

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **MAGHULL HIGH SCHOOL**

Maghull

Liverpool

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104958

Headteacher: Mr J F Jones

Reporting inspector: Mr D P Cox  
10297

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2000

Inspection number: 223958

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Maghull High School Ormonde Drive Maghull Liverpool
Postcode:	L31 7AW
Telephone number:	0151 526 2711
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor G. Howe
Date of previous inspection:	26 <sup>th</sup> February 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
David Cox (OIN:10297)	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards?
			How well are students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
John Acaster (OIN: 9970)	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?
Ann Axon (OIN:22411)	Team inspector	Mathematics Equal opportunities	
Bernard Treacy (OIN:19596)	Team inspector	English	
Christine Harrison (OIN:4145)	Team inspector	Science	
Robert Castle (OIN:22590)	Team inspector	Geography	Resources for learning
Shirley Jeffray (OIN:12985)	Team inspector	Physical education	
Brian Downes (OIN:30136)	Team inspector	Modern languages	Staffing
Ian Kirby (OIN:19905)	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?  Assessment.  Accommodation
Maureen Sinclair (OIN:1578)	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
Lorrain Small (OIN:22491)	Team inspector	Design and technology  Information and communication technology	
Sue Williamson (OIN:27932)	Team inspector	History	
Val Girling (OIN:31685)	Team inspector	Art and design	
Cheryl Jackson (OIN:2597)	Team inspector	Vocational education	

		Special educational needs English as an additional language	
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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Maghull High school is bigger than most other secondary schools, and is a mixed 11 to 18 comprehensive school, situated in Maghull, which is a residential area to the North of Liverpool. The school is located in the Molyneux Ward, placing it in the most deprived 30 per cent of all wards nationally. However, in recent years the school has seen an improvement in the socio-economic circumstance of the student population although it is still below the national average. There are 1302 students on roll with 226 students in the sixth form. The number of students on roll is similar to that noted in the previous report. The school takes students from more than 30 schools from within Sefton, Liverpool and Knowsley. More than 70 per cent of students require public transport to get to and from school. The school is popular with parents and is over-subscribed.

The school has a lower than average number of students from ethnic minorities and there are no students for whom English is an additional language. Whilst the school attracts students from a wide spread of abilities the ability of students on entry is broadly average, although the school does have an improving intake with the majority of students in Years 7 and 8 being slightly above average. There are 202 students on the special educational needs register, this is 15.5 per cent of the school population and is broadly in line with the national average. There are 23 (1.7 per cent) students with statements of special educational need, which is in line with the national average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average at 23 per cent.

The school's mission statement is relevant and is in the school prospectus. The school was last inspected in February 1996.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good, effective school, that is continuing to improve. The good quality teaching, combined with the students' very good attitudes, ensure that students' levels of attainment are improved significantly whilst they are at the school. The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and other senior members of staff is successful in bringing about a commitment to ensuring that all students achieve well. The school is providing good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Students attain above average results in national tests and at GCSE.
- Students attain well above average results at A-level and at GNVQ.
- Students achieve well at the school.
- Most of the teaching is of a good quality; teachers create a purposeful and disciplined environment for learning.
- There is excellent and effective leadership from the headteacher and senior staff, which provides the school with a clear direction and enables the students to achieve well.
- The financial management of the school is excellent.
- Students have very positive attitudes; their personal development is very good and there are excellent relationships within the school.
- The school cares for the students as individuals - form tutors know their students well.
- The school offers an excellent range of accredited courses.

#### **What could be improved**

- Students' attainment in French and German.
- Students' attainment in music
- Students' levels of literacy across the curriculum, especially their writing.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum.
- The quality of monitoring by middle managers so that policies are applied consistently and the monitoring and support of teaching becomes sufficiently rigorous.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in March 1996. Results at GCSE and GCE A-level have improved and significantly so in the last year. The overall quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good and this has ensured that students achieve well at the school. Improvements have been made to ICT facilities. The level of attendance has improved from average to above average. The progress made by the school is a result of the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff in promoting an ethos of high expectation that permeates most of the school. The emphasis that the school's management has placed on improving teaching and learning has led to a good teaching provision, which ensures that standards are above the national average in public examinations. The school's response to the key issues identified in the previous report has been satisfactory.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

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

Students arrive at the school with levels of attainment that are at the level expected nationally, although there are also high and low attaining students who join the school in Year 7. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9. Results in the national tests for 14 years olds in 2000 were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science when compared to all schools. In comparison with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were very high in mathematics and science and places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally; results were well above average in English. Overall, results have improved since the last inspection report.

Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were above the national average when compared with all schools. When compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were well above average. Results have improved since the last inspection report, especially the most recent set of results. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C was in line with the national average. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A\* to G in the 2000 GCSE examinations was above the national average. The school sets challenging targets for the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A\*-C and A\*-G and was successful in attaining these. Students achieved their best results in drama and design and technology: resistant materials and their weakest results were in history, French and German. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 to 11.

Results in the 2000 GCE A-level examinations were well above the national average. Students following GNVQ courses attained standards well above national standards. Students achieve well in Years 12 to 13. Overall, results have improved significantly since the last inspection report.

Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards attained by students at the ages of 14, 16 and 18 are above the level expected of students of the same ages nationally.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are in line with the national expectation.



## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students have very good attitudes and most want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students behave very well in and around the school. The rate of exclusion is well below the national average.
Personal development and relationships	Very good personal development and there are excellent relationships within the school community. There is an absence of oppressive behaviour.
Attendance	Above average and continuing to improve.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	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 of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in Years 7 to 9 and 12 to 13; it is satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 61 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 18 per cent of lessons. Teaching of the very highest standard was seen in 4 per cent of lessons. However, teaching is less than satisfactory in 5 per cent of lessons and poor or very poor in 1 per cent of lessons.

The proportion of teaching that is at least good varies between the years. In Years 7 to 9, 60 per cent of lessons are good or better; this figure rises to 74 per cent in Years 12 to 13 but declines to 50 per cent in Years 10 to 11. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is a strength of the school and leads to the majority of students achieving well. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection report.

In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in English; good in mathematics, science, geography, design and technology and physical education; satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of modern foreign languages and music where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 to 11, teaching is excellent in drama; good in science, geography, design and technology and physical education; satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of modern foreign languages and music where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 12 to 13, teaching is excellent in drama; good in all other subjects with the exception of art and design and history where it is satisfactory and music where it is unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching has many strengths. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Good attention is paid to developing literacy skills in Years 7 to 9 particularly in English. However, there are inconsistencies throughout the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 to 11. Teachers generally plan their lessons well. Teachers work hard to involve all students although they do not always match the work closely enough to the meet the needs of all students. The expectations that teachers have of the students are satisfactory overall but they do vary. Teaching methods are generally good. Teachers use an effective combination of explanation, discussion, and individual work that maintains the interest and motivation of students. The setting of homework is not embedded fully within the schemes of work. The management of students is a strength of the teaching. Teachers have excellent relationships with students and there is a good deal of trust between teachers and students. The quality of marking does vary across and within subjects.

Of particular note is the high quality of teaching that students in Years 10 to 13 receive who are following vocationally based courses where there are examples of outstanding practice. Specialist special educational needs teachers have good subject knowledge of the teaching of basic skills and this leads to confident teaching and the respect of the students.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in all other years. The school offers an excellent range of accredited courses.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The school makes satisfactory arrangements and provides effective support for pupils with special educational needs.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall; provision for moral and social development is very good. The provision for spiritual and cultural is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	Standards of care are good. This is a caring school where staff know the students well.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the headteacher and the senior team are excellent. The quality of middle management is satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory; the governors do not meet fully all of their statutory duties.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The governors and senior management team have a very good understanding of the school's work.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are very carefully deployed to those areas where they will provide the greatest benefit. The school applies the principles of best value extremely well.

