally in humanities, apart from the geography fieldwork studies.

50. The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all and provision is satisfactory. Certificates for praise and encouragement are issued. There is a mentoring system for students whose academic progress or behaviour is giving cause for concern. There were no exclusions last year. Relationships between different groups of students are very good and are promoted through extensive group work in many subjects together with the supportive attitude of staff. The teachers are aware of issues concerning equal access to the curriculum and resources, although resources are not routinely monitored for inappropriateness or cultural bias. The school provides free instrumental tuition for all students taking music examinations. Teaching, in religious education and history particularly, takes account of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and draws upon students' own cultural experiences. In modern foreign languages, it is not possible to study Urdu or Punjabi. However, the school draws upon students' cultural heritage, for example at recent concert where there was a performance of Bhangra music and Asian dance, and the tabla is taught. A room was set aside for prayers during Ramadan. There are some good examples of displays, for example in history work on grandparents from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Turkey. The library does not contain any books, magazines or journals in any of the main languages spoken in school and there are no bilingual dictionaries available. There is some good modern fiction reflecting a wide variety of cultures and communities but elsewhere much of the stock is out-dated and does not fully reflect a modern multi-cultural society. Recent teaching and non-teaching appointments have reflected the ethnic mix of the school and the local community. The school provides good support for visually impaired students. The school building does not give good access. There are currently no mechanisms for a disabled person to access rooms upstairs.
51. The school makes satisfactory provision for students with special educational needs. The curriculum is accessible to all students on the special needs register and students with differing needs are well integrated into lessons. Additional support in examinations is efficiently arranged for those who need it, and students make a smooth transition from one stage of education to another because of the good relationships between the school and its partner institutions. A strength of the provision is the very effective way in which subject teachers and specialist support staff work together in the planning of lesson activities for students with visual impairment, for example in the preparation of large print materials. However, opportunities for meeting the particular needs of other students, such as ways to improve social skills, are sometimes missed.
52. The highest attainers and those students identified by the school as gifted and talented receive increasingly good provision. The recent initiatives, supported by a good quality action plan, ensure that these identified students have work that stretches and challenges them. Much of this provision is currently provided outside normal lesson time. However, the working party

is starting to make an impact in ensuring that teachers' planning includes extension work to meet the needs of these students.

53. The school has a satisfactory programme for personal and social education that has a good impact on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Schemes of work are brief but include sex education, drug education, current affairs, equal opportunities, the environment and careers education. It is currently delivered by teachers with a specific interest or specialist knowledge and supported by a few outside specialists. Social education was not taught during the week of inspection so no lessons were observed. No written work was available for scrutiny. The 50 minutes allocated to social education every other week is supplemented by an extra form time. Students value the support and advice they receive through social education, but there is very little assessed written work and the subject is not reported to parents. The school is currently reviewing the social education course and the opportunities for its assessment. It has very recently appointed a new co-ordinator for social education. An audit of delivery across the curriculum has been undertaken, but results not yet analysed. Plans are in hand to redesign the course and incorporate citizenship.
54. Provision for careers education is excellent. The head of careers has a great deal of experience and knowledge and his accessibility is greatly valued by all students. The careers library is a very good source of information and is freely accessible. There is a well-planned careers programme that currently begins in Year 8 with the 'Real Game' where students are given realistic role-play exercises that encourage them to make their own decisions. In Year 9, students value the advice they are given on option choices for Year 10. Older students are helped with interview techniques and writing curriculum vitae. Students are taken on visits to raise their awareness of career opportunities, for example in golf management and the media. Year 11 students undertake a valuable and well-organised two-week programme of work experience in the spring term. Students are encouraged to organise their own placements and with the help of the careers department most find excellent and relevant placements, many of them in the professions. Work experience is well monitored and evaluated and students complete a comprehensive and useful logbook by the end of it. The work experience contributes very well to students' personal and social development and prepares them very well for life after school. Careers education and work experience receive good support from the Careers and Education Business Partnership, which checks placements for health and safety. The school's good partnership with parents supports the work experience programme well with some parents providing placements. Students are encouraged to stay on into the sixth form, but entry requirements are high and rigorously applied.
55. The school has satisfactory links with the community and these contribute positively to students' learning and personal and social development. The school makes satisfactory use of the local and wider community to support areas of the curriculum. There is a limited number of residential experiences whereby students can develop their social and team skills. There are good links with local religious communities that enhance students' spiritual and moral development. The good links with parents and professional companies support the work experience programme well, but links with industry are unsatisfactory. The good links with local police help to ensure the safety of students outside school. All past students are encouraged to join the Old Boys' Association, which provides a good link with the local community and contributes positively to the financial and social life of the school. The imminent introduction of citizenship into the social education programme sets out to improve links with the local community.
56. The school has good links with partner institutions. It takes students into Year 7 from a very large number of different primary schools and it is not possible for the school to develop good links with all of these, but it has a very good relationship with one local primary school

and good links with another. The good links support students' personal and social development very well. Students of all ages listen to primary school students read every week and act as mentors for the science and mathematics National Curriculum tests. Curricular links with primary schools are underdeveloped, especially in mathematics and science. Three gifted and talented Year 6 students join science lessons in Year 7 and there is an established tradition of primary pupils successfully joining GCSE classes. Two of the local primary schools use the school's ICT and science facilities and there are a few music links with other schools, for example the school's Dhol drummers play in a number of schools, including one for the deaf.

57. The school is a member of the TITAN partnership, which links it with a large number of other local educational establishments and supports students' personal and social development constructively. TITAN brings schools together for the Birmingham Arts Festival and delivers the Excellence in Cities initiative. TITAN also runs the Initial Teacher Training programme in which the school is involved. The school has also become part of the 'Creative Partnership' Collegiate Academy with four other secondary schools. Sporting fixtures against other secondary schools help to develop skills in physical education and a team spirit. The links with Aston University, which is part of TITAN, help to develop students' aspirations of a university education after school. The vast majority of students in Year 11 stay on to the sixth form.
58. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good overall, although it is not yet formally planned into departmental schemes of work. An audit of provision by different subjects is planned for later this term in order to raise teachers' awareness of their role. Provision for spiritual development is good, provision for moral development is excellent, provision for social development is good and provision for cultural development is very good.
59. The provision for students' spiritual development is good. There is no written and agreed policy at present but one is being developed; the clear draft policy formalises much that is already occurring in practice and aims at promoting students' self-awareness and self-knowledge and learning through reflecting on experiences. Subjects such as science are working on building examples of how spiritual development can be promoted into their schemes of work. Not all subjects take opportunities but in English, provision is very good with teachers taking opportunities to focus students' minds on events and situations. The school celebrates achievement and success well; this is reflected in good quality displays. Teachers make good use of praise to encourage students and as a result they feel a sense of achievement when they answer correctly. In assemblies and in tutor group time, students are usually given opportunities to reflect on their own experiences both in and out of school. They do this by relating to their own experiences and other peoples' lives and beliefs, such as the occasion when a teacher had prepared a sheet to help students organise their thoughts on racial harmony. Assemblies focus on themes such as relationships or generosity and successfully promote clear values as well as encouraging students to think deeply about fundamental issues.
60. The school's provision for students' moral education is excellent. Teachers provide excellent role models and have clear expectations of good behaviour. The school council played an important role in the development of the Code of Conduct giving students ownership of the rules and making them feel responsible for following them. The Code of Conduct and school rules are displayed prominently around the school along with published posters that raise awareness of all aspects of relationships and bullying and help students understand how to cope with problems. There is a sensible system of sanctions and a good system of praise and reward. Students appreciate the consistent way in which they are administered. The school

rightly celebrates success and students' achievements are acknowledged. The school makes very good use of the 'Thought for the day' in assemblies and form time to reinforce moral messages, although teachers dominate discussion too often and students are given insufficient opportunity to reflect on their own feelings. During inspection the theme was 'generosity' and most form tutors successfully pointed out the different facets of generosity in terms of money, time and spirit. The school is excellent at raising awareness of the feelings, values and beliefs of different groups and promoting mutual understanding and respect. This has a very good impact on personal and social development. There is good provision for moral education across the curriculum. This is very good in English, history, Latin and modern foreign languages where studies include the morality of slavery, social class, child labour, women in society and Hitler's view of race. In physical education there is very good attention to the merits of fair play. In geography, students look at the environment and moral ills and in science they investigate nuclear energy and genetic modification. Students have good opportunities to demonstrate their awareness of those less fortunate than themselves through charitable initiatives.

61. The school's provision for social development is good, as it was in the previous inspection. Students are given very good opportunities in lessons and extra-curricular activities to work in pairs and groups, which have a very positive impact on learning and personal and social development. There is satisfactory range of visits out of school where students can develop social skills, for example day trips to music workshops, the theatre, the opera and careers opportunity days together with residential field trips and visits to Europe. Year 7 students can attend a team-building camp, but many older students have insufficient opportunity to attend a residential course. Social education is enhanced within the curriculum, for example in geography where students study settlements, population and migration and in ICT where they look at data protection. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including a theatre group, computer club, young engineers, chess, religious groups and sporting activities. Team games are played against other schools. Many students have the opportunity to take part in various musical performances and the school plays. The distance that some students travel to school and the short lunchtime period inhibit participation in some extra-curricular activities.
62. The school encourages students to take increasing responsibility both collectively and individually as they move up the school. Students have very good opportunities to form relationships across the age groups within their house groups and older students mentor Year 7 groups. Year 11 students assist the prefects in their monitoring duties. Students from Year 7 to Year 11 are encouraged to help in a local primary school by listening to readers and supporting mathematics and science. Representatives of each year group are involved in year councils and the student council, which encourages students to accept social responsibility. The provision of breakfast before school and time over the lunch period offer very good opportunities for social interaction and they are used well. The very good system of pastoral care supports social development very well. The imminent introduction of citizenship lessons plans to improve community involvement and further enhance both moral and social education.
63. The provision for students' cultural development is very good. The students have ample opportunities to appreciate a variety of cultural traditions through visits and activities that are offered by the school. These include visits to art galleries, theatres and concerts, aimed at providing students with opportunities to celebrate the achievements of each other, explore issues, and acknowledge difference and diversity and respect for each other's ideas. Opportunities for the students to express themselves occur in many subjects including art, drama and music. Many subjects make references to cultural development in their schemes and in mathematics good use of a newsletter was made to promote a greater knowledge of the

history of mathematics in an article about the work of Escher. In English there is a strong promotion of literary heritages, both English and multi-cultural. In music and drama, this aspect is very good. Work is supported by students' involvement in a wide range of instrumental tuition and high quality groups that perform in such events as the Handsworth Park Festival and workshops, as well as in the school's drama productions such as 'Wyrd Sisters'. Local facilities are used well. Visits are made to concerts and the Birmingham Royal Ballet, to musicals such as 'Grease' at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre and plays such as 'Of Mice and Men' at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. The annual Christmas Concert held at the Adrian Boult Hall involves over 100 students. Visits to London include those to 'Les Misérables'. There is a Bhangra Dance group and a visiting teacher of Asian instruments. Religious education includes the study of many world religions.

Sixth form

64. The curriculum provided in the sixth form is good and designed well to build on the experiences of earlier years. There is a wide range of 21 AS and A-level (A2) courses on offer. There is a good choice of traditional subjects and new subjects have been introduced to meet students' needs and aspirations. Law and psychology courses have started, both taught through distance learning and video-conferencing, and a sports studies course is in the first year of operation. Students receive very good and impartial advice about the sixth form provision. Particular care is taken to ensure that school programmes match the requirements and aspirations of the students, most of whom enter the sixth form with above average levels of attainment. The school has reviewed the student demand and costs, both financial and in terms of staff expertise, of introducing vocational educational courses. It has fully considered the good provision of vocational and work related courses in local further education colleges. It has decided to increase the range of academic subjects, but with a slightly more flexible entry requirement and strong academic support. In doing so, it has been successful in meeting the needs of the majority of Year 11 students, and they go on to achieve well. The school is responsive to local circumstances and successful in meeting external requirements.
65. Breadth is given to the curriculum through the provision of a well-organised general studies course for all Years 12 and 13 students, who attained above average results in 2001. Religious education is a component of the general studies course and now meets statutory requirements, an improvement compared with the previous inspection. All Year 12 students also do four lessons of games, though this is not available to Year 13, unless they are free on Wednesday afternoon. This helps to maintain their interest in sport and to promote their involvement with organising house competitions. The performing arts subjects are not well represented in the curriculum with only three students in music and no theatre studies as yet, although the school is planning to introduce this in 2003.
66. Equal opportunity provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. Courses are open to all students who fulfil the entry requirements. The school admits a small number of girls into the sixth form, who represent 12 per cent of the sixth form population. They settle well into the life of the school. They did not do as well as boys in the examinations in 2001, however. The school is aware of this through monitoring of performance by gender and is seeking to deal with the issue, for example by increasing the number of female sixth form teachers who can act as role models for girls. The school listens to feedback from students and acts upon it. There is a full range of opportunities for physical activities for girls as well as boys and a good take-up of activities. The senior students and heads of house are well represented by different gender and ethnic groups.
67. Sixth form students have good provision for enrichment activities. The school aims to encourage every student to take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for

their own personal and academic development and success. All students follow a general studies programme that includes a wide range of topics such as religious education. It is well designed to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. However, not all teachers are fully committed to the course and valuable opportunities to debate moral and social issues are often missed. In one lesson students looked at different sources of information on nuclear power and assessed the degree of bias, but did not have the opportunity to examine their own feelings on the topic. Other subjects contribute very well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, in English, students examine their personal responses to the dilemma of characters. In biology students debate the morality of cloning, and in geography students look at urban social change and its effect on employment.

68. Sixth form students are expected to play an important role in the community life of the school. There is a head boy, two deputy head boys, a school captain and a chairman of the school council and a good number of prefects. There is also a senior girl to represent the girls' views in the sixth form. These senior students are expected to act as very good role models for younger students and ensure an orderly school society. Prefects are very well organised and operate to clear guidelines. They offer very good support to younger students who are happy to turn to a prefect for help or if they are being bullied. Senior students manage the school council, which wrote its own constitution and contributed positively to the writing of the school's Code of Conduct. It also initiates charitable fund-raising activities. Students are provided with a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities. The school captain acts as a role model for extra-curricular activities, encourages participation and represents the school at parents' evenings. Students act as mentors for Year 7 students and lead all house activities. The good opportunities offered to sixth form students to take responsibility encourage them to become independent, caring and responsible citizens.
69. Sixth form students are offered excellent careers guidance from the head of careers with support from subject teachers and form tutors. The careers library is very well stocked and very accessible. Students have generally had very good work placements in Year 11, which encourage them to be ambitious. They are encouraged to attend university open days and are given excellent advice on gap years and university courses. There is excellent support to help them complete UCAS application forms. They are also given sensible financial advice to equip them for life after school. Past students are welcomed back and supported where necessary. There is no formal programme of work experience but all students are rightly encouraged to find extra work experience during the holidays in order to improve their career opportunities. Visiting speakers enhance careers advice; for example, a recent visitor informed students about self-employment, which is particularly relevant for the large number of students wishing to enter the professions.
70. Personal and academic development in the sixth form is supported by satisfactory links with the community. Some areas of the curriculum are supported well by links with the local and wider community; for example, students studying geography and biology attend a field trip to Stansfield and students of modern foreign languages visit European countries. They are helped to find exchange partners in these countries. Some science students attend specific courses at universities, for example in engineering. Other areas of the curriculum make less use of the wider community to support learning. Links with industry are not well co-ordinated and are underdeveloped. There is currently no Young Enterprise scheme, although all Year 12 students attend a Challenge in Management course with a local girls school at the end of the summer. Students have occasionally assisted a local primary school by providing support in ICT and physical education. A small group visited a school for the deaf to celebrate Diwali. Students support national and international charities such as the Royal

British Legion Poppy Appeal and the Indian Earthquake Fund. The head boy attended the Old Boys' Dinner this year, an important link with the local community. Senior students have also helped with the Welford School's fêtes. These activities have a positive impact on students' spiritual, moral and social development. The school has very good links with universities to help students with their choice of course on leaving school. Students are encouraged to attend university open days before completing their UCAS forms.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

71. The school takes satisfactory care of students' welfare, health and safety. There is good educational support to monitor students' achievements and enable them to make further progress with their learning. There is a very good level of pastoral care, which is greatly appreciated by both students and parents. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and good behaviour and for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good and have a very good impact on students' achievement.
72. The school takes satisfactory care of students' welfare. Measures to ensure the health and safety of all students are satisfactory. Procedures for child protection are appropriate and there is a good level of improvement in staff awareness since the last inspection. Good links are maintained with outside support agencies. First aid arrangements are good and very good records are kept. Although major accidents have not been reported to the appropriate authorities in the past, this has now been rectified. Staff pay good heed to students' safety during lessons. Appropriate risk assessments are in place in science, design and technology and physical education, and undertaken for educational visits outside school, but it is unsatisfactory that there are no formal written risk assessments for whole school situations. Training is planned for later this year. The practice and recording of emergency evacuation drills are unsatisfactory, but steps have already been taken to rectify this. A few other minor health and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the school and were dealt with during the inspection.
73. The pastoral care of students is very strong and appreciated by both parents and students. Excellent relationships are established between students and form tutors that enable tutors to monitor progress well and provide very good support and guidance. There are regular staff meetings to discuss pastoral issues. Students settle very well in Year 7 aided by sixth form and Year 11 mentors for each form group. Prefects play an important role in caring for younger students. All students feel very secure and their confidence in teachers promotes learning and personal development very well. Regular profiling takes place in form time to monitor academic progress and personal development. Students who are deemed to be making insufficient progress are provided with personal mentors funded by Excellence in Cities. Members of the senior management team mentor a number of Year 11 students and this has proved to be very successful in motivating students to succeed. There is a satisfactory programme of personal and social education throughout the school to guide students and support their personal development. Students have excellent careers education starting in Year 8 and are offered appropriate guidance on option choices in Year 9. There is excellent guidance for students wishing to enter the sixth form and each student has an individual interview to assess their suitability for their chosen course.
74. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Registers are marked effectively using an electronic system and registration is efficient. Registration periods are used well to extend students' personal development. Most tutors use 'Thought for the day' for reflection and students' planners are regularly checked. The attendance of individual students and groups of students is well tracked. There is very good support from the educational welfare service and individual absences are investigated immediately. A realistic

target of 96 per cent attendance has been set and very nearly achieved in recent years. Parents give very good support to the school's expectation of good attendance and most ensure that holidays are taken out of school time. Very good systems are in place to monitor lateness and encourage students to be punctual.

75. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and students respond accordingly. The school rules and Code of Conduct are displayed prominently around the school. Students have ownership of these through the contribution of the school council and know what is expected of them. Although written policies dwell on sanctions rather than rewards, there is good use of praise and rewards to encourage students. Students believe that the discipline and rewards are fair and are used more consistently since the start of this school year. Individual student support cards are used very effectively to monitor the behaviour of a few boys. There is a social inclusion provision supervised by members of the senior management team and used to deal with occasional behavioural problems in lessons, but it is seldom necessary to use it. The school receives good support from the behavioural support service. Good records are kept of all incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour and all correspondence with parents, including letters of commendation. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. There is a high awareness of bullying and the impact of actions on others. There is a good input on the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Students are confident that any perceived incidence of bullying will be dealt with promptly and satisfactorily when reported to a member of staff or a prefect.
76. The care for students with special educational needs is good overall. The school has effective systems for identifying students in need of extra support and there are many strengths in the monitoring and assessing of progress. For example, subject departments monitor students' work on a regular basis, and pastoral and academic staff co-operate efficiently in referring students who give cause for concern. The mentoring service works well in helping students to get to grips with particular problems which are hindering achievement. Specialist support is very good. There is an excellent relationship between the school and the visiting teacher from the local education authority's service for students who are visually impaired. This ensures that students' academic and personal progress is closely monitored and detailed reports on current achievement are available at the time of annual reviews. Support staff have a strong commitment to promoting the well-being of students in their care and creating an atmosphere of trust which gives students the confidence to succeed. There is, however, some inconsistency in the recording and use of information to guide planning and improve achievement. Individual education plans are uneven in quality and more work needs to be done on developing targets that are relevant, precise and measurable.
77. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall, but there are some areas that need further improvement. The school collects a significant amount of data about students' attainment from the results of National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. This data is used well to determine the value added by the school. Analysis of value added information reveals differences in performance between departments and between students of different ethnic backgrounds; the school is beginning to address these. The school has challenging overall targets for further raising students' attainment. However, these are not yet sufficiently informed by assessment information or appropriately modified as students progress through the school. Students with EAL and students who are gifted or talented are identified, but the extent to which assessment information is used to support their progress is inconsistent between departments. Individual teachers also hold significant amounts of data about students' attainment in their subjects, and departments are making increasing use of new technology to record this. There are examples of good practice in history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. Although a central database has

been established to hold information across all subjects, the school is not yet taking full advantage of it to support progress and raise standards. For example, students' attainment at the ages of 11, 14 and 16 is recorded, but internal test and examination results are not used effectively as 'signposts' between these stages to give early warning of students not making the progress they should. A weakness in Years 7 and 8 is that students' attainment is not related to the levels of the National Curriculum so that neither students nor their parents can compare attainment with that expected nationally, or identify and improve areas of weakness. In this respect, criticisms made by parents are well founded.

78. Students are set targets for their performance in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations, but the process is not well enough refined in most subjects to allow learning targets to be set, for example during marking, over shorter periods of time. This is particularly the case in Years 7 to 9, though there are some exceptions. In mathematics, targets are set from Year 8 and reviewed as students' performance changes over time, while in history students often assess their own and each other's work and then set improvement targets for themselves. The use of targets in regular reviews of students' performance is a useful tool in helping them raise their attainment, but assessment data is not well enough used to inform this process. Teachers make effective use of assessment in some subjects to review and amend their practice in the classroom. In history and mathematics, for example, examination results are reviewed to find any weaknesses and adjust schemes of work accordingly. There is inconsistency within and between departments in the use of codes in day-to-day marking to indicate the quality of students' work and their effort. As a result, students are often uncertain about the meanings of the grades that are awarded.

Sixth form

Advice, support and guidance

79. The school provides very good support and guidance for students in the sixth form. Excellent relationships exist between tutors and students. Tutors know students very well and give good advice and guidance on personal as well as academic issues. New students, including females, are made to feel welcome and settle into the sixth form well. Form time is used well to support personal development and the programme of general studies supplements this. Students receive excellent careers guidance and support. Students are encouraged to find useful work experience in the sixth form. They are advised very sensibly on university courses and given excellent assistance on the completion of their UCAS forms. Students also receive useful financial advice and very good guidance on gap years. It is taken for granted that sixth form students will provide good role models in behaviour and motivation for younger students and they invariably do so. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are very good. Subject teachers monitor attendance in lessons. There are no health and safety issues specific to the sixth form.

Assessment

80. In the sixth form, procedures for assessing students' attainment are satisfactory overall. There are strengths in some subjects such as chemistry, French and German but weaknesses in others, such as business studies. The available information is used well to monitor and support students' progress. Their overall performance in GCSE examinations is used to set 'minimum target grades' for AS and A2 levels; however, the baseline is overall performance rather than performance in specific subjects related to those they are taking in the sixth form. Regular reviews are the main tool for tracking students' progress through the sixth form. Students review their own progress while teachers review progress towards target grades. The two reviews are then compared and teachers negotiate appropriate learning targets with students in the light of their performance and their aspirations. This is good practice and is being extended to earlier years in the school. Students themselves appreciate the opportunity to be involved in setting their own targets and planning their own progress, saying that it helps them focus on what they need to do to meet their aspirations.
81. Assessment was a key issue at the last inspection. The school has made satisfactory progress since then in providing teachers with information about the prior attainment of their students. Students with EAL and those who are gifted or talented are now identified and there is improved provision for them. Lesson planning usually refers to these students, but plans are not always put into effect.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

82. The school has a good partnership with parents. Parents are very pleased with the school and their involvement has a very good impact on their children's education. Their children like school, expectations are high, teaching is good and they make good progress. The school is popular with parents and vastly oversubscribed. This is because parents like the very good work ethic that helps their children to achieve well and to become mature and responsible adults. Parents also like the high level of pastoral care. Inspectors endorse these positive views. A significant number of parents do not feel well informed about progress, or believe that the school works closely with parents and a number are disappointed with the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors judged that parents receive satisfactory information on progress through progress cards, information evenings and annual reports, but insufficient information on how their children are achieving in relation to national averages. The school

makes good efforts to work closely with parents. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, but the distance that many students live from school sometimes adversely affects the uptake. Opportunities for curriculum-linked visits out of school and residential activities are satisfactory. A few parents commented on the inconsistencies in discipline, but inspectors found that behaviour is very good.

83. The school provides good information to parents. This includes a very good level of information in the prospectus, in the governing body's annual report to parents and the 'A to Z for Parents'. The school magazine, 'The Bridge', gives an interesting review of the school's year and its achievements, with good contributions from students. The regular newsletters and occasional letters are informative. The school is able to communicate with many of the parents whose first language is not English, but does not translate written documents as a matter of course. There are plans to include a community language page in the next prospectus. The school invites parents to a good number of useful consultation and information evenings; for example, parents of Year 7 students were invited to a study skills evening. Students' reports are satisfactory, but comments are very general and they do not contain specific information on what students have learned and understand. Their attainment in relation to national averages is not measured and there are very few academic targets for improvement. There is no report on social education and this undervalues the subject in the eyes of students and parents. Student's planners are potentially a valuable form of communication between teachers and parents. They are usually used well by students, checked regularly by tutors and monitored by parents.
84. Parents make a good contribution to children's learning at home and at school. They take a keen interest in their children's education and provide them with appropriate equipment, such as Internet access at home. Some parents support the work experience programme well by helping to find placements for their child and others. Parents support the school's desire for good attendance. They monitor homework well through the student planners. Parents enjoy school performances and attendance at consultation and information evenings is high. Parents have helped the school to provide a bus to transport students to and from school and thereby improve their safety. The Parents' Association (HGSA) makes a very good contribution to the social and financial life of the school. They organise a good variety of events including a Christmas Fayre and raise a good amount of money that is used to enhance school resources.
85. The school has a good partnership with parents of students with special educational needs. Parents contact the school if they have particular concerns and they attend reviews of their children's progress. Parents are very supportive of their children's efforts to succeed and are appreciative of the school's care for their children.
86. Students are great advocates of the sixth form. They find teachers very accessible and helpful and are treated as mature and responsible young adults. In their responses to the questionnaire, many students felt the range of activities and enrichments was insufficient. Inspectors judged there is a good range of enrichment activities, especially in the form of clubs, musical and sporting activities, but not all students are well motivated to attend. Students are given good opportunities to help others, but some curriculum areas are not well supported by visits outside of school. The team felt that many of the opinions expressed in the questionnaire were in response to the change in systems and discipline that the new headteacher has introduced and do not reflect the views of the sixth form now that routines are established. Students' complaint that they are not treated as mature and responsible young adults appears to have been a reaction to the introduction of supervised free study periods and the lack of facilities in the sixth form common room. These views were not borne out by interviews with students during inspection. Students enjoy life in the sixth form. They find teachers are very accessible for help, and they are encouraged to study independently. Over a

quarter of them do not feel well informed about the progress they are making. Students are encouraged to self-review and receive a monitoring review each term, which gives them targets for improvement, but annual reports are rather brief and do not give good information on progress. More than a quarter of students did not feel well advised about future options, but inspectors found careers education to be excellent. Students are encouraged to make their own decisions and given excellent support in doing so. A significant number of students who completed the questionnaires did not feel they had sufficient support and help if they had personal problems, but during the inspection students were very supportive of the relationship they have with tutors and subject teachers and of the way in which they are treated as mature and responsible young adults.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

87. The leadership provided by the new headteacher is good. Since his appointment at the start of the current academic year, a great deal of progress has been made to deal with the issues arising from the last inspection and the subsequent HMI inspection. He has given a clear educational direction to the school's work and further development. In particular, the senior staff have developed their roles and responsibilities to ensure a greater clarity of purpose and a more defined leadership role. Throughout the school, teachers who have management and leadership roles are clearer in terms of what this entails and to whom they are accountable. The short time-span during which these developments have taken place means that in some subject areas a start has been made, but there is still much work to be done and the full impact of developments has yet to be seen. For example, development planning at departmental level does not take full account of the whole school priorities, and the costs of plans in terms of staffing and resources required are not precise enough. However, systems and strategies have been put into place to guide progress and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. The school has recently instigated more effective means of evaluating its performance. The headteacher is supported well by the senior management team and the governing body.
88. The priorities established in the school development plan are appropriate. Good systems and strategies have been put in place to monitor and evaluate the success in meeting these priorities. The school's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its work are improving and methods of gathering data are now in place to measure how well the school is performing. At present this information is not used to best effect in setting targets for improvement, but the school is aware of this and is developing its practice appropriately. The school now monitors the quality of teaching and learning more effectively and this has led to an improvement in both areas. Areas for further improvement in teaching have been identified and effective measures have been taken to deal with weaknesses, for example in improving the quality of teaching in religious education and music. As a result the overall quality of teaching is better and standards in these areas are rising, and this represents a good level of improvement since the last inspection.
89. There are now sound systems and strategies in place for the evaluation of the school's work and there is good capacity and commitment to improve further because of the school's positive response to the last inspection and the careful plans that have been formulated. Senior managers, heads of faculties and subject departments and year heads demonstrate energy and good commitment to raising standards further. Their overall contribution to managing the teaching in their areas of responsibility is now satisfactory. This was an area identified at the last inspection as needing improvement and the school has responded effectively. The school has taken a positive approach to performance management. Procedures are satisfactory and the processes for identifying and spreading good teaching practice are developing at a satisfactory rate as a result. The school is well organised, and

deals effectively with the bureaucratic demands made upon its administration. Targets for whole-school improvement are realistic and challenging and are now increasingly based upon accurate information about students' attainment levels. The setting of individual targets for students needs further work, but this is an area identified by the school and is firmly in place in the new school development plan. At present, this aspect of the school's work is developing well but is not yet embedded in the day-to-day practice of departments.

90. The school's approach to the previous inspection report has been positive and the new headteacher has accelerated the process of responding successfully to the key issues identified in that report. He has produced a modified school development plan to guide progress. The process of continued improvement is guided by this plan, which is much improved and is a good working document. It gives details of the school's priorities and how financial and staffing resources are to be used to meet these priorities. The priorities are appropriate to the school's current position, but a greater precision is still needed in terms of calculating the costs of meeting the targets set. The cycle of school development planning is sound and it now ensures full consultation with staff and the governing body. It provides an effective framework for evaluating the success of initiatives taken.
91. Governors now take a more active role in the leadership of the school than at the time of the last inspection and make a positive contribution to the decisions that are taken. Governors are mainly effective in fulfilling their statutory duties, but there are still some details that require attention. The school does not meet fully the legal requirements relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship throughout the school. The curriculum does not fully meet National Curriculum requirements in its provision in music and physical education. The governing body and senior managers deal well with the bureaucratic demands made upon the school. A feature of their work is seen in the success they have made in planning to improve accommodation. The governing body is now in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the school to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided. The relationship between the governing body and the staff of the school is good and there are well-formulated plans drawn up to forge a more direct link between the governors and individual subject departments.
92. The school is administered well and good use is made of ICT, for example in building up a bank of data about students' performance in order to set challenging targets. Daily routines operate smoothly. The process of financial planning is now sound and there are effective procedures in place to ensure that the school consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Spending is controlled well and the principles of best value are applied well in the school's use of resources. The governing body's finance committee has a very good level of awareness of the financial situation of the school. The speed with which the new headteacher has drawn up the current school development plan means that the costs of meeting the priorities outlined are not sufficiently detailed. However, a process is being established to marry the planning of school priorities with the planning of the budget. At present, there is a deficit in the annual budget caused by overstaffing. This is inefficient, but the school has a planned strategy to reduce staffing and return the budget to a balanced position within two years. In the meantime, the deficit is being managed effectively because the school is able to call upon reserves built up in previous years. Over the next financial year, the balance carried forward will be an acceptable proportion of the school's income. Financial administration is sound and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. There is a satisfactory programme of audit. The strategic use of resources is good and specific grants are used appropriately. The school gives satisfactory value for money.
93. The leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory. Individual education plans vary in the degree of detail and quality. The best plans are very good, for

example those used to guide the development of visually impaired students. Other individual plans need to be brought to a similar standard so that targets are relevant, precise and measurable. The strengths lie in the shared commitment of the senior management team, the special educational needs co-ordinator, and staff throughout the school to promoting the achievement of students with special educational needs. This is well illustrated in the comprehensive agenda of the pastoral conference, which is held twice yearly. Statutory requirements are met in respect of the provision for students with statements of special educational need and the additional funding for special needs is used effectively. There is a good match of staff to students' requirements, but not enough attention has been given to planning a coherent programme for the professional development of staff with responsibility for special educational needs. The main priority for development is the implementation of the new special educational needs Code of Practice. This will require a review of the school's current policy, together with the clarification of management responsibilities as well as training for all staff.

94. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials, are satisfactory. There is an adequate ratio of computers to students within the school and the software available is satisfactory for most subjects, although access to these machines is sometimes difficult. There is inadequate access to ICT in mathematics, art and music and this adversely affects the range and variety of activities that can be provided to support and extend students' learning. In mathematics in Years 7 to 9, and in English and art the book stock is good and in most subjects students have textbooks they can take home, with the exception of ICT where the lack of appropriate textbooks slows students' progress. In Latin, resources are of excellent quality but the budget allocated to the subject is insufficient to sustain this. Similarly, in ICT there are insufficient textbooks in Years 7 to 9. In most subjects equipment is satisfactory and in geography and science it is good, but in music, resources available, both in terms of books and equipment, are inadequate. In music the lack of appropriate equipment restricts the range of learning opportunities offered to students. Provision of learning resources in the library is unsatisfactory; many books are old and out of date so that the library does not adequately support or extend students' learning nor does it support the development of independent learning. The school recognises this and the development of an effective and attractive resource centre is a priority in the school development plan.
95. Overall, the match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. There have been 20 teaching staff appointed and 17 who have left in the last two years. This has enabled the governors to begin the process of improving the balance of staff and there is now a better blend of experienced longer serving teachers, recently appointed experienced staff and those more recently qualified. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum in science, ICT and design and technology. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make a significant, positive contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.
96. Good arrangements are in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers. They receive effective departmental support and mentoring. In addition, the school supports its newly qualified teachers by funding their attendance at courses organised by the local education authority. The school is a very good provider of initial teacher training and currently has two students in training. The school has effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Evaluation and feedback systems ensure that the school receives value for money from the courses attended by its teachers. Priority is appropriately given to training linked to performance management, the school development plan and departmental development plans. Support is also given whenever possible to individual members of staff who wish to undertake higher qualification courses.

97. The school and governors have made a substantial financial investment in the school's accommodation especially in ICT. However, accommodation overall is unsatisfactory as it fails to meet the needs of the curriculum in music, modern foreign languages and physical education. The library is drab and presents an unwelcoming learning environment for students. It is in need of refurbishment to better support learning. Acoustics in music and modern foreign languages are poor and as a consequence this constrains learning. Facilities for physical education on the school site severely constrain teaching. Overall, the school's indoor provision for physical education is poor although some compensation is made by use of a local leisure centre. There are also constraints on the outdoor physical education programme. The school field is some distance from school and as a result time allocated for teaching games is lost transporting students. This severely inhibits the depth of teaching of activities like football, cricket and athletics.
98. There are examples where the school has good accommodation, which enhances learning opportunities. Good provision has been made in science, mathematics, geography and design and technology. These areas have sufficient room to allow for a good range of practical work to be undertaken by students. Improvements to the fabric of the building are constantly being made. The school has a good awareness of the problems and has planned improvements. For example, building contractors are submitting tenders for modifying acoustics for the modern foreign language and music departments with work projected to be complete after Easter 2002 and a recent bid has been made for new opportunities funding for a sports hall.

Leadership and management of the sixth form

99. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory and the sixth form is cost effective. The overall leadership of the sixth form provided by the school is satisfactory. The head of sixth form knows the students well and relationships are good. His aim is to ensure that all students achieve their potential on courses that match their needs and this vision is shared by all concerned and is effective in giving a clear direction to work in the sixth form. Students develop into mature and responsible young people through the range of experiences and opportunities offered. There are good opportunities provided for students to take wider responsibilities within the school. Students flourish and achieve well in their studies in most subjects. The management of sixth form provision is satisfactory overall and the successful outcomes are the result of senior sixth form staff effectively sharing responsibilities for managing different aspects such as pastoral guidance, careers, assessment and prefectural duties. However, there are specific areas that require improvement. These include the implementation of more formal procedures for monitoring teaching so that the effectiveness can be evaluated. Long-term planning of developments by heads of subjects is also undeveloped. This is reflected in department development plans, which do not reflect those of the whole school closely enough. The new headteacher has formulated a completely revised school development plan since his appointment last term. Clearly, the sixth form planning at departmental level still needs to incorporate this into their planning. The governors have a good understanding of the issues facing sixth form provision and are actively involved in making decisions relating to sixth form provision. They are in a good position to account for the standards attained by these students.

Resources

100. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials, are satisfactory. There is an adequate ratio of computers to students within the school and the software available is satisfactory for most subjects. Students feel that access to computers is satisfactory for private research and study, although most rely on the machines within the ICT rooms. There

is inadequate access to ICT in mathematics and art, religious education and music and this adversely affects the range and variety of activities that can be provided to support and extend students' learning. In English and art the book stock is good and in most subjects students have textbooks they can take home, with the exception of mathematics where the lack of appropriate textbooks slows students' progress. In most subjects, equipment is satisfactory and in geography it is good, but in religious education resources available, in terms of both books and equipment, are inadequate. Provision of learning resources in the library is unsatisfactory; many books are old and out of date so that the library does not adequately support or extend students' learning nor does it support the development of independent learning.

101. Sixth form students use the same specialist accommodation as the main school. Sixth form students do have their own exclusive common room and study areas; both are adequate. However, accommodation for sixth form students is unsatisfactory. As in the main school, this centres upon inadequacies in the subject areas of modern foreign languages, music and physical education. The library is drab and presents an unwelcoming learning environment. It is in need of refurbishment to better support learning. Accommodation is good in science, mathematics and geography. These areas have sufficient room to allow for a good range of practical work to be undertaken by students.

102. The headteacher and governors are taking appropriate action to create a strong and effective senior management team for the sixth form. There is very good teaching provision in the sixth form by a committed group of teachers. Most students state that they are able to follow the courses they wish to from the existing options. This results in a good retention rate with the large majority of students completing the courses they start. The school's sixth form is cost effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

103. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards of achievement in music in Years 7 to 9 and the general quality of provision in music by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning in music lessons in Years 7 to 9 and ensuring that the full programmes of study are taught;
 - improving accommodation and resources in music.(Paragraphs 199, 202).
- (2) Make more effective use of information about students' attainment in order to set challenging targets by:
 - informing targets by the good assessment information held and modify these targets appropriately as students progress through the school;
 - using internal test and examination results as 'signposts' to monitor students' progress towards the longer-term targets that are set;
 - relating students' attainment in Years 7 and 8 to the levels of the National Curriculum so that students and their parents can compare reported attainment with that expected nationally;
 - ensuring that individual education plans for all students with special educational needs meet the standard of the best and targets are developed that are relevant, precise and measurable.(Paragraphs 77, 78, 93).
- (3) Improve the quality of long-term planning in subject departments by:
 - ensuring that planning at departmental level reflects more closely whole-school priorities as set out in the school development plan;
 - requiring departmental plans to give more precise details about the costs of plans in terms of staffing and resources required.(Paragraphs 87, 118, 128, 142, 150, 160, 169, 177, 206).
- (4) Make more effective use of the library to support learning by:
 - ensuring that the stock of books is up to date and appropriate to the needs of the school today;
 - making the library more available to students and students for independent study.(Paragraphs 97, 100, 101).
- (5) Improve the accommodation for modern foreign languages, music and physical education by:
 - improving the acoustics in rooms used to teach modern foreign languages;
 - revamping the music teaching area to make the space available more suitable for teaching and learning music;
 - continuing to pursue funds to improve accommodation for physical education.(Paragraphs 97, 195, 202, 213).

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the quality of provision in economics and business studies by:
 - drawing up departmental development plans;
 - devising schemes of work in both subjects to include details of how the subjects will be marked and assessed;
 - putting in place more effective strategies to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning;
 - improving links with the local business community to enhance the teaching of applied business studies;
 - making better use of ICT facilities in teaching and learning in both subjects.(Paragraphs 255, 257, 260, 262).

- (2) Improve the quality of long-term planning in subject departments by:
 - ensuring that planning at departmental level reflects more closely whole-school priorities as set out in the school development plan;
 - requiring departmental plans to give more precise details about the costs of plans in terms of staffing and resources required.(Paragraphs 232, 250, 257, 262, 273, 288, 300).

- (3) Complete and implement plans to co-ordinate the teaching of key skills.
(Paragraph 16).

In addition to the areas to be improved above, the school needs to:

- Meet fully the requirements relating to providing a daily act of collective worship for all students. (Paragraph 46).
- Attend to health and safety issues brought to the notice of the school. (Paragraph 72).

THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Overall the provision for students with EAL is satisfactory. A total of 376 students (43 per cent) have been identified as speaking EAL. The school does not receive any funding through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant nor does it employ any teachers or bilingual support staff to support EAL learners. A member of the senior management team has responsibility for EAL throughout the school.

Strengths

- Relationships between EAL learners and other students are very good. This leads to a supportive environment for all students.
- Teachers have a good awareness of the needs of EAL learners in lessons.
- EAL learners make good progress in lessons and achieve well.

Areas for development

- There is no specialist support within the school to meet the needs of EAL learners and support mainstream teachers.
- There are no assessment criteria in place to determine EAL learners' fluency and needs, and the progress they are making in acquiring English.
- The school has produced data on attainment by ethnicity but the information is not yet used to set challenging targets for improvement.

104. No students have been identified as being at an early stage of English language although the school does not formally assess students for their fluency in English. Students are identified as EAL learners if another language is spoken at home. The school administers cognitive ability tests in Year 7 to identify needs but this alone does not determine whether their needs are specifically educational or more generally language based. The school conducts an audit of language spoken at home, which also takes account of the script written as well, for example where Punjabi is spoken whether the family read Punjabi or Urdu script. Teachers are generally aware of whether a student is underachieving but have no detail on their fluency in English.
105. Students make good progress in lessons because most teaching is good. No specialist language support is provided for EAL learners, however, which means that specific language needs are not met. Most teachers have identified EAL learners in their planning although levels of fluency are not identified. Most teachers are aware of students' general language needs and in some instances build them into lesson planning, for example in a Year 7 Geography lesson when teaching key vocabulary associated with the topic of weather. In ICT lessons, key words are displayed on the wall for ease of reference.
106. Teachers are developing students' speaking and listening skills effectively, for example in group work in a Year 11 geography lesson on industry. Very few students work in isolation. They are usually placed in groups or pairs for peer support, for example in a Year 7 ICT lesson where students were paired for peer support so that higher attaining students were matched with lower attainers. Students' speaking skills are improved as they participate in class work. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, students evaluated ways of solving equations, and in a Year 8 English lesson students presented their poems to the whole class. However, there are instances where, due to the lack of specialist support, students do not make sufficient progress. In design and technology (resistant materials), for example, a group of EAL learners are held back from obtaining higher grades at GCSE partly because their written English contains basic repetitive sentences and language errors in their design brief.

Speaking skills need developing and some students have difficulty in speaking for a range of purposes when they are using informal colloquial language. The use of prepared writing frames in science helps to support students' learning. Although the use of glossaries and word lists is encouraged, students' work is not always checked for their accurate use, and when writing independently, students reveal grammatical errors such as mixing 'much' and 'many'. There is some good practice in developing students' writing skills. They are encouraged to act independently through marking each other's work. In English, students are encouraged to reflect on their work and to evaluate their peers' work, highlighting areas for improvement. Students are given the opportunity in Year 7 science to develop independent writing to describe the fertilisation process.

107. The classroom atmosphere in lessons is welcoming and supportive. Teachers take steps to include all students in lessons. Students show a willing attitude to talk about their work with each other, to teachers and to the whole class. They volunteer answers and take turns to speak and listen to each other's replies. In English they collaborate in groups. A very good feature of lessons is the relationship between different groups of students and the good behaviour in lessons. For example, students showed a very responsible attitude towards discussing sexual reproduction in a Year 7 class.
108. Responsibility for EAL in the school lies with a member of the senior management team, who is assisted by literacy coordinators. There are no specialist staff for EAL in the school and no assessment criteria specific to EAL. The school has undertaken a major drive to address literacy across the whole school, identifying students to target for extra English through Year 7 assessments. The literacy drive is to address speaking and listening. The school has had some success in promoting opportunities for this, as observed in lessons in English, mathematics and science. In other Year 8 English and mathematics lessons, students had the opportunity to speak to the whole class in groups or pairs.
109. There are no specific resources for EAL within the school. No differentiated work materials have been produced. Where parents do not speak English fluently, the school relies on a member of the administrative staff who is bilingual to communicate with parents. No written translated information is made available to parents. There are no formal arrangements for home/school liaison and meetings with parents, although the school has a number of bilingual members of staff who can converse with parents when the need arises.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	143
	Sixth form	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		69

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 - 11

Number	9	33	61	37	2	1	0
Percentage	6	23	43	26	1	1	0

Sixth form

Number	2	16	31	11	2	0	0
Percentage	3	26	50	18	3	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 students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	658	220
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	90	22

Special educational needs

	Y7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	5	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	19	1

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	376

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	136	0	136

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	136	136	136
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	136	136	136
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (99)	100 (99)	100 (95)
	National	64 (63)	66 (66)	66 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	77 (72)	99 (95)	83 (69)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	33 (30)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	125	136	131
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	125	136	131
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	92 (88)	100 (99)	96 (96)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	58 (45)	98 (90)	65 (61)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	132	0	132

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	121	131	132
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	121	131	132
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	92 (92)	99 (100)	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 student	School	58.5
	National	39.1

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	13	95	7	102

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	95	7	102
	Average point score per candidate	21.2 (18.0)	14.6 (10.8)	20.8 (17.5)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.8)	17.9 (18.6)	17.4 (18.2)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	95	7	102	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Average point score per candidate	21.2	14.6	20.8	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	52
Black – African heritage	13
Black – other	0
Indian	314
Pakistani	200
Bangladeshi	23
Chinese	5
White	222
Any other minority ethnic group	49

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	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	57.2
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	220.6

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – 11

Key Stage 3	22.8
Key Stage 4	22.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	2616812
Total expenditure	2543264
Expenditure per student	2897
Balance brought forward from previous year	154012
Balance carried forward to next year	227560

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.3 FTE
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.8 FTE
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

875
240

Number of questionnaires returned

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	48	5	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	45	12	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	47	11	3	2
The teaching is good.	44	46	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	46	15	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	43	6	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	30	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	28	48	16	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	49	3	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	51	5	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	39	12	7	14

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

- Well above average standards in Years 7 to 9 and very high in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching; very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The students are highly motivated.
- Excellent GCSE curriculum coverage.
- Good leadership and management backed by a supportive team of teachers.
- High aspirations for all students of all backgrounds.

Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment to set targets and track progress towards them.
- Use of examples and reviews of good practice and learning to support the progress of middle and lower attaining students.
- The department's longer-term planning requires a sharper focus on targets and the criteria for measuring success in meeting such targets.
- The creation of more progressive opportunities for students to use ICT.

110. The current Year 7 students entered school with standards that were well above average. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and very high at the end of Year 11. Overall achievement is good, and very good during Years 10 and 11, especially in literature, as a result of very good teaching.
111. In the 2001 end of Year 9 tests, standards were well above average and just below those gained by the highest five per cent of schools. In comparison with other grammar schools standards were well below average. The results were similar to those in science, but lower than those in mathematics. However, overall achievement was good. Less than one third of the students had achieved above average standards when they entered the school. By the end of Year 9 more than three quarters achieved above average results or higher. Standards have been consistently well above average for the last four years and very high in comparison with boys in most schools.
112. In the 2001 GCSE examination the proportion passing at A*-C was in the highest five per cent of all schools. The proportion was well below the average for grammar schools. Even so, more students gained the higher grades than was predicted by their test results at the end of Year 9. The 2001 results broadly matched those of 1999 and 2000. In English literature the results were outstanding. The students outperformed all students nationally by, on average, 1.5 grades. More than 30 per cent achieved grades A*/A. Students tended to do better in English literature than in most of their other subjects. The results in 2001 improved on the slight decline in 2000.
113. The 2001 Year 9 results are matched by the standards of the current Year 9. The students' achievement is good. Overall standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are well above average. Only a few students fail to achieve above average standards in speaking because they do not consistently make extended and formally constructed contributions. When reading, many students – about 40 per cent – consistently show a high level of deduction when answering questions from previous test papers. Their empathetic pieces about political persecution based on 'Talking in Whispers' showed a great awareness of the

novel's themes and issues. Students extract relevant information quickly and recognise the features of specific genres such as sports writing. Most students write with a high level of accuracy. Those who reach the highest standards are assured and controlled in a range of written contexts. Their range of vocabulary and sentence structure engages the reader. This was strongly exemplified in the range of poetic forms such as ballad and sonnet successfully written in one class. The few students who do not achieve beyond average standards have some weaknesses in spelling and punctuation and do not show the range of appropriate vocabulary of other students.

114. In Year 11, standards match those achieved in the 2001 GCSE examination. The students' achievement is very good, especially in literature. Standards of speaking and listening are very high. A few lower attainers give shorter answers in class and do not achieve beyond average standards. Reading standards are very high. The depth of analytical writing in literature coursework achieved by the highest attainers is outstanding, as effectively exemplified in excellent comparisons of two short stories by Collins and Bradbury. Perceptive independent reading was a strong feature of Year 11 students when they discussed Brooke's 'The Soldier'. A few students do not achieve above average standards because their comments lack the perception, focus and coherence of other students. The overwhelming majority of Year 11 students write with very good accuracy and organisation. The best are highly effective in their control of explanatory writing and use a wide range of sentence structures. Their breadth of vocabulary enhances their personal, narrative and analytical writing. Only a few make too many errors and do not consistently reach average standards. They have particular weaknesses in their assured use of standard English.
115. Both students with special educational needs and those with EAL progress as well as other students. The teachers have an effective knowledge of these students, providing, for example, large print resources for visually impaired students. The extra English lessons in Years 8 and 9 provide an effective means with which to help some students make good progress in their grasp of standard English and in analysing texts.
116. Overall standards of teaching and learning are good and they are very good in Years 10 and 11. The teachers' subject specialism and thorough planning have led to excellent coverage of the GCSE course. The students therefore are thoroughly prepared in terms of their knowledge, skills of writing and understanding of how to do well. This is clearly shown in the quality of much of the students' coursework. High expectations lead to students of all attainments working hard both in lessons and at home. The teachers mark GCSE coursework thoroughly and accurately, providing the students with good feedback on how to improve. Throughout Years 7 to 11, the teachers employ a wide range of methods that engage and sustain the students' interest. Year 7 students enjoyed the highly interactive whole class question and answer session on features of tabloid journalism. Both higher and lower attainers in Year 10 responded with great enthusiasm to opportunities to use dramatic techniques in their study of 'The Crucible' and 'An Inspector Calls'. Assignment titles are challenging and resulted in excellent analytical work on the film 'Schindler's List' by Year 10 students. These methods enhance the students' personal development. They are highly motivated, work well with each other and enjoy reflecting on the events they study in literature, often effectively relating them to their own experiences in discussion and writing. They respond to each other's work with genuine interest and respect.
117. Occasional lessons had too much time given to some tasks and concentration waned. Some questioning was not probing enough, especially for middle and lower attaining students. These groups of students tend not to have enough chances to benefit from analysing or constructing explicit examples of what is required to guide their responses. The teachers tend not to give the students the chance to review what they have learnt, so missing the

opportunity to reinforce key learning points. In Years 7 to 9 the students are not clear enough about their standards or potential in relation to national levels and about how to fulfil their potential.

118. The department is well led and has achieved good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a good team spirit. The range of teaching methods used and the gradual introduction of methods from the National Literacy Strategy confirm the department's receptiveness to new ideas and its determination to improve standards further. The head of department systematically monitors teaching and learning in order to improve standards. There is not enough planned and developmental use of ICT; the department's longer-term planning requires a sharper focus on targets and criteria for measuring success. Despite some good practice, the use of assessment to raise standards through rigorous target setting and tracking of progress is not strong.

Key skills: literacy

119. The school is making good progress in systematically dealing with language issues across a range of subjects. Subject teachers effectively enhance the students' accurate use of specialist vocabulary. For example: the spelling of 'isosceles' and 'cumulative' in mathematics; the correct application of terms such as 'virtual' and 'real' when applied to images formed in a mirror in science; and prominent and frequent reference to key words in design and technology and geography. However, in ICT there is not enough explicit emphasis on the development of vocabulary.
120. There is less effective emphasis on the development of efficient and effective reading and research skills. The best practice was clearly evident in history. Teachers reinforce good skimming and scanning techniques to help students find relevant information reliably, independently and quickly. Teachers also expect high standards of evaluation skills when students assess the reliability of source material. Elsewhere, although students do carry out research tasks, there was less attention paid to helping them develop good research and study methods. In geography, for example, some students copied information rather than reading and reorganising it into their own words and formats. This is an important whole school area for development and has been rightly highlighted in the recent literacy policy. A lack of textbooks hinders the development of reading skills in ICT. The timetabling of the library for class lessons and a lack of continual supervision also restricts opportunities for independent research for all subjects.
121. Although at a relatively early stage, there is better provision for the development of writing skills. In history, the students write in a range of formats such as a diary of a domestic weaver in Year 9 or a letter to a member of parliament about the coming of the railways. They also receive effective guidance on the structure of paragraphs and opening sentences. The emerging use of writing frames is effectively helping the students to plan and organise their work in ICT in Years 10 and 11, physical education, and science. Although writing skills are not systematically taught in geography, students have good opportunities to write in a range of formats, such as a tabloid news account of a volcanic eruption. Modern foreign languages and Latin teachers effectively emphasise accurate punctuation. The accuracy of the students' writing is not marked in art. In mathematics, the students do not have enough opportunity to explain mathematical concepts on paper.

Drama

122. Drama is a recent addition to the school's curriculum. Students are achieving well. Overall standards seen were above average. They were also above average in a Year 10 lesson with

the school's first GCSE students. In the lesson the boys showed they had made very good progress in developing skills of projection, gesture and movement to devise an effective piece, which had good audience impact. The groups who performed effectively communicated the message of civic participation, which was at the heart of the stimulus poem. They have also made good progress in working together and, most notably, in constructively evaluating each other's work. Their group warm-up work confirmed high standards of co-operation. This good progress is the result of teaching that is very good overall. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations. Her lessons are well planned with a clear sense of purpose and progression. She challenges the students to give of their best. Although the school does not have a specialist drama studio the teacher makes good use of the space and facilities available in the hall.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are very high.
- Teaching is good and contributes strongly to the very good learning that takes place.
- Students' behaviour and their attitude to their work are very good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- The provision for higher attaining students is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The integration of ICT into the work of all students.
- The monitoring of teaching and marking, in order to improve practice.
- The quality of longer-term planning in the department development plan.
- Greater consistency in the application of department policies.
- The quality and range of books available to students in the library.

123. On entry to the school, with the large majority of students at level 5, overall standards in mathematics are well above the national average. By the end of Year 9, and also in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, standards are very high compared with national figures. This improvement in performance is brought about by good teaching across all areas of the National Curriculum, and because of students' very positive approach to their work. The mathematics department is leading school initiatives in the development of a policy for numeracy across the curriculum. This is improving students' confidence and enjoyment when using number, though practice is not yet consistent across the school, or even within the mathematics department.
124. Standards in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 for students in Year 9 were very high compared with the national average for all schools. Compared with other grammar schools, results were below average. Over the last three years, there has been an upward trend in the proportions of students gaining the higher grades, and students are performing better in mathematics than in English and science. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were very high compared with the national average, with about one student in three gaining grades A* or A. In the last three years, almost all students have gained a grade in the range A*-C. Students perform better in mathematics than in most of their other subjects. Comparing students' results in examinations with their standards on entry indicates that students' overall achievement is very good during Years 7 to 9, and during Years 10 and 11.

125. In work seen during the inspection, standards are very high compared with the level expected nationally, and reflect the results obtained in national tests. The majority of students take pride in the presentation of their work, they show how they obtain their answers, and the good habits they develop contribute to their success in examinations. Earlier work lays the foundation for the standards achieved at the end of Year 9. In Year 7, students are taught in their tutor groups. They clearly understand the reasons why corresponding and alternate angles are equal when lines are parallel. Higher attaining students in each group can use algebra and equations to help them to calculate the unknown angles in a triangle. From Year 8 onwards, students are placed in sets based on their results in tests. By Year 9, students in higher attaining groups are using both the sine and cosine rule with confidence to calculate the length of sides and the size of angles in triangles without a right angle. Average attaining students also work confidently when deriving the algebraic equations for number sequences; they learn how to use these equations when it is difficult to predict the subsequent numbers. By the end of Year 10, students in the highest set are entered for their GCSE examination. They begin the study of AS modules in Year 11. Standards are very high, as in a lesson on trigonometry where students confidently derive the values of multiple angles. The achievement of lower attaining students is also very good; for example, a Year 10 group study inequalities, and quickly gain confidence in using the 'greater than' and 'less than' signs. By the end of the lesson, they are overcoming their problems with applying these to graphical regions. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into the work of each class, and their progress is in line with that of other students. They are well known by their teachers, who provide extra help as necessary. There is no significant difference in the attainment of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
126. Teachers in mathematics make a good contribution to the development of students' literacy skills. They display key words, which help to ensure that spellings are accurate, and, through investigations, there are opportunities for students to express themselves in their own words. Numeracy is given a high priority. In many lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, there is a numeracy starter to the lesson. In the best lessons, this relates to the main topic, so that students can appreciate the usefulness of the exercise. Students are given guidance also on when it is appropriate to use a calculator. Their numerical skills, and also their accuracy with a calculator, are both very good. The use of computers to extend learning has not been sufficiently developed within the mathematics department; this is only partly explained by the relative difficulty of gaining access to a computer room.
127. Teaching overall is good throughout the school; it is never less than satisfactory, and in about one lesson in three it is very good. Because good teaching is supported by students' very good attitude to their work, it leads to very good learning. Teachers are well qualified, and have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This enables them to provide work at the correct depth for students of all levels of attainment. In most lessons, therefore, students are given work which makes them think, and which challenges even the gifted and talented students. For instance, in Year 11, students in a higher set solve quadratic equations which increase significantly in difficulty; they enjoy using their number bonds to overcome the difficulties. In a small minority of lessons the work is too repetitive, and involves copying from the board or the textbook. The planning for lessons is thorough but it often concentrates too much on the subject content, and does not always include sufficient thought about the activities through which students will learn. The relationships between teachers and students are excellent, partly through teachers' very good management skills, but also because students have a very positive attitude to their work. This contributes to a very good working atmosphere, as in a Year 9 lesson on transformations. Mutual respect was evident between teacher and students. The marking of work is inconsistent, and a significant proportion of students are unaware of how well they are doing, or of what they need to do to improve. Homework is set regularly, and at an appropriate standard to consolidate classwork.

128. Good leadership and management of the mathematics department, including regular reviews of schemes of work, and appropriate organisation of teaching groups, have a major impact on the quality of provision and of examination results. The department development plan, however, is not closely related to school priorities, and lacks longer-term objectives. Regular assessments are made of students' standards; these provide information on the achievements of individual students, so that teachers know whether they are making appropriate progress. This information, and how the results compare with National Curriculum levels, is not clearly conveyed to students in order to help them relate their standards to their target grades. There has been an increase in the monitoring of teaching through performance management, but insufficient debate about how students learn. More lesson observations, including peer observations, would provide greater focus on teaching and learning, and improve further the quality of teaching skills. In general, monitoring of the work of the department is good; however, there is room for closer scrutiny of the quality of teaching materials, and of the frequency and quality of marking. This would help to develop greater consistency across the department and improve teamwork. Resources are generally good, but there is little use of mathematical equipment such as three-dimensional models. The quality and range of mathematics books in the school library are poor.
129. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress. Teaching has improved, and as a result standards in Year 9 and in Year 11 are both very high compared with national averages, and still improving. However, opportunities are missed to engage students in discussions about the magic of mathematics. The department has recently made a positive start to the development of a whole school policy for numeracy, so that all students will receive regular practice in order to improve their number skills. Teachers in other departments are also now aware of their responsibility to contribute to students' numeracy skills, and so there is a move towards greater consistency across the school. The management of students within mathematics lessons is very good, and there is also a better understanding of the specific difficulties of students with special educational needs. The department has a good capacity for further improvement.

Key skills: numeracy

130. The mathematics department is leading the school by example in the development of students' numeracy skills. Training for all teachers has started, and there is now a greater awareness of the national strategy, and how each teacher in the school can contribute. In order to develop greater consistency across the school, draft whole school policies on numeracy and on the use of calculators have been produced. Their implementation will make a major contribution to the development of numeracy skills.
131. Within mathematics lessons, there is now more frequent practice for students in improving their numeracy skills. Even within the mathematics department, however, the integration of numeracy starters into lessons is inconsistent. Teachers have little, if any, first hand experience of how numeracy is taught in primary schools, and insufficient use is made of teaching aids such as whiteboards to support learning.
132. The overall level of students' numeracy skills is well above the national average. This is partly due to standards on entry, but also on provision within the mathematics department, and on students' positive approach to improving their standards. Although detailed planning for the contribution to be made by other departments is only just beginning, there are a number of subjects which already provide significant support. In geography, for instance, students handle data competently, and they use scales on maps to make measurements of distance. In ICT, students use formulae to program cells when using spreadsheets in Years 7

to 9. Extensive use of numeracy occurs in science. Students make frequent measurements during practical work, and they use graphs to analyse their results; this includes the identification of anomalies. Skills of data analysis are high in science, for instance in investigative work. A number of subjects already have references to numeracy within their planning, for example in the geography departmental handbook. This is good practice as it raises teachers' awareness of the potential for contributing to students' numeracy development.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and students achieve well; examination results are well above average.
- Teachers have high expectations and, as a result, students are eager to learn.
- Teachers support their students' learning very well, for example by emphasising the meanings of key words in science.
- Students behave very well in science lessons, and this allows learning to proceed at a brisk pace.

Areas for improvement

- In a few lessons, particularly in Year 9 and some lower sets in Years 10 and 11, teachers pay too little attention to the full range of students' abilities, resulting in some achieving less well than they should.
- Marking of students' day-to-day work is inconsistent; targets to help them improve their work are set by some teachers, but not by others.

133. When students enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is well above average. Attainment is also well above average at the ends of Years 9 and 11. Students achieve well overall, but there are some variations; very good behaviour and levels of concentration allow them to learn at a brisk pace. They develop very good investigative skills by the end of Year 11.
134. In 2001, the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. They were well below the average in grammar schools because the spread of ability is much wider than most grammar schools. This represents satisfactory progress for these students between the ages of 11 and 14. Results were higher in 2001 than in the previous year and were similar to those in English, although lower than those in mathematics. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were well above the national average for the proportion of students gaining the higher (A*-C) grades. This represents good achievement for these students relative to their National Curriculum test results two years earlier. The results were similar to those in 2000. More than half the students took examinations in the separate science subjects (biology, chemistry and physics) in 2001, while the rest took double award science. Overall, students did less well in science than in English and mathematics.
135. In the work seen in the inspection, students achieve well through Years 7 to 9, although their achievement is not quite as good in Year 9 as in Years 7 and 8. Students achieved very well in a Year 7 lesson because the meanings of key words, such as 'placenta' and 'umbilical cord,' were emphasised; all quickly learnt how the human foetus develops in the uterus. On the other hand, in many Year 9 lessons, the wide range of students' prior attainment is less well addressed in teachers' planning. Achievement was only just satisfactory when students learnt how an electrostatic precipitator works; the pace of learning was too slow for some, while others gained incomplete understanding because they were uncertain about the meanings of key words such as 'precipitation'. In lessons and other work, students' overall attainment at the end of Year 9 is well above average, matching results in the National Curriculum tests. However, it could be higher if the momentum developed in Years 7 and 8 was carried through into Year 9.
136. Overall, students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Their attainment in lessons and other work is well above average by the end of Year 11, reflecting results of recent GCSE examinations. In some lower sets, achievement is less good, though still satisfactory, because students are given too much information and are not encouraged to think for themselves, as when they followed instructions to find the percentage of water in a sample of copper sulphate crystals. As a result, the progress of some students in these groups is held back and their attainment is lower than it could be.
137. The progress of students with special educational needs and those whose home language is not English is similar to that of other students in almost all lessons. The exception is in a few lessons in Year 9 when the meanings of technical words are not explained clearly enough; a small number of students then fail to grasp the main points of the lesson. No evidence was seen during the inspection of any difference in the progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds.

138. Students' literacy skills are very good. They write well, using the rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately; this reflects well on the department's recent emphasis on the development of these skills. Students have very good numeracy skills, though these are not developed systematically in science. During practical work, they handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely, though not always complying with safety instructions, such as wearing eye protection. By Year 11, their investigative skills are well developed; excellent examples were seen of students' analysis and evaluation of their experimental results. In some areas of science, for example in biology, students have good opportunities to develop their ICT skills, but this is inconsistent because not enough suitable equipment is located in the department.
139. Teaching and learning in science are good. About one third of the lessons seen during the inspection were very good, about one third were good, and all the rest were satisfactory. The key features of good and very good teaching observed were well organised lessons with a variety of teaching approaches to maintain students' interest, key words and writing frames used well to support students' learning and, most importantly, high expectations of what students could achieve. In a Year 7 lesson about the development of the human embryo, the teacher captured and maintained students' interest by tape-recording interviews with a woman at various stages of pregnancy; the woman later visited the class with her baby. The pace of learning in this lesson was very good because all students were fully engaged by the teacher's approach; by the end all understood how the foetus develops in the uterus. A very well structured lesson in Year 11 led students to work out an equation to calculate the potential difference across various electrical resistors. They responded very well to their teacher's high expectations; learning was very good because almost all worked out the equation for themselves and then applied it in answering questions from a worksheet. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of extension work to help higher attaining students reach their full potential, as in Year 10 when they considered differences between healthy and diseased lung sections and how lung function might be affected.
140. In a few lessons, where learning was satisfactory rather than good, students had too few opportunities to think for themselves or higher attaining students were given insufficient encouragement to move beyond the basic lesson content. Teachers' day-to-day marking varies. Codes to indicate the quality of work or the effort students have made are used inconsistently across the department; targets to help them improve their work in science are often not set, or are set and then not followed up.
141. Students behave very well in science lessons and most concentrate throughout the full length, allowing time to be fully used for productive learning. There are occasional exceptions to this, mainly in lower attaining sets in Years 10 and 11, when students become restless because they fail to see the relevance of their work. Exercise books are generally very well kept by students, showing that they take pride in their work; this helps their learning because they have a written record for later revision.
142. The science department is well led and managed. The recently appointed head of science has a clear vision for the future of the department, but this is not yet formalised into a sharply focused development plan. Recent extensive monitoring of teaching is already benefiting students, for example in the clarity with which teachers now present learning objectives to students at the beginning of each lesson. The department is considering how to further raise standards, for example by introducing setting or banding by ability in Year 9, and reducing the proportion of students taking three separate science subjects in the time allocated for two in Years 10 and 11. Teachers work well together as a team and the results of this are evident in lessons; for example, recent emphasis on literacy is helping students further improve their investigative skills, particularly in the areas of analysis and evaluation of experimental results. There is a good system for assessing and recording students' attainment at regular

intervals, but it is not used to identify and support underachieving students at an early stage. The laboratories are in good condition and are further enhanced by very good displays of students' work; they are stimulating spaces for students to learn science.

143. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The results of National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are a little higher. Teaching has improved; some unsatisfactory teaching was reported then, but none was seen in this inspection, although some undemanding work is still being set.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The standards achieved in national assessments and examinations are well above average and are about the same as those of boys in other grammar schools. The proportion of A and A* grades gained in the GCSE examinations is very high.
- Teaching and learning in art and design is very good; students progress very well through Years 9 to 11.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocated for art and design in Years 7 and 8 is insufficient and is holding back the students' progress in those years.
- The availability and use of computers are inadequate and are not helping to improve standards.
- The teachers in the art and design department do not share their individual good practice sufficiently in order to make planning more effective.

144. The standards of attainment in art and design are very good when compared to national averages, and are about the same as those of boys in other grammar schools. The results of the end of key stage assessments for Year 9 students are above the national average. The work observed in lessons confirms these standards. Last year (2001), in the end of Key Stage 3 assessments, 79 per cent of the Year 9 students were judged to have attained level 5, the national expectation, and quarter the higher level 6. As yet there are no visual examples or standardised procedures to identify these levels securely, but the teachers have interpreted the existing guidance accurately. Students arrive at the school in Year 7 with little experience of art and design, and many are at level 3. They progress slowly through Years 7 and 8, where they only have 25 minutes a week for art and design. This is well below any recommended minimum time for a statutory subject. When they have an appropriate time to study in Year 9 they make rapid progress to reach the higher levels, but could progress further with a better grounding in basic skills. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 they have achieved well. The results over the past three years have been broadly consistent.

145. The standards achieved in GCSE examinations are high compared to the national averages. Forty-seven boys took the drawing and painting option of art and design in 2001. Of these, 81 per cent gained grades from A*-C, which is around the average for boys in selective schools, and 28 per cent obtained A and A* grades, which is very high. The standards over the past three years have been maintained at this high level and the numbers opting for art and design are steadily increasing. The average points scores of boys taking art and design have been significantly higher than the national figure over the past five years, and also indicate that they are achieving well compared to the other subjects they study in the school.

146. The range of work being done in class in Years 7 and 8 is limited as they only have one art and design lesson a fortnight. This is not only adversely affecting standards, but also the continuity of the students' learning, especially as some of these students might only have two experiences of art and design in a half term. They are starting to address the demands of the art and design curriculum, but progress is slow. Students in Year 8 develop their skills of portrait painting and drawing very well when they study the expressionist painters. They use their increasing knowledge of colour and possible effects in oil pastel, oil paint, and charcoal. The amount and scale of this is limited by the time restrictions, and some work is incomplete, but the small group size allows individual discussion and support to develop their ideas quickly. The work in progress is reviewed and discussed in a rational manner, and the students' knowledge and understanding support their practical skills to produce work of a high quality. Work in sketchbooks is inconsistent; some are developing their use well, inserting resources and developing ideas thoughtfully, but other sketch books are very weak, with little work of value in them.
147. The Year 9 students are progressing better; they have a more realistic time allocation, but even then, the one 50 minute lesson is reduced by the time needed to set out work and tidy away. The relative isolation of the studios also means that lessons often start late, especially when students have to move from another part of the school, reducing time even further. They are starting to complete projects and develop their personal folders responsibly. The three-dimensional work they are completing, based on the study of British sculptors, carving into blocks of plaster or concrete, is of a high standard. The students are busily developing their sculptures from sketches and observational drawings in their sketchbooks. This is extending their experiences and covers the requirements of the National Curriculum well, although the only other material that is used for three-dimensional work is card. The lack of accessible storage space means that the size of work is limited. The use of homework is good; it is set regularly, often including research on the Internet for artists or art movements, and it extends the work in class well.
148. The GCSE classes specialise by following the drawing and painting option, which makes best use of the resources available. The painting skills of the Year 11 students are good, especially when they are challenged to complete work using personal research, and they are developing the work in their sketchbooks more confidently. Individual students are working productively on personal projects, often with a similar starting point, but moving off into very different approaches and outcomes. They are prepared very thoroughly for the examination, and given responsibility for evaluating and completing their work to meet the GCSE assessment criteria. Some less motivated students are not rising to this challenge, and wait for the teacher to tell them what to do. Some of these are entered for the short course because they do not complete enough projects in time. The practical work is often technically very adventurous, using a wide range of media and approaches. It is backed up with detailed and well-directed research into artists and movements. This is based almost entirely on the western European tradition of fine art, and there is little reference to the wide cultural diversity that the students bring to the school. Most individuals progress well and use the excellent examples of work by the sixth form that are displayed around the studios and school as a stimulus and for guidance. The work on 'expressive hands' is a good example; it has motivated several students to attempt observational drawings and develop their ideas imaginatively.
149. The quality of teaching in art and design is very good overall. The teachers are committed and expert practitioners who pass on their enthusiasm for the subject to their students. They motivate and hold the attention of their classes with extensive and continuous discussion, guidance and challenge. They inform the students of their attainment and progress, explain what they need to do to improve and gain specific grades or levels. They plan individual projects and lessons well to address the students' learning needs. In the best lessons students

are challenged to produce personal responses based on research about the work of artists. They experience very good direct teaching of skills and techniques using high quality resources. When this happens the quality of teaching is very good and the students are clearly progressing. At other times, such as in Year 7, where students are given an intriguing project on knots, the teaching is less successful. The basic concept of linking Islamic and Celtic traditions of interlocking patterns is very good, but the actual activities are mundane and unexciting, stifling creativity. Students still complete the tasks quietly and without disruption. Their attitudes to art and design are very positive, and their behaviour is very good.

150. The management of the department is satisfactory; the head of department completes regular reviews and assessments of work, which are analysed with results from previous years. The planning for art and design is satisfactory overall. The departmental handbook and schemes of work provide a good basis for supporting teaching. In Years 7 to 9, there are clear links to the National Curriculum orders, and all teachers have developed their own variations on common themes, working in their own styles to their individual strengths. This leads to some inconsistency across the classes, but each teacher takes the same classes through Years 7 and 8, and shares them in Year 9, so students have similar experiences throughout the key stage. The audit of the teaching over the whole of Years 7 to 9 is completed after individual planning has been done. It is a check on what is being covered, rather than a plan of what needs to be done, and who is going to do it at the appropriate time. The two teachers do not liaise closely enough early in the planning cycle so that a coherent plan to address the requirements of the National Curriculum is developed and work at the correct level can be incorporated into the projects. The departmental development plan relates well to the school's priorities and the areas for improvement that the staff have identified, but it needs more focused and persuasive arguments for extra facilities and an expansion of provision.
151. Overall, assessment is satisfactory. There is ongoing informal discussion with each student as they develop their work, and this is helping them to improve. Half-termly reviews are completed in discussion between students and their teachers. These reviews inform students of their progress and achievements and about their targets. The school assessment policy is followed and towards the end of Year 9 the grades are gradually linked to the levels they will be assessed at. In the GCSE classes, students have a very clear picture of the assessment objectives of the GCSE syllabus from Year 10 onwards. They know what they need to do to achieve their higher grades, and how well they are progressing in their work. The information teachers gain from these processes does not yet inform the planning process so that they can refine their schemes of work and develop their teaching. There is no specific planning for students with individual needs, either those with EAL, the gifted and talented or those with special educational needs. However, the teaching makes provision for all students through the individual attention each is given in class, and close personal knowledge the teachers have of them.
152. The art and design department was not visited in either of the previous two inspections. Over the past three years the progress in the subject has been satisfactory. The good results in both Year 9 assessments and GCSE examinations have been maintained and the profile of the subject is being raised through displays around the school. Resources for art and design are good, but work in three dimensions is limited by lack of space and access to facilities such as a kiln, which would extend the range of work available for the gifted and talented students. The classes in Years 10 and 11 have good accommodation, but the management of it means that space is restricted and some classes have difficulty working on a large scale. The staff should review their organisation of space and resources as this is limiting the scale and range of work that can be attempted, especially by the larger groups now opting for art and design in Years 10 and 11. Provision for the use of ICT is inadequate, with only one working computer and printer, and little suitable software available. This is of good quality, but kept

in the departmental office and is only available under supervision for examination classes. This is severely limiting the range of work in ICT that the art and design students can experience. The range of books and resources is good, but not well organised, but those available in the library are very poor and outdated. More use could be made of visits to local exhibitions and placements of artists in residence, neither of which appear in the plans of the department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Consistently good or better teaching in all lessons.
- Good accommodation and facilities for the subject.
- The very positive attitudes of the students, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The good leadership and management of the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- Planning for the more systematic and progressive development of design and graphical skills in Years 7 to 9.
- Departmental development planning to be more detailed and focused on the raising of standards of achievement.
- Make more effective use of the data available to set students' targets to further improve their levels of achievement.

153. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicated that standards of attainment in 2001 were very high in relation to the national average, seen in the proportion of students achieving level 5 or above. In 2001, the proportion of students obtaining GCSE grades A*-C was very high compared with the national average. Results in the electronic products and resistant materials courses were very high and in graphic products were above the average. In all the courses the proportion of students achieving grades A*-G was above the national average. Overall, the students achieved results in design and technology at levels broadly in line with those in their other examinations. Results in GCSE in 1999 and 2000 were lower than those achieved in 2001, with the results in resistant materials showing a very significant improvement.

154. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is very high compared to the average. This represents very good progress as the majority of students enter the school with levels of attainment that are just below the average. Subject knowledge and the technical vocabulary that underpins it are well above the national average by the end of Year 9. For example, in a Year 9 electronics lesson, the students were drawing out a latching circuit for an electronic alarm. They understood the functions of a range of components and the symbols used to represent them in circuit diagrams, as well as using the correct terminology both verbally and in their notes. The majority of students have making skills which are well above the national average in a range of materials. The design skills of the highest and middle attaining students are well developed and graphical skills improve over time for all students. Students with EAL achieve standards in line with their peers, and the gifted and talented students achieve very high standards in all areas of the subject.

155. Compared to the national average, standards of work are very high by the end of Year 11. The achievement of students, including those with EAL and the gifted and talented, is good, building on the very firm foundations laid in Years 7, 8 and 9. The pattern of attainment in the various elements of the courses is very similar to that at the end of Year 9. Practical

making on all three courses offered is at a very high level as the students handle tools and materials with increasing care and precision. Design skills are well above average for the middle and higher attaining students but graphical skills are more variable except for the students taking the graphics products course where they are above average and improving. For example, in a Year 10 graphics lesson, the students were using a range of techniques and media with accuracy and skill to distort a cartoon image as part of a clock project. Subject knowledge and understanding and technical vocabulary continue to be at very high levels for the vast majority of students.

156. Throughout the school, the students handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing confidence, accuracy and skill, and work with due regard for safety. Over the Years 7 to 11, the highest attaining students make very good progress in their development of design skills, as they research, analyse, draw up specifications and evaluate with increasing depth and rigour. Graphical communication skills also develop to a good level for many students as they use a range of drawing and projection methods to model, record and communicate their design ideas. Students with EAL make progress in line with their peers and the gifted and talented students make very good progress, in all areas of the subject.
157. The quality of teaching is consistently good in all years of the main school and is a strength of the department. In some lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 the teaching was very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons very effectively. The work set is challenging and extends the students' learning and acquisition of skills. In the lessons observed the teachers used a range of methods and learning activities appropriate to the levels of attainment. For example, in a Year 9 graphics lesson, the students were being taught how to apply coloured rendering to their drawings and show light and shade. Materials and resources of high quality were provided. The teacher gave a sequence of brief and very clear explanations and demonstrations using his very good subject skills, which the students were required to copy and practise. This built up their skills rapidly as at each step the teacher gave a time limit for its completion. This gave pace to the learning with the teacher giving very good individual support to the students, including feedback when checking the progress of their work. Across the years, students use their ICT skills extensively and well, particularly when they produce work on projects that is kept in folders for assessment.
158. Individual support was a consistently effective feature in all the lessons observed and the well-informed feedback given by the teachers encouraged the students to value their efforts and raised their level of motivation. In all lessons the teachers shared the aims of the lesson with the students so they were aware of what they should achieve by the end. However, only rarely did the teachers review the progress made at the end of the lesson with the students, or set time deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks and this contributed to a loss of pace in some lessons.
159. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They are keen and interested to learn in design and technology lessons in Years 7 to 11 and concentrate very well on the tasks presented to them. They listen very carefully to their teachers and respond eagerly to their questions. Relationships between the students and with their teachers are very good. Classroom routines are well established and teachers manage students' behaviour very effectively. All these factors combine to ensure an excellent working atmosphere in lessons, where very good learning takes place.
160. The leadership and management of the head of department are good. The departmental handbook is an effective document covering policies and practices, giving good guidance to the staff. However, the departmental development plan does not give details of who is responsible for the various targets, costs, timescale, resources and success criteria, and is not

sharply focused on raising levels of attainment further. In addition, the assessment data available to the department should be used to set improvement targets for individual students also aimed at raising levels of attainment. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but the planning for the progressive development of design and graphical skills is not systematic enough in Years 7 to 9. Accommodation is good and the teaching staff are well qualified and they are deployed to their specialist strengths in all years.

161. Overall the progress made since the last inspection has been good. Examination results at GCSE level have improved since 1999 and, on the evidence seen during the inspection standards in the graphic products GCSE course, are continuing to improve.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Well-qualified teachers plan lessons thoroughly and help students to achieve well.
- Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and set challenging tasks to be done in school and at home.
- Good use is made of secondary sources of evidence and information, such as videotape and photographs, to develop students' understanding.
- The two specialist teachers work well together making effective use of the department's resources.

Areas for improvement

- The completion of revisions of schemes of work, particularly for Key Stage 3, to bring them fully in line with the revised National Curriculum.
- The improvement of students' performance in the GCSE examination in comparison with other school subjects.
- To make greater use of ICT within lessons particularly for the organisation and the handling of data.
- To make more effective use of National Curriculum attainment target levels within the assessment and reporting process to inform students and parents about the level of geographical attainment reached.
- A more coherent departmental development plan is needed to guide the longer and medium-term planning of the subject

162. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Students have limited skills and knowledge of geography on entry to the school but make very good progress by the age of 14. Students following the optional GCSE course reach standards well above the national level. Attainment in 2001 was lower on average in geography than in other school subjects due, in part, to staffing difficulties between 1999 and 2000.

163. Attainment in geography by the age of 14 is well above the standards expected nationally. Achievement is very good. Students arrive with limited geographical skills and knowledge but make very good progress because they receive effective teaching from well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers. Attainment at the age of 16 by students taking the optional GCSE course is also well above the national average and achievement is very good over the Years 11 - 16. Nevertheless, in 2001 students did not attain as well in geography as they did in other subjects. This was caused in part by long-term teacher absence and replacement difficulty between 1999 and 2000, which affected continuity of teaching.

164. The school's National Curriculum assessments of 14 year old students in 2001 show almost all students reaching level 5 or above of the geography attainment target, and well over a half achieving level 6 or above. This represents very good progress from a relatively low starting point for most students on entry to the school. It is well above average for the age group although it is not exceptional for a selective school. The work seen in lessons and completed project work by students in Year 9 indicate that in the current year group students will have made similarly good progress, helped by thorough, well-organised teaching. Teachers are very sensitive to the need to develop students' language skills and, as a result, students for whom English is not their first language, and some with special needs, make similarly good progress in geography.
165. Students in the current Year 7 have already developed good skills in interpreting maps, organising data into charts and using four- and six-figure map references. They are able to identify and define the characteristics of linear, nucleated and hierarchical settlement patterns. They clearly enjoy the varied activities undertaken within geography lessons in what is for many of them a new subject. Students in Year 9 have a well-developed competence in displaying information in graphical form as well as in written notes. In a lesson examining hurricanes as a natural hazard, students were expected to produce a reasonably accurate measurement of the dimensions of a Caribbean hurricane as it approached the Florida coast, using a satellite photograph. Most were able to do this successfully by taking measurements from the photograph and scaling these against an atlas map of the region. Some of the students completed unaided investigations, for example, keeping and presenting a detailed weather diary for a week, and these are done with considerable accuracy and care to a very high standard.
166. At the age of 16 GCSE results are well above the national average. In 2001, however, although seven out of ten students gained an A*-C pass, the grades achieved by students were not as good in geography as they were in other subjects in the school. This is due in part to the impact of long-term teacher absence and subsequent temporary teaching experienced by half of this cohort in the 1999/2000 academic year. This also coincided with the time when the new GCSE syllabus was being taught. The geography department has taken steps to improve performance by bringing into operation a better system of setting targets for students and monitoring their progress more closely. The department is examining carefully each unit of the GCSE course, including looking to improve the fieldwork component of the course. There is no residential fieldwork undertaken in the school at this stage: this is a feature which strengthens the coursework grades in many schools. In addition, the geography teachers now provide good language support for all students by highlighting new and subject-specific vocabulary and by providing suitable frames to guide the development of students' writing in response to geographical questions. In lessons observed, this was helpful in supporting the development of language and literacy skills for all students.
167. The attainment in lessons seen in Key Stage 4 is well above average for the age group. In both Years 10 and 11 students are very attentive and eager to be involved in discussion of important issues. Year 11 students studying global climate change responded well to lively teaching. After the teacher had redefined with them 'the greenhouse effect' and the effects of global warming, students were keen to discuss wider issues beyond the basic requirements of the syllabus. They are beginning to think maturely about the relationships between climate, the environment and the impact of industry. Students' completed work and their mature approach to learning in geography in Years 10 and 11 suggest that they are now moving forward as well here as in other subjects. The quality of the work indicates that the overall progress from age 11 to 16 has been very good in developing and improving analytical skills, knowledge of the wider world, and the understanding of the processes of change.

168. The quality of teaching is good and this leads to most students making good progress. All the lessons observed were of a high standard and about a third were very good. Teachers are well-qualified and enthusiastic geographers who communicate their own interests well through their lessons. Thorough and detailed lesson planning was a consistent feature of lessons observed during the inspection. This led to very good use of time and to the maintenance of interest by students of all ages. A successful lesson in Year 8, for example, gave students a brief starter activity to revise key terms about volcanoes in a quiz format, followed by an indication of new key words to be noted and learned within the lesson, such as ‘cataclysm’ and ‘pumice’. The main part of the lesson used selectively very powerful videotaped pictures of the Mount St Helens volcanic eruption and the devastating consequences for the surrounding area. Students then compared the extent of the destruction using a map of Birmingham to judge the scale of the eruption before finally using their own notes to begin to write a newspaper report of the main events and their consequences. Within the space of the 50 minutes the teacher also gave some individual time to a student with special needs and to six students identified as learning English as an additional language. In a small number of lessons the attempt to include the maximum amount of content within the allotted time led to over-optimism as to what might be achieved within one lesson. As a result some of the planned impact was lost. Nevertheless, teachers provide challenging lessons, set homework regularly, mark work thoroughly and helpfully, and assess attainment to the department’s mark scheme at the end of topics. At the moment, most completed work is not assessed in line with the National Curriculum attainment target levels and, as a result, students (and parents) are not aware of their levels against national standards until the end of Year 9. This contrasts markedly with the helpful grading of completed work on the GCSE course to the appropriate examination grades.
169. The department is managed well and effectively and is moving forward again after a period of staffing difficulty. Clear improvements have been made since the last inspection in areas of: monitoring of teaching; putting in place new GCSE and AS and A2 courses; improving literacy strategies; and, improving operating guidance with a departmental handbook. The school and the department are aware that further improvements are needed to bring GCSE A*-C results more in line with other school subjects, and to introduce ICT more centrally into both the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 schemes of work. The department is working currently to complete the revisions of the schemes of work, particularly for Key Stage 3. This is an important priority. In common with most other areas of the school, a more coherent departmental development plan needs to be put in place to guide the longer and medium-term planning of the subject.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are consistently well above the national average.
- Students achieve well through Years 7 to 11, especially the most able, in developing a good understanding of the past and effective skills of recording and analysing evidence.
- Good learning is promoted by good teaching with well-planned lessons and a variety of stimulating activities.
- The department is well led and significant improvements have taken place.
- Students are well motivated and enthusiastic about their work, and have a very good relationship with the teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of long-term planning, with targets more closely related to the whole school development plan and criteria for measuring success.
- More systematic and planned provision for the use of ICT to enrich lessons.
- Sharing of good practice through more frequent and formal classroom observation.

170. When students enter the school, their level of attainment is above average in understanding causes in the history context and in their skills of enquiry and analysing sources. Standards of attainment are well above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. This good achievement is a result of the good teaching, with high expectations being set in developing history skills to high levels. The good learning is promoted by the students' very positive attitudes and readiness to tackle challenging tasks.
171. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are well above the national average. This matches the proportion of students attaining level 5 and above in teachers' assessments for 2001. At the higher grades of level 6 and above, students attained at twice the national average. There has been a trend of improvement in standards for the last three years at a faster rate than for boys nationally. Students with special educational needs and those with EAL make the same good achievement as other students.
172. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average at grades A*-C and on the points scored by each student. All students gained at least a G grade, which is above the national average. Although the proportion attaining the higher grades declined slightly, the proportion attaining the very highest grades of A*/A improved and was twice the national average. History was the second best performing subject in the school and students did significantly better in it than in their other subjects. Standards have been consistently high for the last three years. Overall, this represents good achievement for all students compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9.
173. By the end of Year 9, students of all abilities have a very good knowledge and understanding of the key events and chronology in history. They select and record evidence from written sources well. Students have a good understanding of different causes. Year 8 students were able to effectively discuss the importance of short and long-term reasons for the English Civil War. Students write well in various forms, often with strong empathy. Year 9 students wrote sensitive pamphlets on slavery and very well written letters by higher attaining students to MPs about the conflicting effects of the coming of the railways. Students with special educational needs and those with EAL are helped in this by teachers using appropriate materials and strategies such as starter sentences and writing frames. Students develop good skills of enquiry, organisation and discussion. This is due to a strong emphasis in curriculum planning on studies in depth in each year, analysis and the encouragement of group work. Skills of analysing and evaluating source work and interpreting evidence are begun early in Year 7 and are very well developed by Year 9 as teachers set high expectations. Year 8 students, for instance, effectively examined the conflicting views of Mary Tudor's reign and of the Gunpowder Plot.
174. Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are well above national expectations. Students achieve well compared with their level of attainment on entry to the GCSE course. Students have a very good understanding of the key features under study and well-developed note-making skills by Year 11. Year 10 students do not always write with sufficient conciseness. They have particularly good skills of identifying and analysing sources, such as when Year 10 students thoughtfully weighed up cartoon evidence on Roosevelt's New Deal before coming to a balanced conclusion. Most students write at length with clarity and fluency, often based on thorough research and good organisation. However, lower attaining students do not always structure their work coherently and maturely unless clear guidance is provided.

All students display good oral skills and higher attaining students articulate their views especially well, as they are challenged by rigorous questioning.

175. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teaching is often very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers have high expectations and set students varied and challenging tasks that actively involve them and stretch their skills of evaluation. For instance, enthusiastic students in Year 8 worked imaginatively in pairs to produce a 'recipe' of reasons for the Civil War incorporating ingredients deduced from lively classroom discussion and analysis of different causes. Analysis is less effective if students' basic understanding of the key events or features is inadequately reinforced or checked before moving on. Materials and strategies are used well to match the needs of all students. Students with EAL are encouraged to read aloud; 'buddies' are well chosen to help them work in pairs on analysis of evidence sources, as when a Year 10 class was keenly analysing sources on the New Deal in America. Strategies for promoting concise and coherent writing are being developed, though they need to be applied more frequently. Homework is challenging, regularly set and thoroughly marked, with clear advice for improvement. The well-qualified teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons carefully. Consequently, students make at least good progress in all lessons in acquiring secure knowledge and learning important new skills of enquiry, organisation and source analysis.
176. Teachers monitor students' progress well during lessons through rigorous questioning and moving around in support. The warm relationships with students, often based on good humour, encourage very good classroom management. For instance, very good learning took place in a Year 7 class analysing whether King John was good or bad. This was due to the excellent support given by the enthusiastic teacher to individuals, especially a student with special educational needs. Teachers generate enthusiasm for work and promote a good attitude, which was seen in all lessons. Students listen carefully to instructions and co-operate well with each other and with the teacher. Students in Years 10 and 11 know their predicted grades and in Years 7 to 9 their National Curriculum levels. There is regular monitoring of their current performance and constant reminders of how to improve through regular assessments.
177. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic head of department who has a clear educational direction for history. Clear policies are in place. Schemes of work, helpful to new teachers, are in the process of completion. However, the department has no long-term development plan reflecting the whole school's planning, nor criteria to measure success. The use of ICT is not sufficiently developed in the teaching. The sharing of good practice through systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching through classroom observation is undeveloped.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Very good attainment at the end of Year 9.
- The overall commitment of the school to improve ICT facilities.
- Students have very good attitudes, which help deepen and extend their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Strengthen in-service training arrangements for non-specialist ICT staff to enable a more consistent curriculum taught to students.
- Monitor teaching more effectively to promote the best practice in developing students' learning.

178. The subject is not taken at full GCSE level, though there are opportunities for external accreditation via a certificated course and a half GCSE at the end of Year 11. There is also a pilot group in Year 9 undertaking an accelerated course leading to the half GCSE. There are no previous results to report upon at GCSE but results in the certificate course, whilst good, have declined slightly between 2000 and 2001.
179. Standards on entry to the school are above average overall, but there is a wide range amongst students when they start the school. Good teaching means that students progress well; achievement is good, leading to well above average standards by the end of Year 9.
180. In the work seen, students make good progress and achieve well. In Year 7, students consolidate and extend their technical vocabulary, for example the terms 'relative' and 'absolute' in understanding cell addresses. By the end of Year 8, middle and higher attaining students have a good grasp of dumb and intelligent hardware and the different categories of computers used in business and the public sector. By the end of Year 9, middle and higher attaining students can copy, paste, import and export data with increasing confidence. Similarly, they can undertake increasingly complex communication exercises, for example, creating and presenting simple advertising sequences using images, text, and appropriate audio materials based on software downloaded from the Internet.
181. In Years 10 and 11, students apply and continue to develop their ICT skills in order to enhance their work, particularly in the use of graphical representation. Opportunities and corresponding attainment in the area of controlling, measuring and monitoring are more limited. Most students do not reach a secure understanding of the uses, advantages and disadvantages of particular modelling techniques. Students of all abilities have a more established awareness of the social and economic implications of new technologies for work and leisure.
182. Teaching and learning are good. The main features of good teaching are its clear objectives, good plenary sessions which draw together important learning points and a good knowledge of external accreditation requirements. The teaching of basic skills is good. Teachers' expectations, other than amongst some non-specialist staff, are good. The pace of some lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 was slow due to poor timing and lack of challenge in some tasks, for example in lessons addressing aspects of numeracy. Some teaching lacks appropriate artefacts, and the use of a digital projector for presentations and plenary sessions would assist effective learning and make improved use of lesson time. In those lessons observed, time was sometimes lost by unnecessary repetition, for example of spreadsheet calculations and the application of cell-based formulae. Students are able to pose questions, for example about communication technologies, and share their learning well in group work when given the opportunity to do so.
183. Attitudes and behaviour are very good and these reinforce both the pace and depth of learning in lessons. Teaching which embraces the principles of care and respect for each other is used to foster this positive situation. Students are keen to do well and work hard in lessons though a minority of students in Years 10 and 11 have not managed their time well in completing coursework for external assessment.
184. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work are well considered and match the learning needs of students appropriately. There is a well-focused departmental development plan emphasising wider curriculum opportunities and raising standards, particularly for more able students. The department is catering well for the highest attainers by teaching a half GCSE course with more able students at the end of Year 9. There were, however, some unsatisfactory features in the lessons observed. Students' entitlement between Years 7 and 9

is uneven and a number of groups are taught exclusively by non-specialist staff who are not always confident in presenting material or in challenging higher and lower attaining students effectively. Marking is not always prompt and there were examples of unmarked work in the students' folders in Years 7 to 9.

185. Resources have improved and the ratio of computers to students is at the national average. However, current funding does not allow the purchase of sufficient texts or more specialist software. This restricts the consolidation of learning for students who are overly dependent on spoken presentations from teachers.
186. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained and the subject is well led. There is a clear vision as to how the use of ICT can support and develop learning across the school. Progress in supporting separate components of the subject has been more modest, given recruitment and retention difficulties during the last two academic years. Attempts to strengthen staffing arrangements should be maintained if there is to be a consistent curriculum offered to all students.

Key skills: ICT

187. The principal means by which ICT currently supports learning is through the use of word processing, for example in English and modern foreign languages. There is some application of digital photography for stimulus and recording purposes in art and design, and electronic keyboards are used in music. Similarly, in some subject areas, students are referred to potentially useful web sites for individual research in the sixth form and in work on World War I in Year 9 history. There is good and varied use of ICT, including more advanced software and data and image manipulation in design and technology. The teaching of Latin makes good use of relevant software for the purposes of language development. Overall, however, the planned and systematic use of ICT to support learning is at an early stage of development. Higher order skills such as controlling effects or movements and modelling real or imaginary situations are not supported outside the discrete ICT curriculum. Students have access to a computer club but this is limited both because of accommodation constraints and staff availability.
188. The school has embarked on a programme of staff training to raise competence in the teaching of ICT basic skills. At present, many staff do not feel confident in using ICT and a review is needed on the current level of ICT competence amongst non-specialist staff with a view to all teachers being able to plan and deliver basic skills in ICT through their particular subject. A positive approach to planning for the teaching of ICT by subjects across the curriculum has started but is at an early stage. Responsibilities for evaluating and monitoring need to be clarified so that the school can be assured that the full National Curriculum requirements in ICT across the curriculum are being met. Although there were no specific references to ICT in the last inspection, the school has invested strongly in this area during the last two years. The ratio of one computer to every seven students meets current national comparisons and the adoption of a partially wireless local area network allows modern laptop equipment to be used appropriately in classrooms that are remote from the ICT suite. This equipment is currently under-utilised by subject departments. There is no clear strategy in place to promote the use of this flexible facility with the result that there is over-reliance on the limited accommodation provided in the specialist ICT suite.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in French and German in GCSE examinations are well above average.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and high expectations.
- Students' positive attitudes towards their learning, very good relationships with their teachers and their excellent behaviour are major factors in enabling them to achieve well.
- The good quality of teaching enables students to make good progress.
- The use of ICT to support and extend learning.

Areas for improvement

- The need to increase students' opportunities to use the languages independently and to gather and give information informally.
- Continue to develop the use of assessment across the department to ensure all students make appropriate progress in lessons.
- Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory and hampers students' progress in acquiring speaking and listening skills.

189. The standards achieved overall in French and German are well above average. In 2001 the proportions of students attaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in both French and German were well above average in relation to all schools. They were below average when compared to other grammar schools. This represents good achievement in relation to students' prior attainment. Students achieve better results in French and German than they do in other subjects. All students, including those with special educational needs, with EAL and gifted and talented students, make good progress through Years 7 to 9 and their rate of progress accelerates during Years 10 and 11 and they achieve very well. In 2001, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards were well above average.

190. In work seen during the inspection, standards achieved by students currently in Years 9 and 11 are well above average. By the end of Year 9 students respond appropriately and promptly to instructions and questions in French and German delivered at normal spoken speed. They write fairly accurately at length and in detail about a number of topics such as their home, family and leisure activities. They describe events in the past, present and future and express their opinions, giving reasons for their views. Listening skills are well developed and students identify the main points and detail from recordings, higher attaining students needing little or no repetition of speech at near normal speed. Higher attaining students write imaginatively for narrative purposes and to discuss their opinions about school and leisure, using a wide range of structures and vocabulary, manipulating the language with ease to suit their own needs. In some classes speaking skills are very well developed with students responding spontaneously and using the language to exchange information. In others, speaking skills are less secure and some students lack confidence in using the language for themselves without recourse to written notes and prompts.

191. Students make good progress through Years 7 to 9, increasing their understanding and command of both French and German. In a Year 8 German class for example, students describe their leisure activities and give simple opinions, and in Year 9 in German, students refine their use of the language and are able to express more detailed opinions about food and drink. In French, students in Year 7 are able to describe their leisure activities and in Year 9 they discuss their activities in more detail, saying how frequently they play different sports and why they enjoy activities or not. By the end of Year 11 students extend their range of vocabulary and structures and transfer language from one context to another with ease. They have a very good understanding of the way the languages work and usually apply grammar rules accurately in writing. In question and answer activities in lessons in both French and German they are able to discuss topics such as work experience and their home life in detail, giving their views and justifying their opinions and using a variety of tenses and structures.

They use a very good range of language, using a variety of means to express and link their ideas in speech and writing. Listening skills are developed well; students identify the main points and detail from recordings at normal speed, lower attaining students doing so with guidance and some repetition. Standards achieved by the majority of students are in line with the requirements of the higher levels at GCSE.

192. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Over half of the lessons seen were good or better and almost a quarter were very good or excellent. Examples of very good or excellent teaching were seen in Year 11 in French and in Year 8 in German. There are significant strengths in teaching across the department. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; this enables them to plan their lessons so that students are able to build effectively on previous learning and to conduct activities effectively and often exclusively in the language being learned. Students therefore have frequent exposure to excellent role models, and listening and speaking skills are usually well developed as a result. Teachers ensure all students understand and are able to succeed in using the language through both skilful questioning and careful monitoring of individual progress when students are completing tasks. Students are routinely told the objectives of lessons and the use of review of previously learned language at the outset of lessons and recap of new language at the end is very effective in enabling students to consolidate learning and evaluate their own progress. Activities are usually sequenced well so that students build effectively on what has gone before. In some lessons in both French and German, progress slows because planning is too ambitious and students are not always given enough time or opportunity to consolidate their learning before moving on.
193. Teachers have very good relationships with students and in the lessons where students make the best progress the supportive yet purposeful atmosphere enables students to become confident linguists because they are not afraid of making mistakes. In a Year 11 French lesson, all students were able to succeed in responding to questions about their work experience, for example, because of the skilful questioning of the teacher which challenged higher attaining students and gave lower attaining students a model for their answer. Teachers make very good use of resources such as the overhead projector, flashcards and the board to make clear presentations of new language and provide support for students' activities. In a Year 8 German lesson, for example, flashcards were used very effectively to demonstrate how to make comparisons in the language. Students rapidly understood and were able to use the structures themselves. Students make rapid progress when they are given the opportunity to practise new language informally and to exchange information in pairs and small groups. In lessons where students are not given sufficient opportunity to do this, progress is slower and some students lack confidence in using the language for themselves. Similarly, when lower and average attaining students are not given sufficient support in listening activities, they have difficulty completing tasks.
194. Behaviour is always very good and often excellent and students have very positive attitudes towards their learning. When they are given the opportunity to evaluate and plan their progress they take this seriously. They enjoy the brisk pace and challenge of some lessons and are concerned to do well.
195. The management of the department is good. The head of faculty has a clear idea of the strengths and areas for improvement in the department. She has only recently taken up her post but has already made a significant impact upon achieving consistency within the department and across the languages. Since the last report, standards have improved, as has the overall quality of teaching. Good use is being made of ICT to support and extend learning. Assessment procedures are very good and the use of assessment data is very effective in tracking and planning for students' progress overall. Assessment is used very well

to plan for the progress of different groups of students and to involve students in evaluating their own progress but this is not yet consistent across the department. The monitoring and development of teaching and learning are being established and teachers are beginning to work well as a team, exchanging ideas and sharing good practice. Teachers are committed to raising standards and have a good capacity to improve further. The poor acoustics in the majority of language classrooms hamper progress made by students in speaking and listening activities. Schemes of work ensure both statutory requirements and the demands of examinations are met but do not give sufficient detail about how topics are to be tackled by different groups of students within lessons and this leads to inconsistencies in expectations of students. Students benefit from additional lessons to prepare for examinations.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in GCSE work in Year 11.
- Students show very positive attitudes and behaviour is very good.
- Relationships within the department are excellent.
- The range of opportunities and standards in instrumental tuition are very good and teaching is excellent.
- The standards reached in extra-curricular work are excellent and bring credit to the school.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in classroom work in Years 7 to 9.
- In Years 7 to 9 the statutory requirement to teach singing as part of the National Curriculum is not met. Students sing insufficiently and irregularly.
- Learning is too keyboard-based; students make insufficient use of their own or other instruments in classroom work.
- Accommodation is poor and impacts on standards.
- The department is poorly equipped; this impacts adversely on standards.

196. GCSE examination results between 1997 and 2001 were well above average when compared with all schools and average when compared with similar schools. Only small numbers have taken the examination. Results in 2001 were typical with 100 per cent of the students gaining pass grades in the range A*-C.

197. Students enter the school with very variable musical experience, related to the quality of their musical education in their previous schools, interests and level of home support. Some students enter with below average attainment but most students enter with average attainment or above in music, and teachers' assessments confirm this. By Year 9, standards are broadly average across a range from level 4 to level 7 with the majority of students working towards level 5; some talented students attain higher levels. Overall, students' achievement is unsatisfactory over these three years, the poor accommodation, resourcing and weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum having had an adverse effect upon their progress. Students have not had sufficient experience in singing to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Students are beginning to make appropriate use of the technology available, for example in developing performances on keyboards, and instrumental performing skills are broadly average over a very wide range of attainment. Students have insufficient experience of instruments other than keyboards and insufficient opportunity to use their own instruments. This includes the many talented students who receive instrumental tuition in school or privately, including those playing at grade 8 level. Students compose effective pieces using the technology; the understanding of structures and devices of the most musical students is

secure but the majority compose mathematically. Music-reading skills are barely satisfactory and many students use letters written under notes or on the keyboards; this is a weakness. The more confident show good improvisation skills. Students listen most intently and respectfully to each other when performing and their general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structure and well-known pieces of music, is satisfactory. The more experienced use appropriate technical vocabulary in appraising but the majority make insufficient use of musical terms. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are relatively higher than in Year 9 where students receive less music teaching.

198. In GCSE work, where students have opted to follow a course in music, standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. Students' instrumental skills are good, averaging about grade 5 to 6 in Year 11 (and grade 4 in Year 10), but students do not sing as a group because of the academic approach used. The most talented students show very good understanding of devices and structures in composing and create imaginative and original compositions. They make good use of music technologies (including those at home) but are disadvantaged by the lack of computers in the department to help them develop pieces and notate their work. Students listen very respectfully to each and their general musical knowledge is satisfactory. Students' achievement is good and supported by the free instrumental tuition available to students taking examinations in music.
199. The quality of teaching varies from poor to good in classroom work. Overall it is unsatisfactory. All teaching seen in examination work during the inspection was satisfactory or better but half of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 was unsatisfactory. Teachers show secure subject knowledge so that they teach confidently and often use their skills as musicians well in lessons. In the best lessons, instructions are clear and the students understand the objectives but in weaker lessons this is not so and learning is poor. Much time has been spent putting schemes of work together but major weaknesses are the lack of regular singing in lessons, the over-reliance on keyboard work and the academic approach taken. In the best lessons, for example in examination work, expectations are high but in the earlier years students are insufficiently challenged in most lessons. Overall, the teaching is not rigorous enough.
200. Students with special needs are well integrated and make similar progress to the other students but lessons do not cater for the full range of attainment found in classes so that the least experienced often flounder and the gifted and talented are insufficiently stretched. The best lessons have clear structures and are well organised; student management is very good so that lessons are orderly and time is well used. As a result, relationships are excellent, even in the poorer lessons; students are good humoured and work well, especially in practical work. Lessons start briskly but the pace is often too slow. Even so, students remain focused, supported by the use of visual aids such as video in the more successful sessions, but illustrations and classroom display are used insufficiently at all levels. In the better lessons, the assessment of students is supportive and shows them clearly how they can improve. Homework is set appropriately to extend students' learning. Most students like practical work and use equipment sensibly, but take a less positive approach to written work. They are attentive, work productively and are very supportive of each other. Students are keen to answer questions and the most enthusiastic involve themselves in opportunities offered by the department and musical opportunities outside school. In GCSE work, attitudes are mature and most students take advantage of the opportunities in extra-curricular work; this strengthens their achievement.
201. Almost 100 boys, about 11 per cent of the students, receive instrumental lessons from seven visiting teachers; this is an above average number. Standards are well above average. The progress and achievement of students are very good in relation to their ages and the time they

have received tuition but practice is too variable and students do not have practice books to support this. Monitoring of students' progress in tuition needs strengthening. Teaching is excellent as seen in string, brass and piano tuition. The curriculum insufficiently supports instrumental tuition and tuition makes little impact on the quality of students' musical experiences in the classroom; this is a weakness already identified by the department and there are plans in hand to deal with the issue. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is good and includes orchestra, brass band, string quartets and wind, string, brass and guitar ensembles. Standards and the quality of teaching are excellent and individual students reach very high standards as heard and seen in video recordings of concerts. The visiting teachers give excellent support to these groups. The school promotes regular concerts involving large numbers of students and visits to concerts, opera and ballets, such as 'The Nutcracker' in Birmingham and musicals such as 'Les Misérables' in London. Music groups perform for special events but the regular use of live and recorded music in assemblies is underdeveloped. Groups perform at local arts and charity events such as the Handsworth Park Festival. Music makes a valuable contribution to students' personal development, especially their social and cultural development. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, support of parents and the enthusiasm of the talented musicians whose performances and successes bring credit to the school and the department.

202. The new head of department is committed to raising standards and is well supported by the school so that leadership and management are now satisfactory. There is much to do. Schemes of work, systems for monitoring and evaluating the subject's performance, planning for the future, assessment schemes and strategies to raise standards are all under review. There are useful and developing links with other schools but curricular links with primary schools need strengthening. The soon to be improved music accommodation is poor. Noise from other rooms is distracting and within rooms it poses a health and safety risk. The use of two small rooms for half-size classes is a waste of resources. The use of the rooms as tutor group bases makes it impossible to leave equipment out causing additional wear and tear and wasted time. Despite much spending on music recently, resourcing is poor. The department is inadequately resourced in terms of computers, keyboards, and classroom instruments to enhance creative work, music for singing, playing and the library, OHP and recording equipment. There is no technical support in music and insufficient time is given to the head of department to organise music. Since the last inspection when provision did not meet the needs of all students, there has been unsatisfactory improvement in implementing the National Curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The new head of department is giving a very clear direction to the work of the department.
- Teachers work well together as a team; there is a strong commitment to improve.
- Good relationships and students' positive attitudes contribute to a good learning atmosphere.
- Students who take GCSE obtain good results and achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- Poor facilities on and off site constrain teaching and learning in physical education; large amounts of time are lost when travelling to games fields.
- Improved planning of the teaching of core physical education lessons in Year 11 is needed to fully meet statutory requirements.
- There is a need to extend the range of tasks and activities planned to cater for the wide range of abilities.
- Better access to computers is required in order to improve investigative elements of examination work.

203. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Years 9 and 11. The standards at the end of Year 9 represent good progress in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the school. The quality of teaching in physical education is good in Years 7 to 9, but unsatisfactory overall in Years 10 to 11. This is because the students taking the core course are not taught the full programmes of study. The teaching of students taking the GCSE course is good. Students have good positive attitudes; behaviour is good and students respond well to teaching. The department has made satisfactory progress since the 2000 inspection.
204. Students enter Year 7 with standards below average; due to good teaching, students by the end of Year 9 reach standards that are average. Teacher assessments do not agree; standards are judged to be well above average but these are too generous. By the end of Year 11, students demonstrate standards that are average. A small cohort of boys take GCSE and they attain results well above the national average, but only a small number reach the A* and A grades. The 2001 results show a slight improvement from previous years. The small size of the cohort means that statistically comparisons are not valid. These students achieved at a good level in relation to their level of work when they were in Year 9.
205. The average standards reached by the end of Year 9 represent good achievement by students compared with their standard on entry. Students, including those with special educational needs and those with EAL, show competence in the range of activities seen during the inspection, including dance, football and table tennis. In Years 7 and 8, students can take partial responsibility for their own warm-up and show a sound understanding of the reasons for warming up the body prior to taking part in physical activities. By Year 9, students know that the reasons for warm-up are to maximise performance and to reduce the effect of injury. In dance, Year 7 students were able to complete a short dance routine effectively, but a small minority had difficulty fitting their dance to the timing of the music. However, students were successfully developing the basic fundamental of dance movements and showed a good grasp of how to evaluate the work of others using appropriate criteria to make their judgements. In games activities, students have a sound knowledge of the rules, conventions and appropriate skills to enable them to participate successfully. Many know and successfully demonstrate correct techniques of controlling and passing in football and when placed under a little pressure within a conditioned game the skill is successful; higher attaining student do this well within a competitive small-sided game. Attitudes and behaviour are good and at times very good and these aspects help learning. All students in Years 7, 8 and 9, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language, are fully integrated into lessons.
206. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards reached by Year 11 students in the core physical education programme are broadly in line with the level expected nationally. Students following GCSE show standards that are above the national average. In the core course followed by all students, high attaining Year 11 students make effective use of a range of basketball skills within a game and show sound tactical awareness. Year 11 students with learning difficulties and low attaining students contribute well to the passing aspects of the

- game. Skill levels vary, for example, in basketball, but students continue to show a good understanding of warm-up: the benefit of being able to improve performance and to minimise injury. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good, and at times very good; this considerably enhances attainment and progress. Students' attitudes and perseverance were well demonstrated in a Year 10 hockey lesson where adverse weather conditions were ignored as students worked well to develop basic stick control work and a range of passing activities.
207. Year 11 students opting to follow a GCSE course show a good understanding of factors contributing to fitness. Students show good knowledge and understanding of the circulatory and skeletal systems and the effect that physical exercise has on the systems. Many start to understand how muscles work during exercise. Students successfully develop their understanding and expertise in both theoretical and practical aspects working along side one another, for example, in the treatment of muscle injuries. They show a good knowledge of the role of the coach and the differences in coaching individuals and teams. Orally and in their written work, students demonstrate a good understanding of these aspects. However, when presenting work, students make very little use of computers in order to enhance presentation or research the topic further. GCSE students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment as they build on the basic skills learned in Years 7 to 9. All students, including those with special educational needs and those with EAL, are well integrated into lessons and receive good support from teachers and their peers.
208. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 much of the teaching and learning is good, but the provision is weakened overall because the full programmes of study are not taught to students following the core programme and this is unsatisfactory.
209. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding and, at times, very good knowledge of physical education. They apply this very successfully and this has a positive impact upon the students' learning. For example, in a Year 11 basketball lesson, very good knowledge of change of pace in attack placed appropriate pressure on students' skills within a basketball game; this appropriately extended and developed their skill. Teachers have high expectations of both effort and behaviour of students, as shown in a Year 9 table tennis lesson where insistence on quality and accuracy made a big improvement to the service. The result of these high expectations is that students are keen to do well, and learn rapidly. Most students work hard and maintain their efforts and concentration, as seen in both Year 7 and 8 football lessons where they persevere, working on simple dribbling and control activities in order to improve. Students work successfully in small groups, challenging and competing with one another, constantly improving their performance as seen in a Year 10 hockey lesson. Teachers make good use of questions and answers to reinforce the students' knowledge and understanding at the start of most lessons. This was well exemplified in a Year 11 basketball lesson about putting pressure on skills within a game.
210. Ongoing teacher evaluation in lessons is good and sometimes very good. As a consequence students are at times able to make good progress; teachers evaluate, analyse and act in order to improve individuals' skills and group learning. Overall, good assessment, good subject knowledge, good expectations and good relationships combine to ensure all students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning. Teachers know their students well and adapt their teaching strategies effectively to meet the needs of individual students. In all lessons throughout the age range, students with special educational needs and those with EAL are well integrated and make good progress in line with their peers. The monitoring of teaching is undertaken within the department by the head of department. However, further development of regular and systematic monitoring of teaching is needed in order to share good practice within the department and to raise the quality of teaching further.

211. Students show good attitudes and behaviour in physical education lessons, which underpin and extend learning. The department offers a varied range of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all students and about one sixth of students in the school regularly participate. This enhances the curriculum and provides opportunities to extend the more gifted and talented students.
212. The leadership of the new head of department is satisfactory overall, but has some good features. He is giving a very good, clear educational direction, which is beginning to shape the future of the subject. He receives good support from his colleagues. At present, provision for students following the core physical education programme in Year 11 is unsatisfactory. The programme fails to meet statutory requirements in Year 11, as the complete Programmes of Study are not being taught. Long-term planning of the curriculum and department development are areas for improvement in order to ensure better progression and continuity. The curriculum, assessment system and department planning need to be reviewed, upgraded and agreed by the department to ensure consistency, with the inclusion of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In examination courses, computers are not sufficiently used for presentation and investigation.
213. Overall, the school's indoor provision for physical education is poor; this is a constraint to learning. A recent bid has been made for New Opportunities Funding for a sports hall. However, this is a long-term plan in order to try to resolve the current problem where facilities severely constrain teaching. The multi-purpose hall is used for physical education but for many activities it is an inappropriate indoor space. The school provision is supplemented by using a local leisure centre, which includes use of the swimming pool and sports hall for some groups of students; this is a short distance from the school. Changing accommodation at school is barely adequate for the numbers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well and gain very high results in the GCSE short course examination.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- Teaching draws successfully on students' different ethnic and religious backgrounds to promote learning in the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 does not always challenge students enough to consider religious issues.
- Resources for learning are inadequate.
- Assessment information is not used effectively to help students improve their work in Years 7 to 9.

214. Levels of attainment in work seen are well above average levels expected in the local agreed syllabus at the end of Years 9 and 11. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Students have a very positive attitude to the subject and this is a major factor in enabling them to achieve well in religious education. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.
215. All students have been entered for the GCSE short course in recent years and results at grades A*-C have been very high compared to national averages for all maintained schools. The number of students gaining A* grades is extremely high with half the candidates achieving this grade in 2000 and over a quarter in 2001.

216. Work seen during the inspection from students in Years 7 to 9 shows that standards overall are well above those expected at the age of 14. Most students begin Year 7 with attainment above the level expected in the local agreed syllabus. All students achieve well and make good progress in Years 7 to 9, including those with EAL. They develop a good knowledge and understanding of the major religious traditions and can explain what it means to belong to different faith communities. Students are able to think through and discuss questions of meaning and purpose, as in a Year 9 lesson when students demonstrated a thoughtful appreciation of contrasting Christian perspectives on euthanasia. They are generally fluent and articulate when describing a situation or explaining a point of view. Students' written work is usually accurate, well expressed and mature; for example, extended writing on religious leaders such as Martin Luther King, Gandhi and the Dalai Lama showed that students could research information successfully and evaluate religious and ethical ideas effectively.
217. The overall standard of work seen of students currently following the GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11 is well above the national average. All students, including those with EAL, make good progress during the course. Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity, and of one other world religion. They demonstrate a thoughtful appreciation of a wide range of religious and ethical topics, such as arguments for and against belief in God, issues of war and peace, and attitudes to animals. Most students are able to produce relevant evidence and persuasive arguments to support and evaluate different points of view, both orally and in writing.
218. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9 and it is never unsatisfactory. Teachers generally have a secure knowledge of the topics they are teaching and a very good understanding of the GCSE requirements, which ensures that students are well prepared for the examination at the end of Year 11. Where teachers are not subject specialists, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend and challenge students' thinking and understanding. Work is usually well planned and an appropriate range of teaching methods ensures that students make good progress in lessons; a particular strength is the way in which teachers, through good planning and skilful questioning, draw on students' different ethnic and religious backgrounds to promote learning. In the best lessons expectations are high, and students are challenged to think deeply and logically about religious and ethical issues, as in a Year 10 lesson when students were researching and working out different Christian perspectives on animal rights. However, in some lessons on the Muslim and Sikh traditions, taught to students in Years 7 and 8, teachers' questioning was not always probing or challenging enough to enable students to make maximum progress. Teachers pay good attention to developing language skills, which helps students use correct vocabulary and write well-argued essays. Students are also encouraged to use ICT for learning, especially when doing research and presenting project work. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. A clear determination to do well and high levels of interest are major factors in enabling students to achieve well in religious education. The teachers are successful in using these attributes of the students to ensure overall good provision leading to high standards.
219. The leadership and management of the department are good and there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Statutory requirements are now fully met and schemes of work provide effective guidance for teachers. The overall quality of teaching has improved and is now consistently satisfactory or better. At present, assessment information in Years 7 to 9 is not used enough to help students set targets for improving their work. Resources for learning are inadequate. There are not enough text and topic books to support and extend students' learning effectively, and the department relies too much on photocopied materials and school-produced resources, which are not always well presented. With the

recent appointment of a second experienced specialist teacher, the department is in a good position to continue to improve.

OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

Latin

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

Strengths

- The high standards achieved in examinations.
- The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject.
- The very positive attitudes of the students towards their learning.
- The very good quality of resources and use of ICT to support and extend learning.
- The subject's contribution towards students' awareness of their cultural and linguistic inheritance.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory.
- Resources for the subject are inadequate.

220. Standards achieved in Latin, both in examinations and in lessons, are well above average. Students have a very good understanding of the way the language works and are able to identify, explain and apply patterns for themselves. They have a very good understanding of linguistic terms and use them with confidence to explain their ideas in discussion.
221. Teaching and learning are consistently very good and lead to students making rapid progress not only in their understanding of the language but also in their knowledge of classical civilisation. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject result in imaginative and enjoyable lessons where students regularly experience success. In a Year 9 lesson, students were rapidly able to recognise and translate verbs in past tenses because of the teacher's very effective use of the board to illustrate how the structures work. Every opportunity is taken to develop students' understanding of the linguistic inheritance of classical languages and their relevance today. The teacher employs imaginative strategies to bring the elements of classical culture to life; for example, Year 9 students took part in a Greek lesson, which not only gave them an insight into what it was like for a Roman boy in the schools of the day, but also gave them insight into the Greek influence upon English spellings. Resources produced in the department to enable students to work at their own pace are attractive and of very good quality. They, together with ICT, are used very effectively to consolidate and extend students' learning. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, students participated in a high level of debate about Latin grammar and eliminated any misunderstandings or difficulties because of the very effective use of a list of definitions of technical linguistic terms. ICT is used to very good effect both to extend and to consolidate learning in all aspects of the course. For example, Year 10 students have a very good understanding of the structures used to determine tenses because they explore and identify those patterns for themselves using *Excel* worksheets.
222. Students respond very positively to the high expectations of their teacher. They listen attentively, work well together in small groups and have very good relationships with each other and their teacher. Behaviour is excellent and students enjoy their lessons.
223. The subject is managed very effectively; the subject curriculum is broad and balanced, fully meets the requirements of the examinations and makes a relevant and valuable contribution to students' learning across the wider school curriculum as well as to their literacy and cultural

development. Assessment is used very effectively to plan for progress in lessons and monitor learning. Poor acoustics in one teaching room hamper learning and the resources made available to the subject are inadequate to sustain the very good provision.

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. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	per cent gaining grades A-E		per cent gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Advanced Subsidiary							
MATHEMATICS	68	81.8	70	25.8	31	2.3	2.2
CHEMISTRY	47	95.7	86	53.2	41	3.2	2.8
BIOLOGY	32	96.9	83	56.3	34	3.4	2.6
PHYSICS	42	92.9	85	40.5	40	2.9	2.8
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	10	100	83	50	25	3.5	2.3
BUSINESS STUDIES	35	94.3	86	31.4	27	3.2	2.4
ECONOMICS	14	64.3	89	14.3	47	1.6	3.42
COMPUTER STUDIES	42	85.7	78	38.1	20	2.7	2.0
ART AND DESIGN	10	80	86.7	30	43.5	1.9	2.9
MUSIC	1	100	N/A	0	N/A	2.0	N/A
GEOGRAPHY	13	84.6	90	23.1	39	2.3	2.9
HISTORY	31	96.8	93	45.2	42	3.2	3.0
RELIGIOUS STUDIES	20	80	91.4	36	41.5	2.7	2.9
POLITICS	17	47.1	N/A	5.9	N/A	1.2	N/A
PSYCHOLOGY	13	84.6	83	30.8	29	2.6	2.4
ENGLISH LITERATURE	31	100	93	29	36	2.9	2.9
ENGLISH LANGUAGE and LITERATURE	21	66.7	N/A	4.8	N/A	1.1	N/A
FRENCH	9	100	90	77.8	46	4.1	3.1
GERMAN	1	100	90.7	100	42	5.0	3.0
GENERAL STUDIES	115	89.6	80	23.5	26	2.3	2.3
Advanced Supplementary							
MATHEMATICS	4	100	62	0	15	1.3	1.5
BUSINESS STUDIES	1	N/A	1	0	N/A	3.9	N/A

Subject	Number entered	per cent gaining grades A-E		per cent gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GCE A-level and AVCE courses							
MATHEMATICS	52	82	87	44	43	5.5	5.8
CHEMISTRY	39	87.2	90	38.5	43	5.4	5.9
BIOLOGY	33	90.1	88	30.3	34	4.7	5.3
PHYSICS	25	76	88	48	40	5.8	5.7
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	5	100	91	20	30	5.6	5.4
BUSINESS STUDIES	14	71	92	29	32	3.9	5.5
ECONOMICS	14	93	89	29	36	4.7	5.5
COMPUTER STUDIES	23	100	86	43.5	23	6.3	4.6
ART AND DESIGN	5	100	96	40	46	7.6	6.6
GEOGRAPHY	9	100	92	22	38	5.3	5.7
HISTORY	17	100	88	59	35	6.8	5.5
POLITICS	12	92	N/A	25	N/A	5.5	N/A
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	12	92	91	8	30	3.5	5.3
ENGLISH LITERATURE	29	76	95	10	37	3.7	5.9
FRENCH	6	100	89	67	38	7.0	5.6
GERMAN	3	100	91	0	40	6.0	5.8
OTHER LANGUAGES	1	100	93	100	56	10.0	6.8
GENERAL STUDIES	100	91	85	33	30	5.4	4.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In physics, examination results were in line with the national average in 2001 and the students attained as expected considering their GCSE results. One lesson was observed. In this lesson the teaching was very good. There was a well thought out balance between times spent teaching and amplifying students' ideas and those where students discovered for themselves with their own circuits. It was a very productive period where much was learned about potential dividers.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good; teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and enthuse their students about the subject.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and lead to a very good classroom atmosphere where good quality learning can take place.
- Students' results at A-level are better than expected based on their performance at GCSE.
- Mathematics is popular; a large number of students take the subject each year.
- Students are appreciative of the quality of the teaching and course planning.

Areas for improvement

- The breadth of teaching strategies, including the use of ICT, to stimulate students' involvement and initiative and improve further their ability to be independent learners.
- Raising standards in AS, A2 and further mathematics examinations to ensure consistently good achievement.
- The development of the mathematical aspect of key skills for students not studying mathematics.

224. The A-level results in mathematics in 2001 were broadly in line with national averages, in both the ranges A/B and A-E. There has been a trend of improvement in the last three years so that school results now compare more favourably with national figures. In further mathematics, there was an increase in entries, and seven out of the nine students entered obtained a pass grade. There were no A grades, but five students gained a B grade. In relation to their GCSE grades, students achieved well in both examinations.

225. There was also a wide spread in the results of the large number of students entered for the new AS examination, with overall standards in line with national expectations. About one student in six failed to obtain a pass grade. A larger number of students than expected left the course. The majority of those who left had taken the Year 12 course in order to strengthen their mathematics and in Year 13 pursued the courses of their first choice. Overall, retention rates are good.

226. The standard of work of current students is also in line with the national average. A high proportion of students are on course to gain their target grades and their good achievement is due to the thorough teaching, the regular assessments, and their own positive approach to the subject. A small number of students each year take the further mathematics paper, and obtain satisfactory results. They obviously enjoy the lessons, but they are not provided with sufficient time to complete this more challenging work.

227. Students in Year 12 enjoy the challenge of the AS-level course. They found the transition from Year 11 to the higher level relatively straightforward because a number of them had started their AS modules in Year 11. In a Year 12 lesson concerned with the points of intersection of graphs, students initially lacked confidence. However, the teacher sensed this, asked them easier questions in order to consolidate basic understanding, and then set more challenging tasks in later work. When they are set questions to consolidate their understanding, they concentrate well, they work very hard to the end of the lesson, and they are provided with effective support by the teacher. Extension work is set for the higher attaining students so that all students work at their own level. The overall pace of the lesson and of learning is very good.
228. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is occasionally very good. The best features of the very good teaching are the teachers' secure knowledge of their subject, and the detailed planning of the lessons, including the tasks through which students will learn. There is strong mutual respect between teachers and students. The result is the development of a very good working atmosphere, with teacher and students working together on the challenge of mathematics. In a Year 13 further mathematics lesson, for instance, the teacher recalled previous work on integration, before introducing the topic of integration by parts. The very good structure to the work gives the students confidence, and they tackle the tasks set enthusiastically, with effective support available from their teacher. In a very good Year 12 lesson on quadratic inequalities, students were challenged to explain their answers to their peers to test their understanding of the topic. The teacher's relaxed approach gave them confidence to participate, and very good learning followed as a result. In the lessons where teaching was satisfactory, planning concentrated on the lesson content and too little on methods for achieving good learning and on considering how best to involve students in the learning process.
229. The initiatives to improve students' literacy skills are beginning to impact on mathematics work in the sixth form. For instance, a number of mathematics teachers are stressing the meanings of key words, and encouraging students to write down their understanding of these by using their own words.
230. The assessment of students' work is undertaken through regular tests. These provide good preparation for the external module tests which contribute to their final grade. Students are given target grades for their AS and A2 examinations, which are moderated according to recent performance. These targets give appropriate impetus to their work. The monitoring of students' homework is good; the scrutiny of classwork is less thorough, and as a result, a small minority of students develop habits of untidy presentation of work.
231. The work in mathematics in the sixth form is well led by the head of department. Teachers are experienced and committed, and the A-level teaching is shared across the department. Teaching plans for the A-level courses are kept under review. Good quality textbooks supplement the teaching, and it is unfortunate that a set of new texts has been delayed by the publishers. Little use is made of ICT, however, to add interest and to broaden the range of teaching strategies. There is very little opportunity in the sixth form for students not taking the AS course to improve their mathematical ability, for example through a structured key skills course.
232. Overall, improvement in mathematics in the sixth form since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The new AS-level course has been introduced, with satisfactory outcomes, and the scheme of work has been upgraded to accommodate the revised course. In most classes, teachers are aware of the need to ensure that appropriate tasks are provided for the wide range of student attainment. The department has also established a revision club where

students can be given extra help. Students appreciate the quality of the teaching, the good structure of the A-level courses, and the high expectation that they will work hard. The department development plan, however, is not closely related to school priorities, and lacks longer-term objectives.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Good teaching from well-informed and enthusiastic teachers promotes good learning.
- Good student involvement in the formulation and development of ideas results in good learning.
- A well-organised field course, which stimulates interest and teaches practical ecology well, has the effect of effectively reinforcing and extending the work in school.

Areas for improvement

- More consistent marking to enable students to see where they went wrong and how their work could be improved.
- Encouraging students to work more by themselves, supported by a better-equipped main library.

233. At A-level in 2001, attainment was in line with the national average. Students' achievement, relative to their GCSE grades, was good and particularly good for the higher attainers. At Advanced Subsidiary level in 2001, standards were above the national average with over half the grades being either A or B. Over the last three years the standards have risen from below the national average to become in line with it. At present there are few girls doing biology; nevertheless they performed better than the boys at AS-level in 2001. The numbers of students opting for advanced biology is steady at around 30. Almost all of those who join the AS course and, last year, all of those doing the A2 course, completed their studies.

234. The standards seen in the present Year 13 are above average and match their AS results. They achieve well when compared to the grades that they obtained at GCSE. The students' good learning was well exemplified by a lesson in which they showed a sound understanding of the focusing mechanisms of the human eye, together with its aperture control and how a range of optical defects could be corrected. This learning was well shared by confident, well-researched presentations by students.

235. Students in Year 12 also show standards that are above average: most are building well upon their GCSE knowledge and skills. A group were able, without teacher intervention, to confidently debate the social, ethical and economic consequences of cloning in humans and other animals from a scientific point of view for most of a lesson.

236. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. Lessons are well thought out to deliver definite objectives, which are made clear to the students. The teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and used well to produce interesting lessons with broad perspectives, taught to high levels that challenge the students' thinking. Most lessons incorporate a wide range of teaching strategies, thus promoting interest and a fuller understanding. Teachers provide clear explanations and regular checks of the students' learning, followed by reinforcement if necessary. Learning from the previous lesson is not always monitored, nor is the new learning regularly brought together at the end. In the best lessons students' ideas are sought and they are stimulated to develop them; other lessons are more teacher dominated. This provides students with secure knowledge, but less challenge and interest. Teachers make good use of their knowledge of examinations to optimise the students' response to questions.

Marking of students' work is very variable in quality: whilst some of it gives useful corrections and suggestions for improvement, other marking is more cursory. Assessments of end of unit tests give students a useful insight into their probable AS/A2 grades. Suitably challenging homework is frequently set, requiring thought and research.

237. The quality of learning is good. The students work hard and most are keen to learn, although some are happier to be told and reassured by questioning than they are to reason for themselves. The enthusiasm of some students, who were studying the way that the human eye works, was well shown by a group who opted to continue their studies after school. Learning is greatly helped by their good relations with teachers, which results in a productive two-way traffic. Teachers are always willing to help, thus individual progress is monitored well and supported. Teachers encourage students to work by themselves and give some guidance in this area, but it could be improved. The main library offers inadequate computer facilities, a limited range of sixth form books and few scientific periodicals to support research and a wider interest.
238. The subject is well led and managed. There are good schemes of work, enabling teachers to use their very good subject knowledge to present the subject in sufficient depth for the students to access high grades. There are good assessment procedures and they are used well to provide assistance to the individual student and to modify curriculum delivery. The curriculum is enriched by a very well organised field course at Stansfeld that delivers a good introduction to ecology and sampling methods. Helpful visits are arranged, such as the one to the Botanical Gardens in Oxford. Visiting speakers enhance the curriculum, such as the one whose subject was Jenner. The staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. They work well as a unit. The accommodation is good. The resources in the department are good, apart from some shortages in ICT. They are effectively deployed and maintained by hard working technicians.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Good teaching from well-qualified teachers, which leads to good learning.
- A well-organised department, with good facilities that are used effectively to ensure that students learn well.

Areas for improvement

- More involvement of students in the formulation and development of ideas in order to broaden their learning skills
- More encouragement of students to work independently of the teacher, with the support of a better resourced main library.

239. In the 2001 A-level examination, students' attainment was in line with the national average. Their achievement was good overall relative to their GCSE grades, with the higher attainers doing particularly well. In the last three years standards have risen from below the national average to be in line with it. At AS-level in 2001, standards were above average and over half of the candidates obtained grades A or B. Students therefore achieved well. Whilst only three girls took the A2 examination in 2001, more participated in the AS-level where they outperformed boys. The number of students wishing to do sixth form chemistry is steady at around 45. Nearly all the students who set out on the AS course complete it and last year all students who began the A2 course finished it.
240. The standards of work of the current Year 13 students are high and their achievement is good when compared with their grades that they obtained at GCSE. A group, who were considering energy changes in reactions, demonstrates this. They showed a good understanding of bond enthalpy and were able to use this to find overall energy changes for reactions. They knew about Hess's Law and the Born-Haber cycle and could construct energy level diagrams.
241. Students in Year 12 are working well and have made good progress from the standards they achieved at GCSE. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This was very apparent from a class who were reviewing the meaning of their practical work on halides and haloalkanes. They knew how the electron distributions in the various molecules came about and how the resultant charge patterns would affect the ways in which their substances would react.
242. Teaching is good and the students learn well as a result. The teachers have a very secure subject knowledge, which they use effectively to develop interest and to give perspective to the topics. There are clear objectives that are made plain to students. GCSE knowledge is checked and reinforced well. Strong features of the teaching are the good planning, clear explanations and logical, step-by-step development of ideas. This is punctuated at intervals with questions to test and clarify understanding before moving on. It is this process which governs the pace of the lesson, thus maximising learning. Only in a few lessons does the teacher start by checking the learning from the previous one and conclude by consolidating the new learning. The best lessons seek not only to teach and check, but also to involve students in the generation and development of ideas. This was the case in the lesson on haloalkanes, where the teacher used skilfully crafted, related questions to enable the students to find out 'how and why' without telling them the answer. Where lessons are less successful and interesting, they are more like lectures with questions to test understanding. Marking and assessing of students' practical work is good, but it is of more variable quality in students'

folders. At best it has useful corrections and suggestions for improvement, but some calculation work has little comment. The assessment by teachers does provide students with a good indication of their standards in relation to AS/A2 grades. Teachers are good at training students to appreciate how examination questions need to be answered to maximise marks. Good homework is usually set; it complements, challenges and extends learning.

243. The students' learning is good. They take their tasks seriously, listen carefully and work hard. Their learning is enhanced by good relations with their teachers. This generates a pleasant, but purposeful and productive working environment from which all benefit. Whilst they are keen to answer questions and to ask when they are confused, they generate few of their own. They are encouraged to work by themselves, but their approach is not very well structured. The main library offers inadequate computer facilities, virtually no sixth form chemistry books and few scientific periodicals to support research and a wider interest.
244. The department is well led and managed. This, together with the good teaching, promotes good learning. There is an effective scheme of work, which guides the well-qualified staff in covering the curriculum in sufficient depth to enable students to access the highest grades. The curriculum is enhanced by lectures at Birmingham University and the Materials Science course at Swansea University and Canadian chemistry examinations. Assessment procedures are good and used well both to benefit individual students and to help modify the curriculum. The accommodation is good. The resources are also good, apart from those in ICT, where there is a lack of network connections, a shortage of data loggers and unreliable radio links with central systems. Nevertheless, good use is made of the available resources in this area.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on design and technology.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The consistently good level of teaching by all four staff involved ensures good learning over the range of topics.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and skills, which they use to very good effect to enthuse their students.
- The positive attitudes and commitment of the students to their work lead to a very good working atmosphere in lessons.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Links with industry to broaden the curriculum and students' experience.
- Accommodation for individual students to undertake specialist designing and making activity in their non-contact time.

245. The A-level results in 2001 were in line with the national average with all five students achieving pass grades, one at B, three at C and one at E. These results were broadly in line with those achieved in other subjects. At AS-level the results were well above the national average and of the ten entries all achieved passes at grade D or higher, with two students achieving grade A and three grade B. These results were above the average for the school. Retention rates are high with nine of these students continuing with their study of design and technology to A2 level.

246. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average. The Year 13 students are maintaining their good progress from GCSE and AS-level. In the lessons seen, they are doing well as a result of effective teaching that is well planned, sets high expectations and uses the staff knowledge and expertise available in the department to benefit the students. The students have subject knowledge and specialist vocabulary at the level expected for the course. In one lesson their knowledge was being extended as they studied the composition and characteristics of a range of metals and, more specifically, how steel is hardened, tempered, annealed and normalised. The making skills of the students are very good and they are currently making their final projects using a variety of wood, metal and plastic materials. In addition they effectively use a range of graphical skills and techniques to develop, communicate and record their design ideas.
247. In Year 12, the students are halfway through the AS course and are achieving well. They are developing further their design, making and graphical skills and broadening their subject knowledge and understanding. In one lesson the students were engaged in their own individual project work, undertaking a range of tasks to develop their work. These included development and design work for rigs for testing materials which they were considering for their project, whilst other students were constructing their rigs. Students worked with a good degree of independence, applying and consolidating secure subject skills. Overall, a good proportion of the students are working above the expected levels for the AS course.
248. Teaching is consistently good and the students learn well as a result. A significant feature of the teaching is that four teachers are used and deployed to their specialist strengths. The students' learning benefits from this very good provision. The teachers have clear lesson objectives and the methods used are well matched to the subject material to be taught. The lessons are well planned and the teachers provide appropriate resources to support the learning. High expectations and challenging tasks are significant features of the lessons. Very effective support is given to individuals, often including evaluative comments aimed at raising levels of achievement and the rate of progress.
249. This good learning is promoted by the very good attitude of the students towards their work. Students in both years are very attentive and work productively in class. All the students are enthusiastic about the subject, concentrate well and respond readily to their teachers' questions and the different challenges that the subject and their teachers present to them. Behaviour was excellent in all the lessons observed. Relationships between the staff and the students, and between the students themselves, are also excellent, and students support each other very effectively when working as a group.
250. The leadership and management of the sixth form courses are good. The teaching team is deployed to make the most effective use of their subject skills and expertise, and teamwork is very well developed. With the new AS and A2 courses recently introduced, documentation is up to date and the teaching scheme is constantly under review. However, there are limited opportunities for students to undertake visits to local companies and experience, first hand, commercial and industrial practices in designing and making. In addition, the department lacks facilities for students to continue their work outside their timetabled lessons, and this can affect the rate of progress, especially in making. The departmental development plan does not give details of who is responsible for the various targets, costs, timescale, resources and success criteria, and could be more sharply focused on raising levels of attainment further.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business education and economics.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good.
- Teaching is energetic and uses good examples and illustrations to maintain the interest of students.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of a detailed scheme of work for teaching to include departmental assessment and marking policy.
- The provision of a departmental development plan, so that priorities can be identified and acted upon to take the subject forward in a coherent way.
- A more rigorous system of monitoring teaching and assessment systems is needed.
- Formal departmental meetings are needed in order to develop cohesion and a united approach to improvement.
- Business links with the surrounding community need to be developed to enhance the teaching of applied business studies.
- Facilities for the use of ICT should be introduced to the department's main teaching rooms.

251. The department offers business studies at both AS and A2 levels. In each of the years 1998-2001, business studies A-level results were well below the national average. For example, in 2001 nearly a third of the students did not attain a pass grade compared with less than a tenth in similar schools nationally. The 2001 result was nevertheless an improvement on that of 2000, when more than half the students failed to pass. In comparison with their other subjects at the school, students did significantly worse in business studies in each of these years except 1999. There is no significant difference in the results of different ethnic groups.
252. On the other hand, AS results in 2001 were better than the as yet unvalidated national figures at each grade level. For example, the proportion of students attaining grade A was nearly twice the national figure, and those attaining grades A-D was nearly a fifth higher, although this comparison was against all schools rather than similar schools. The small group of girls did less well than boys at AS-level. Compared with their previous GCSE attainments, students do slightly worse than expected at A-level, but the shortfall is not significant. The implication is that one reason for the relatively low attainment of students at A-level is their relatively low GCSE entry standards to the subject, which in 2001 was below a B grade on average for examinations taken two years earlier. Very few students leave the subject during the first (AS) year of sixth form, but just over half continued to A2 level last year.
253. The overall standard of work seen in the inspection is average, and the students' achievement is satisfactory. There are good features, for example in an AS class on social responsibility in business, where students worked hard to analyse the conflicts between profit and ethical behaviour. They developed a sounder understanding of the difficulties involved in long-term corporate image building. On the other hand, teaching style sometimes confines students to basics, and in these classes they do not demonstrate the higher level skills of synthesis and evaluation that would raise standards. For instance, in an A2 class on locational factors in business, students did not progress far beyond note taking from written lists and diagrams and making short responses to questions which allowed little scope for extended analysis or discussion. Similarly, higher level debate was lacking from an AS class on motivation. Student attainment was restricted largely to noting what the teacher gave them, and they did not test this opinion for themselves in debate.

254. Students' written work is adequately presented, but again confined largely to the basics of the syllabus, with little evidence of original research or extended analyses. Little distinguishes the creative written output of students who would otherwise be considered high or low attaining, and this is largely due to the lack of opportunity given to them. There is a notable lack of the use of ICT in student files.
255. Teaching in general is satisfactory. The teacher's knowledge and understanding are good, and at best are put across in a stimulating way that produces good learning. In the AS lesson on social responsibility in business, the topic was introduced through group and individual work and a variety of relevant and well-focused articles and questions. Students were required to discuss and present their conclusions to the class in a way that encouraged learning and excited interest. The pace of the lesson varied. Continuous assessment of progress was made through question and answer, though limited in targeting students. Support and praise were well used. Teaching overall is demanding of attention, but where it is less satisfactory it is too teacher directed and lacking in variety. This results in few opportunities for students to develop their learning actively and broadly. It also inhibits development of their higher level skills of analysis and evaluation. For instance, in the AS class on motivation, many helpful examples and illustrations were used, but it lacked variety of pace and strategies, as it was too dominated by the teacher. This produced a narrow scope for learning and a passive (and sometimes distracted) response from several students. Homework is set regularly, but marking of work seen in files is sometimes perfunctory, lacking the diagnosis and advice that would help students to improve. There is little evidence that ICT is being used regularly in teaching. Local business links are also not being used to stimulate learning in this applied field.
256. The quality of learning is linked very much to the quality of teaching, and overall students learn satisfactorily. This is the same for all ethnic groups, and for both boys and girls. They do particularly well where they are encouraged to be active and where the teacher assists them in their discovery and to explain and justify their ideas. For example, students working in groups responded very positively and co-operated well in searching text on Marks and Spencer to assess its approach to social concerns such as health and safety, and then synthesising and explaining their findings. Their learning is restrained when opportunities are missed to involve them fully and to excite their attention through discovering for themselves. The content of student files across both years is quite restricted in its scope, and there is little evidence of extended learning taking place beyond the confines of the specification.
257. The teachers are well qualified and experienced. However, the quality of leadership and management in the subject has serious weaknesses, which makes it unsatisfactory. There are several aspects requiring urgent improvement in order for the quality of provision to improve. There are no detailed schemes of work for teaching. There is no departmental development plan to identify priorities for action. A departmental assessment and marking policy has not been developed, nor a more rigorous system of monitoring teaching and assessment. Since the last inspection in 2000, there has been no significant improvement in the A-level results, but the better than average AS results show that some success has been achieved in raising standards.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good.
- Good use is made in teaching of a variety of materials to maintain students' interest.
- Praise and encouragement are used well to stimulate learning.

Areas for improvement

- There are no detailed schemes of work for teaching, and these should be drawn up to give a stronger framework to the teaching.
- There is no departmental development plan, and this should also be drawn up as a matter of urgency so that priorities can be identified and acted upon to take the subject forward in a coherent way.
- A departmental assessment and marking policy should be drawn up and communicated to the students.
- A more rigorous system of monitoring teaching and assessment procedures should be devised by the head of department to include more frequent classroom appraisals.
- Formal departmental meetings should be held more often by the teachers in order to develop cohesion and a united approach to improvement.
- Facilities for the use of ICT should be introduced to the department's main teaching rooms.

258. A-level results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average. Results in the A/B category were just below the national average and they exceeded the average at A-E. Between 1998 and 2001, A-level results fluctuated. In 1998 they were broadly in line with the national average for similar schools, but declined thereafter to below the national average in 1999 and in 2000 to very low in comparison with the national average. In comparison with their other subjects, students did less well in economics in each of these years, but the difference was not significant except in 2000. There is no significant difference in the results of different ethnic groups. The first AS-level results in 2001 were significantly worse than the as yet unvalidated national figures for all schools, with just over a tenth of students gaining grades A or B as against nearly half nationally. Compared with their previous GCSE attainment which was just average, students do better than expected at A-level. Very few students leave the subject during the first (AS) year of sixth form, but only about 50 per cent continued to A2 level last year.

259. The overall standard of work seen in the inspection is satisfactory, as is the progress of students with respect to their previous results. In the best work seen, students were able to advance their knowledge and skills to a good level, as in an AS class on the costs and benefits of monopoly, where they demonstrated technical understanding and went on to discuss more complex issues in a lively and constructive way. The interchange of ideas produced a sound progression to a good standard for several of the students. In other contexts, standard are not so high, as in an A2 class on exchange rate determination, where student discussion and understanding did not rise to the level of the materials used, or in another on concentrated markets, where responses (in a depleted class) were at a basic level and showed little evidence of higher level reasoning in a topic which was not over-complex. The differences in standards in class are partly due to the differing initial attainments of the students, and partly due to the teaching, which is not always matched to students' needs. Written work in student files is generally well presented and organised. The academic standard is variable, with neat and technically sophisticated analysis at the higher end, competently completed and with good use of concepts, while lower attainers have poorer literacy and organisational skills and are attaining at a standard below a pass grade. Little evidence is seen in their files of competency in the use of ICT.

260. Teaching overall is satisfactory. The teacher's subject knowledge is good, and it is put across with a wide range of materials, especially in applied economics. Good use is made of encouragement and praise, and assessment is continuously carried out through questioning

and response. A helpful flexibility was seen, for instance in the AS class on monopoly, where unplanned but worthwhile extension into applied areas of the topic was pursued in response to student questioning. In this class, a good pace was maintained, and the students were challenged. Where teaching was less good, the introduction or reinforcement of the basics of theory were neglected, leaving students with an inadequate platform on which to build their knowledge of economics in practice. For example, in the A2 class on exchange rates, the students were introduced to some complex writing (part of which was set for reading homework) without the theory of demand and supply in the foreign exchange market being thoroughly explained and assimilated first. The written materials are not fully matched to the learning needs of all students. Although higher attainers are well served, some lower attaining students find the handouts and articles too complex. Homework is set regularly, but there is little evidence in files of the extended diagnosis and advice through marking that would help students to improve. Teachers are not using new technology regularly in their work.

261. Generally, learning is satisfactory by all groups of students. At its best, students show an enthusiasm for participation and argument that carries their knowledge and understanding forward in a very positive way. This is linked closely to the opportunities given to them to express themselves actively. The debate that developed in an AS class on the costs and benefits of monopoly was stimulating. Students were able to work out their own ideas and listen to others, while the teaching allowed scope for digression and the testing of ideas that was very beneficial to the students' learning. Learning was inhibited where an inadequate link between theory and practice was established. Students were restrained in their progress in applied economics by an incomplete understanding of concepts and basic diagrams. In some instances, the materials used, for example an 'Economist' article on the European car market, were beyond the scope of lower attaining students, who consequently made limited advance. Students' files show limited extension work
262. The teachers are well qualified and experienced, although more extensive in-service training would be beneficial in extending their expertise. However, the quality of leadership and management in the subject has serious weaknesses and there are several aspects requiring urgent improvement in order for the quality of provision to improve. There is no departmental development plan to identify priorities for action. Detailed schemes of work for teaching have yet to be developed. A departmental assessment and marking policy has not been developed. Teaching and assessment are not being effectively monitored. This is unsatisfactory leadership and management. Since the last inspection in 2000, standards in external examinations show a mixed picture: while A-level results were much better in 2001, standards at AS-level were very low. Overall, there is no clear pattern of improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The focus was on the AS-level ICT course in Year 12 and the A-level computer studies course in Year 13.

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

Strengths

- Well above average AS and A-level results in computer studies.
- Good teaching in lessons that are well planned to enable students to effectively build up a secure knowledge and understanding in the subject.
- Good leadership and management of the subject with effective strategies for staffing the department.

- Very good relationships between all teachers and students enable the planned work in lessons to be completed successfully by all students.
- Good resources, which enable very fast access for students to the wealth of computer-related databases on the Internet.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of specialist teachers has constrained standards by leading to large teaching groups and a narrowing of option choice at A-level.
- Apply greater rigour in the marking of A-level work and adopt a more rigorous strategy for monitoring and reviewing students' progress.
- Retention rates between AS and A-levels are very low in the subject when compared with other sixth forms.

263. In both the AS-level and A-level courses last year, the number of students attaining an A or B grade was well above the national average. All students taking the A-level computing course gained an A-E grade and the proportion of students gaining an A-E grade in the AS-level course was also above average. There is no significant difference in the attainment between male and female students, but national comparisons are less meaningful since very few females take the subjects. Over the past two years results have been improving with a greater proportion of students gaining the higher grades and an A-E grade each year. Fewer students than average have opted to complete an A-level in the subject after successfully completing their AS-level examinations last year.

264. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are above average in Year 12 in the newly introduced information systems course. Whilst this does not reflect the well above average results of the previous year, it is a different subject and comparisons would be less meaningful. In one Year 12 lesson, students showed a good understanding of how to set out an accurate and well-structured user manual to help their clients to both understand and use the systems they design for them. In the work seen in the A-level computing course, overall standards are well above the average and reflect the rising trend in standards in the subject over the last two years. In one Year 13 lesson, all students showed very good skills in researching the control of data transmission and the traits associated with collision detection and token passing in networks. They readily used the Internet to search for sources of information on data transmission and showed very good skills of working by themselves. In another Year 13 lesson, students showed a clear understanding of data transformation and the advantages of packet switching over circuit switching. Most students produce well organised folders of work showing very good effort over time and clearly most students achieve the target dates set for each piece of coursework.

265. On the basis of work seen, students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment on entry to the course. Most students enter the course with average standards, having only studied a short course in ICT in Years 10 and 11. A small proportion of students have not studied the subject to GCSE level.

266. The very good achievement is attributable to the teaching, which was good in all lessons, combined with the very positive approach taken by students towards their work. The teachers responsible for the subject have good planning skills and structure the work in lessons well, successfully achieving their objectives. The pace of work in lessons is brisk and purposeful and well focused on task. The two teachers involved in delivering the course have individual teaching styles, which complement each other well. Students are verbally well informed about the standards achieved and what they need to do to improve. However, marking is occasionally superficial and the written comments made by teachers are insufficient in detail to enable students to understand what they need to do to improve work. Target setting for

individual students based on their prior attainment in the subject is not as rigorous as it could be, although the teachers know their students' work well. However, group sizes that are too large, and the consequent heavy workload on teachers, partly explain why marking is less rigorous than it could be. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and enable good learning to take place in lessons. Good humour prevails and students are very responsive to challenges set them. There is a good degree of collaborative work and they show very good levels of maturity in responding to one another and to their teachers.

267. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Larger groups of students than usual opt for the subject and are well provided for in terms of resources and accommodation. There is a clear educational direction by the head of department and efficient management of the teaching in difficult circumstance brought about by the recent changes in staffing. For example, the introduction of the AS level information systems course is allied to the available teaching strengths and expertise. However, there is an over-reliance on the expertise of one teacher, leading to teaching groups that are too large in Year 12. This places an undue workload on the head of department and leads to standards that are above the average rather than well above it in Year 12. There is insufficient specialist knowledge amongst the current staffing to continue to provide an A-level computer studies course. Continued development of the expertise and skills of staff is essential to enable the school to offer as broad a range of provision as possible at sixth form level. Standards have risen since the previous report and continue to show a rising trend.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on the new course in physical education at Advanced Subsidiary level.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- The new head of department gives good, clear direction to sixth form work.
- There is a good commitment by teachers to improve standards; they demonstrate good knowledge, are enthusiastic and want students to be successful.
- Relationships with teachers and between different groups are good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are also good and this enhances the learning environment.
- Students are achieving well in their Advanced Subsidiary course.

Areas for improvement

- A greater range of teaching strategies to involve students in their theory work.
- The use of ICT in the examination course to enhance presentation and investigation.
- A specific room is needed for the examination course.
- The introduction of additional certificated courses for Year 12 and 13.
- Improved deployment of staff to ensure best use of staff expertise.

268. Prior to 2001 there were no AS or A2 courses in physical education. The sixth form examination courses in Advanced Subsidiary Sport Studies commenced in September 2001 with a small cohort of male students. Only half of the group of students had previously followed GCSE Sports Studies; all obtained A*-C grades. Teaching, progress in lessons and achievement over time are good. Students' predicted grades are average for July 2002. An optional programme of physical recreation operates on Wednesdays during the afternoon and this offers a range of

activities for both male and females in the sixth form.

269. In work seen, students attain standards in the AS course which are broadly in line with the national expectations and for those six months into their first year of their course. In Year 12, they have a positive approach to their work. Discussion with students shows that they find the work very challenging in terms of both width and depth.
270. Students in Year 12 are adapting and responding well to the challenge of higher levels of work. In basketball students know and are able to demonstrate the basic violations of the double dribble, travelling and obstruction. They all understand the three options that are open to a player, but within a game situation many fail to choose the correct option of pass, shoot or dribble. Many students successfully exploit two against one situations. However, within a game situation, collection of rebound shots is not well developed. Those students with good basketball skills do not always make best use of their individual skills within a game. Students have a good understanding of overloading a zone defence, but many do not fully understand the role of different players within a zone defence. Students' practical skills vary, but they are generally average; high attaining students are beginning to think carefully about how to use their strengths and weaknesses to best effect in defensive and attacking positions. Students are beginning to show a good awareness of tactics within their chosen sports. They study the social influences of performance and participation and understand the different pressure placed on performers whether performing for the local club or at international level. Students in Year 12 clearly understand the extra demands of the new courses. They show good achievement in terms of successfully dealing with the width and depth of the theory of physical movement and the need for more sophisticated analytical skills than at GCSE level. They are starting to respond well to these demands.
271. The quality of both teaching and learning in physical education is good. Good teaching is usually characterised by good subject knowledge evident in the good explanations to students, for example, that gaseous exchange in the alveoli enables muscles to receive energy in order to operate. Teachers are very confident and enthusiastic about their subject and want their students to be successful. Teachers also have high expectations of students, which was evident for example in the enthusiastic way in which Year 12 were involved in their physiology lesson. Tasks provided for students indicate thorough individual lesson planning. However, there are few opportunities for students to work individually or in groups. Teachers tend to dominate the lessons, providing inadequate time for student participation in their own learning in order to secure higher grades through active learning. Students need to be encouraged to engage in more open debate with each other in order to improve the depth of their learning.
272. Students' attitudes towards physical education are positive; this contributes to their good learning. Students all show a positive approach to their studies, and clearly enjoy their physical education course, as shown when interviewing these students. They develop a very good and confident working relationship with their teacher. They listen well to their teacher and to one another and as a result good learning takes place.
273. The post-16 course in physical education is well led and managed by the head of department, but long-term planning is an area that needs to be considered more closely in relation to the whole school development planning. The new courses have been appropriately resourced. About half the students interviewed felt they did not know how well they were achieving in relation to the final assessment of work in the

examination. Split classes do not enhance students' learning; students have three different teachers taking their AS course and as a result there are different teachers' expectations of students' work, which in this situation constrains learning and the continuity of work. Literacy and numeracy skills successfully support work within the AS course. However, there were no examples of strategies for improving these skills. ICT is underdeveloped in Year 12 and constrains investigative work and the presentation of work. Opportunities are needed within the timetable for alternative certification for sixth form students within physical education. Practical work is severely constrained by poor facilities both on the school site and at the school field. Theory work is also hampered, as there is no single room for the teaching of sports studies. This means that resources for theory lessons have to be carried to different rooms. Teachers have worked hard to implement an Advanced Subsidiary Sports Studies course for the sixth form. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The good levels of performance in inter-school sport have been maintained.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The results of the A-level examinations are very good.
- The number of students opting for art and design is increasing.
- Teaching is very good, leading to very good learning and students who are enthusiastic about the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The results in the GCE AS examination in 2001 were well below average, and students' level of achievement was poor.
- Attendance and punctuality of students, especially in Year 13, are poor.

274. The overall standards in art and design are good. Students study for the drawing and painting option of the examination. The numbers studying vary from year to year and standards have been consistently above the national averages for the past three years. Last year, 2001, five students took the A-level, and achieved well above the national average. The two students who gained a grade A achieved well above their predicted scores. Ten students took the AS-level. Their results were well below the national average, achieving poor grades considering their GCSE results. The art and design students were the lowest qualified group in the school to follow an AS level course, and not all had studied for a GCSE in the subject previously. This year all but one of these students are studying for A-level and are progressing well. They have extended their work and raised their standards well above the low results they attained last year.

275. The standards of work seen in lessons are very high. After poor AS results, Year 13 students are now achieving very well. They are working well independently on individual projects that they have developed in consultation with their teacher. They use their strength in academic research to produce personal studies based on European artists and art history, which reflect their interests. They are of high quality, well presented and some show personal involvement and research. Many are at present developing their portfolios for interviews at university,

and the range and scale of the work being assembled is impressive. Much work is being developed from the study of photographs taken on a digital camera, but the lack of a scanner, digitising tablet or suitable software is limiting this development to the more obvious images. Their research in sketchbooks is very good, showing evidence of a developing personal engagement in the processes of drawing and painting.

276. The Year 12 students are sustaining the pace and challenge from their GCSE courses. They can talk about their intentions and the way their work has developed with confidence, and they all listen to the comments of the teachers and contribute well to reviews and criticisms of work. Their knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists is good, and they use it well to develop their own ideas, showing a perceptive approach to drawing and painting, using a wide variety of techniques and approaches as they experiment and develop their own personal styles. The large-scale portraits, collages and paintings are adventurous and powerful. Students, who join the course from different schools, including one girl, progress well in the stimulating environment in the studio and are achieving good results in their work.
277. Teaching is very good overall. Planning and preparation are good; each teacher takes a different group through to A-level, and they each have their own styles and strengths, which are reflected in the work of their students. The teaching methods are very good, with clear demonstrations of techniques and perceptive comments and questions. This is particularly evident during the regular reviews of work in progress which are aimed at increasing the students' capacity for independent study. The use of sketchbooks has been encouraged and the basic skills reinforced to ensure a firm foundation for future development. Activities are planned well to address the needs of the students. Assessment to provide clear information to students about their progress towards specific grades is now formally recorded, discussed with the students and regularly updated. The teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students well and are able to challenge and support them effectively. Most students are responding positively, numbers have increased, and students come in to the art studios to work, continue with projects in their own time and have produced work on a large scale for a local hospital.
278. The quality of leadership and management of sixth form work is satisfactory. The departmental development plan relates well to the school's priorities and the areas for improvement that the staff have identified, but it needs to be more focused and precise. The system of separate teachers working in their own way is effective because of the strengths of the individuals, but they need to liaise better to ensure that problems that do not arise as they did in the AS-level course last year. The department had difficulty in planning a new course, monitoring students' progress and preparing the students for an unknown examination without sufficient support from the examination board. One teacher went on the AS-level training, but the other taught the actual course. A review of the submissions made last year indicates that they were under-marked, although the visiting moderator upheld the scores. This has been resolved this year by the production of a detailed handbook for students. It provides good guidance on how to approach the individual modules and exemplar materials from the examination board to support accurate assessment.
279. Attendance in Year 12 is good, but several Year 13 students take part in sports activities on a Wednesday afternoon and so miss one of their lessons, and others miss lessons for a variety of reasons. All lessons tend to start late as students arrive from various parts of the school. A single lesson of 50 minutes is not a long time to set up the work and study to any great depth as it has to be stored away at the end of the lesson.

280. The accommodation for the increased numbers is not being managed well. It is constrained by the teachers' organisation of the space available. This is limiting the range and scale of work that they can attempt. The department is developing the use of displays and exhibitions of students' work around the school and the community to raise the awareness of the subject in the school. The examples are stimulating and challenging the younger students to extend and improve their work.

HUMANITIES

The focus for the inspection was geography and religious studies, but history and law were also sampled. In history, standards in A-level examinations in 2001 were very high compared with the national average. Students attained well above average at the highest grades and all passed. Overall, this is good achievement compared with their GCSE results. Girls achieved less well than boys though their numbers were too small to be significant. The subject was one of the best performing in the school. AS results were in line with the average, and achievement was satisfactory. In the three lessons sampled, teaching was good with teachers showing very good subject knowledge. This was used well to stimulate and challenge the students' skills of critical analysis. This led to good learning, encouraged by the strong motivation and interest of the students.

One lesson of law was sampled. An AS course was introduced in September 2001 using video-conferencing and distance learning for a class of 14 students. Standards were above average in the lesson with students showing good knowledge and understanding of the jury system. Their good learning was enhanced by the challenging questions of the teacher in response to their research homework and their enthusiasm for the subject. Students were ready to question to clarify their understanding and to challenge each other's views. Their attitude was sensible and mature to this new form of teaching and learning.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good. Well-qualified specialist teachers help students to learn well on the A-level course.
- Students' standards of attainment are good and they achieve well.
- Students benefit from the annual residential fieldwork undertaken in Year 12.
- All students are taught in small groups and are helped by the close monitoring by teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Greater use needs to be made of ICT for recording and analysing data.
- Better library provision is needed to support students' learning.

281. Relatively few students follow the AS and A2 level geography courses. Currently six students follow the courses in Year 12 and six in Year 13. The groups are taught separately by subject specialist teachers.
282. Standards in the A-level examination in 2001, measured by the average points score, were in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement compared with their GCSE results and in line with what was predicted by the school. The average points score of male students at A-level in the last three years has been above the national average. The very few female students entered in the last two years have been less successful although all students since 1996 have gained graded A-level passes. The work in progress in Year 13 indicates that students are on course to gain passes in line with those of previous years.

283. Standards in the 2001 AS level examination were below average. Two of the 14 students failed to achieve a grade. The other 12 students were evenly spread from A to E grades. Some students taking the course had not studied geography at GCSE level and some were taking the course as a fourth subject, out of interest. Six of the most successful students have continued the course towards A2 level, including one student who had not taken the GCSE course. They are making good progress and achieving well. The department is now alert to the potential difficulty of an AS or A2 student starting a course without a sound background of geographical skills and understanding.
284. In work seen, standards are above average in both Years 12 and 13. This reflects thorough specialist teaching, diligence on the part of most students and good working relationship between staff and students. Students work well collaboratively. Year 13 students were each able to present effectively a short talk to the group outlining a particular point of view, for or against a proposal to build an electronics factory on a green site in a Birmingham suburb. The group acted as contributors and challengers of various arguments with perception, and sometimes with force, but without rancour. Within the topic they showed that they had a good understanding of key issues, such as inward investment with traditional industries, the multiplier effect, diversification of employment, cost/benefit arguments, and the need to preserve green belt. The higher attaining students have a good understanding of the political implications of major planning issues and the possible areas of conflict between local and national government.
285. Good collaborative learning was seen also within the Year 12 AS group. Students here are currently undertaking challenging work on energy and resources and urban physical environments. In the work observed on the development of distinctive ecologies, all students contributed well to the close examination of the ecology of the Chesterfield-Sheffield canal, using photographic evidence. As a result of well-focused teaching this AS group is on course to gain above average grades than the 2001 AS group.
286. Teaching is very good and students are achieving well as a result. Teachers use an effective approach to involve all students in discussion. Lesson planning is thorough and makes the best use of the available time. Well-qualified specialist teachers share the teaching in both year groups, working closely together in planning and monitoring students' progress. They are both mindful of the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and of those who may have gaps in their geographical knowledge. As a result, new terminology is clearly explained and new key vocabulary is regularly rehearsed. Relationships between teachers and students are relaxed, but very productive. The work they are undertaking currently, on energy and resources and on urban physical environments, is intellectually challenging. Demands are placed upon the students to complete work to time. This successfully promotes good learning.
287. The strong focus on learning is helped also by the very positive attitudes of students towards their work. Students expressed their enjoyment of the AS course stating that they have gained particular benefit in improving their observational and analytical skills from the residential field course.
288. The courses are well organised and well led. A more coherent departmental development plan needs to be put in place to guide the longer and medium-term planning of the subject. Both teachers contribute to the planning and development of schemes of work. Marking of work and assessment of units is carried out regularly and with thoroughness. The work this year so far has not included any elements of work requiring ICT analysis in lesson times. The geography department does not have its own computers, nor weather recording equipment which would be helpful for the AS course. Most students, however, have access

to their own computers and sometimes use these for presentation and illustration of their written work. Students are encouraged to use a wide range of up-to-date geographical sources for research. The school library provision is poor in this respect, but the geography department has a small collection of relevant textbooks to support students' work outside the classroom.

Religious education

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- The introduction of the new GCE A-level course has been well managed.
- Students are well motivated and have very positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Students have access to only a limited range of texts, which reduces their opportunities for independent study.
- The pace of some lessons is not always fast enough to ensure students make maximum progress.

289. In recent years there has been no A-level work in the school. However, in 2000-2001 20 students took the new AS-level course and results at grades A and B were slightly below the national average. These results reflected the prior attainment of the students and most of them achieved their predicted grades. Thirteen students have gone on to take the GCE A2-level course in Year 13 and a new group of eleven students are following the AS-level course in Year 12.
290. Work seen during the inspection from students in Years 12 and 13 shows that standards overall are in line with national averages. Students achieve well and make good progress during the course. There is no difference in the standards and achievement of students from different ethnic groups. They are mastering the content of the course effectively and are successfully developing their thinking on ethical and philosophical issues. In lessons on social and global justice based on the work of John Rawls and Peter Singer, Year 13 students grasped the key concepts quite quickly and could relate what they learnt to earlier work on religious ethics. In lessons on the philosophy of religion, Year 12 students successfully came to grips with the teaching of Irenaeus and Augustine on the problem of evil and suffering, and were able to probe the strengths and weaknesses of different viewpoints. Students in both years are generally confident and fluent in discussion, and their written work is usually well argued and appropriately structured, although in some instances they have difficulty in fully addressing the actual essay questions that are asked.
291. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The planning of lessons is thorough so that key themes and ideas are effectively highlighted and emphasised for students. Teachers have a good overall knowledge of the subject, which enables them to present and explain new and complex ideas effectively. However, as this is the first time staff have taught the course, lack of familiarity with some of the material means that the pace of some lessons is not always fast enough to ensure students make maximum progress. A good range of teaching methods successfully introduces new topics for students; for example, the effective use of video clips helped Year 13 students understand the ideas of John Rawls. Questioning is probing and discussion is well managed, as in a Year 12 lesson when students' understanding of Augustine's explanation of the origin of evil was successfully extended and clarified. Well-prepared course guidance sheets give good direction to students' learning and provide them with a helpful framework for their own independent study. Marking is informative and

the students confirm that it is useful. They are given helpful advice on writing essays and appropriate use is made of ICT. The rapport between teachers and students is very good and the attitude of students to their work is very positive. They are well motivated and keen to succeed, which helps to explain their good achievement in the subject.

292. The leadership and management of sixth form religious education are good, and since the last inspection the subject has been successfully re-established at A-level. The course follows on well from work in the main school and is well matched to the interests and background of the students. At the moment students have access to only a limited range of texts, which reduces their opportunities for independent study. The two teachers involved in sixth form work, one of whom is recently appointed, work well together and the department is now in a good position to develop teaching approaches and resource materials for the course.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature and French. One Year 13 lesson of English language and literature was sampled. Although the results in the 2001 AS examination were well below the provisional average, the standards of work seen in the lesson were broadly average. The students responded positively to good, stimulating teaching about the nature of literature and showed real enthusiasm for conceptual thinking and argument in the ensuing discussion.

Work in German was also sampled. Results in recent years in German have been consistently above average. One A-level German lesson was observed. High standards are achieved because of the very good quality of teaching and learning.

English

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving after a period of decline.
- Teachers have high expectations and this encourages effectively a positive response from students.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is very good, leading to effective teaching.
- The quality of marking ensures that students know precisely how to improve their work.
- Good curriculum provision.

Areas for improvement

- A sharper focus is needed on target setting and tracking students' progress towards their targets.
- The department's longer-term planning requires more precise targets and criteria for measuring success.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently systematic in approach.
- Developing students' independence during lessons.
- Focus on individual needs, especially for average attaining students.

293. The standards of work seen are broadly average. Standards are improving after a period of decline. This improvement reflects good teaching that has a sharper focus on the assessment objectives of the recent AS and A2 courses. It has also been achieved through the development of a more collaborative approach to curriculum planning. The students enjoy the course and value the good support they receive from their teachers.

294. Standards in the 2001 A-level examination were well below average in terms of the average grade, the proportion gaining grades A-B and the proportion at grades A-E. The small number of female students tended to do better than their male counterparts. Although most students did as well as might have been anticipated from their earlier GCSE results, about one quarter of the students did not, so overall achievement was not satisfactory. These results continued a decline that started in 1999.
295. The results in the 2001 AS examination suggest that the decline of recent years has been reversed. Overall standards were broadly average in comparison with the provisional national results. About one third of the students achieved grades A or B. All achieved grade A-E. All candidates did at least as well as their GCSE results suggested they ought: more than a third did better. This shows good achievement overall when account is taken of the students' starting points.
296. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standards are broadly average. Most students have a clear understanding of the themes and issues of the texts they study and explain them with clarity. The higher attainers enhance these qualities with highly analytical and detailed evaluation of the texts. One student's assignment contrasting the characters of Oscar Schindler and Philip Rhayader was notable for its well-crafted evaluation of the views of critics and its incisive comments on the impact of each writer's choice of language. Mature phrasing also characterises the work of the highest attainers. Most students do not consistently attain these high standards, but there are clear strengths: for example, they are skilled in discussing texts in terms of their historical or geographical settings. However, work on the analysis of the character of Desdemona revealed the need for more evaluated references to the text. The work of a small proportion is below average: it tends to be too superficial and descriptive and also includes some awkwardness of expression and some inaccurate punctuation and spelling.
297. One lesson was observed in Year 12. Students are making good progress in adjusting to the requirements of the course. Most have made gains in writing extended and consistently evaluative pieces on their texts. Some lower attainers are not including sufficient detail from the texts they study. In the lesson observed the students answered questions willingly. Although not passive in their responses, they nevertheless tended to rely too much on the teacher's prompting to guide their responses.
298. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The subject expertise of the teachers is a strength. It is especially effective in enhancing the students' knowledge of the cultural and historical factors in texts. The teacher's selection of a parable, sonnet and a Breughel painting (The Cutpurse) stimulated a searching enquiry into the impact of Christian values on Shakespeare's writing with reference to 'Measure for Measure'. However, it was noticeable (as it was in another lesson comparing the writing of Wilkie Collins and John Fowles) that while the students worked well in a pair situation, they tended to respond rather than taking the initiative in whole class discussions. Other strengths of teaching include marking which is very informative and thorough. Teachers also have high expectations regarding the amount of work the students do. The lessons are well planned and ensure hard work and intellectual effort. The work of the average attaining students suggests they would benefit from a more focused approach on the development of their analytical writing to give them a better chance of consistently achieving higher standards.
299. The students speak very positively about the course as well as about their teachers whom they regard as consistently helpful, approachable and accessible. The students enjoy the rigour and in-depth nature of the work they do. Most students completed their AS course. A significant majority decided to continue studying the A2 section. Teachers' records,

however, show the attendance rate of some students is not as good as might be expected and this hinders their learning and the continuity of syllabus coverage for other students.

300. The leadership and management of the course are now good. Teachers work well together to produce a coherent approach to the curriculum. They give students good educational support through the half-termly review system. A stronger focus on targets (starting in Year 12) and on the specifics of good work organisation is needed in order to enhance this provision further. The department's longer-term planning requires a sharper focus on targets and criteria for measuring success. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently systematic in approach.

French

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in A and AS-level examinations are very high. All students achieve at least in line with their prior attainment and most achieve very well.
- The excellent subject knowledge of their teachers is effective in developing students' skills and in increasing their understanding of French history and culture.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning and are encouraged to take full responsibility in evaluating and planning their own progress.
- The excellent relationships that exist between students and their teachers are a major factor in the students' high levels of achievement.

Area for improvement

- Develop the use of assessment in all lessons to ensure all students are able to build effectively on previous learning and are presented with an appropriate challenge.

301. Standards achieved in French are well above average. Results in 2001 for A and AS-level examinations are well above average when compared to the national average. Students' achievement overall is very good, with the majority of students exceeding expectations in relation to overall prior attainment.
302. The evidence from work seen during the inspection shows that standards remain constant. Standards of attainment in both Years 12 and 13 are well above average in speaking, reading, writing and listening, and students display a very good knowledge of contemporary society and recent history. Most are able to gather the gist of spoken and written French at this level and identify detail from it with little guidance. They gather a very wide range of relevant vocabulary and structures that they use effectively when speaking and writing. Written work is of a high standard and students write accurately and in detail, and organise their arguments clearly. Students have good research skills and use a variety of resources, including the Internet, to increase their understanding of contemporary issues and extend their vocabulary. They speak confidently and with a high degree of fluency both in response to questioning and when expressing their own ideas in discussion about contemporary issues such as the problems of immigrants in France. Students have a good command of a wide range of vocabulary and structures and most manipulate the language with ease.
303. The sixth form teaching, overall, is very good. During the inspection one unsatisfactory lesson was observed where the progress students made was too slow. However, the overall impact of teaching is very good and usually leads to high standards of learning in lessons, in written work and in examinations. All lessons provide a high level of challenge and students make very good progress when key words and structures are illustrated clearly and students

are given the opportunity to work independently of the teacher to explore and express their ideas. Teachers use a good variety of resources, including the Internet, literature and poetry, and these give students exposure to the language in a wide variety of circumstances. This is effective in developing their understanding of past and present society and their language skills. A good range of well-chosen texts and recordings from the media is used effectively to explore, for example, environmental issues. Marking is regular and thorough, and gives very good guidance to students on how to improve. Teachers use very skilful questioning and very effective strategies to enable all students to succeed in speaking tasks. This is very effective in challenging the highest attaining students, whilst also enabling the lower attaining students to make very good progress.

304. Students make very good gains in learning when they are given opportunities to use the language to express their opinions and ideas and to report back information. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson where students summarised an article about the Algerian conflict. Students feel they make the best progress when they are required to work independently of the teacher in small groups and to make presentations. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, they worked very well together, with the help of the teacher, in analysing their own ideas about young people's television viewing preferences and in explaining the statistics presented in a French newspaper article on the subject. However, progress slows and students have difficulty completing tasks when steps in learning are omitted, when they are given inadequate guidance or when teacher-dominated discussions decrease their opportunities to practise new language for themselves.
305. Teachers have excellent relationships with students and their enthusiasm and love of the language is contagious. The atmosphere in lessons is demanding and it is clear that teachers and students are working well together to achieve the highest standards. Students respond well to the high expectations and level of challenge. Activities are conducted at a brisk pace and entirely in French. As a result, students' listening skills are very well developed and because of this frequent exposure to excellent role models, their own standards in French are high. Students are mature and attentive, and maintain high levels of concentration in lessons. They appreciate the excellent subject knowledge of their teachers and the guidance given to them. They value the excellent working relationships they have with their teachers and recognise the need to take responsibility for their own progress in the subject.
306. Management of the department is good. Good use is made of the resources available; the subject curriculum is broad and balanced and fully meets the requirements of examinations. Since the last report, standards of teaching have improved and standards in examinations have risen. Very good use is made of assessment to inform students and involve them fully in planning their own progress. Teachers work well together as a team and have a very good capacity to improve further in addressing the few inconsistencies which remain.