There are adequate staff and learning resources although further development of ICT resources is required. Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

#### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of teaching is very good.</li> <li>The standards that students attain and the progress that they make.</li> <li>The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>Students have positive attitudes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents being kept better informed about how their child is progressing.</li> <li>The school setting a more appropriate amount of work to be done at home.</li> <li>The school working more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The standards that students attain are above the national average and students achieve well at the school overall. Students have very good attitudes. The quality of management is very good overall.

The inspection team found that the annual written reports to parents on their child's performance do not always inform parents about the achievements and progress that their child has made although a new system of reporting is about to be launched. Homework does not always support and extend students. The school does work closely with parents; it is approachable and welcoming.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. The majority of students entered the school with levels of attainment that, overall, were at the level expected nationally, although those students currently in Years 7 and 8 entered the school with levels of attainment above the level expected nationally. By the ages of 14, 16 and 18, standards of attainment are above the level expected. The majority of students achieve well at the school.
2. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, the proportion of students reaching Level 5 and above was well above the national average in English and above the national average in mathematics and science. The proportion of students reaching Level 6 and above was above the national average in all three subjects. The average National Curriculum points score was well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science when compared to all schools. In comparison with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, students' average National Curriculum points score was very high in mathematics and science and places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally; results were well above average in English. Overall, results have improved since the last inspection report.
3. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C was close to the national average. Results have improved since the last inspection report, particularly the most recent set of results. However, in subjects such as music, art, history and religious education, few students attained the very highest grades. Results at A\* to C were above the national average in physical education and drama; in line with the national average in all other subjects with the exception of history, French, German, music and religious education where they were well below the national average. A particular example worthy of mention is the eighty-nine per cent of GNVQ engineering students who achieved at the higher levels of merit and distinction.
4. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A\* to G in the 2000 GCSE examinations was above the national average. The proportion of students obtaining one or more passes at grades A\* to G was well above the national average. The total GCSE points score per student was above the national average when compared with all schools. When compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were well above average. The total GCSE points score rose considerably in 2000 with boys performing particularly well. Based on the figures for the last five years, the average total GCSE/GNVQ point score per student showed a trend above that of the national trend. Results at A\* to G were above the national average in double award science; in line with the national average in all other subjects with the exception of history where they were below the national average.
5. Students' best overall results, compared to their achievements in other subjects were in drama and design and technology: resistant materials and the weakest results were in history, French and German.
6. The new headteacher has set challenging targets and the school has been successful in obtaining these. However, the school has also recognised that in some subjects students do not always achieve the very highest grades.
7. In the 2000 GCE A-level examinations, the average A/AS level point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent was well above the national average. These results represent a significant improvement on the 1999 results.
8. In the 2000 GCE A-level examinations, results were well above the national average in English and biology; above the national average in design and technology; in line with the national average in all other subjects with the exception of music where they were well below and history and religious education where they were very low. Students following GNVQ courses in business, and leisure and

tourism attained standards well above national standards. A particular example worthy of mention is the sixty-five per cent of advanced business students who attained significantly high levels.

9. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards attained by students at the ages of 14, 16 and 18 are above the level expected of students of the same ages nationally.
10. Evidence gathered during the inspection in English indicates that students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are well above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. By the age of 16, students' standards of attainment are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally and represent satisfactory achievement. By the age of 18 attainment is in line with course expectations. Students' attainment in speaking and listening is a strength at all levels in the school and it is clear that students enjoy practising their skills. By the age of 14 students read a good selection of novels, plays and poems suitable for their age. Students enjoy reading aloud and are almost always keen to read to their class. By 16 and 18 students go on to study more demanding texts. By the age of 14 students are able to write in a variety of different styles. By the age of 16 students go on to consolidate their skills and to widen the range of writing. However, whilst higher attainers do develop the capacity to write with clarity, the work of many middle and lower attaining students lacks cohesion. Additionally, inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar sometimes mar their work. By the age of 18 students are able to produce accurate, well-structured, well-expressed essays on a variety of literary topics.
11. Standards of literacy are in line with the national expectation. However, there are inconsistencies in the way the school teaches literacy across the whole curriculum. Thus, for example, students are given good opportunities to develop their skills in some subjects but in others few such opportunities exist. Additionally, whilst students in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 and 13 develop their skills at a good pace, the rate at which students in Years 10 and 11 do so is slower than might be expected.
12. In some subjects students are provided with ample opportunities to practise and develop their skills in reading. However, relatively few such opportunities exist across all subjects and in many lessons students' reading is confined to worksheets. Whilst higher attaining students achieve good standards in their writing, the work of many middle and lower attaining students is marred by errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. There is a lack of consistency across all subjects as to how such basic errors are addressed. The opportunities, which exist in subjects to develop skills of writing for particular audiences, are not fully exploited. Students are not required to produce extended writing, especially in Years 10 and 11, to the extent that might be expected.
13. Evidence gathered during the inspection in mathematics indicates that the standards that students attain at age 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students have a sound understanding of percentages, and a good understanding of data handling. By the age of 16 standards are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. In completing coursework, higher attaining students are beginning to develop good skills in investigations by carrying out substantial problems. Students use mathematical language well and present sound arguments for their generalisations. By the age of 18 students are attaining standards that are in line with course expectations. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying.
14. Levels of numeracy across the curriculum are broadly in line with the standard expected. There is no whole-school strategy in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the whole school. In science, general standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Students' data handling skills are practised well in geography and in physical education where a variety of graphs are used to represent data.
15. Evidence gathered during the inspection in science indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. By the age of 16, students' standards of attainment are also above the level expected nationally. By the age of 18, students' standards of attainment match the course expectations in physics and chemistry and are above expectations in biology. Most students in the school have a good knowledge of the basic

facts associated with topics they have studied recently. Higher attainers often show very good understanding. Students generally have good investigative skills.

16. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain by the age of 14 are above the level expected in physical education and design and technology; at the level expected in all other subjects with the exception of history where standards are below the level expected and modern foreign languages and music where standards are well below. Standards in religious education are below those expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
17. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain by the age of 16 are above the level expected in physical education, geography, design and technology and drama, at the level expected in all other subjects with the exception of history and music where standards are below the level expected and modern foreign languages where standards are well below.
18. Evidence gathered during the inspection and where there is sufficient evidence to form a judgement indicates that the standards that students attain by the age of 18 are above course expectations in modern foreign languages, biology and physical education; at the level expected in all other subjects with the exception of history and music where standards are below course expectations.
19. In work seen during the inspection, students are attaining standards that are above the level expected of both 16 and 18 year-old students nationally in engineering, leisure and tourism and ICT for students in Years 10 and 11 and in business, leisure and tourism, and travel and tourism for students in Years 12 and 13.
20. The majority of students achieve well overall at the school. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and Years 12 to 13 and satisfactorily in Years 10 to 11. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls. The very good relationships between students and teachers promote an eagerness to learn and to achieve well. The good quality of teaching has a positive impact on students' achievements. Students achieve better in Years 7 to 9 than they do in Years 10 to 11 because much of the work is more structured and often more challenging. In Years 10 and 11, the written work of many middle and lower attaining students lacks cohesion. Students are sometimes denied the opportunity to practise the rigour of synthesis and evaluation, and to hone their writing skills. Students in the middle attaining groups in Years 10 and 11 do not achieve quite as well in examinations as their attainment in lessons would suggest. One reason for this is a lack of precision in some students' written answers. They do not always make satisfactory use of subject terminology so that the meaning of their answer is not clear.
21. The progress of students with special educational needs is similar to that of other students in the school. However, in some subjects, teachers do not always match the work closely enough to meet the needs of these students. This is particularly true of higher attaining students including those that are gifted and talented. In subjects such as art and design and history, these students are not sufficiently challenged and often their progress is only satisfactory.
22. Students following the 'Motivated By Choice' vocational course in Years 10 and 11 enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below the level expected. They achieve far better than might be expected in relation to their prior attainment, both in terms of motivation and quality of learning. Students not only improve in terms of behaviour, attendance and punctuality but progress on to viable career routes, including university.

### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

23. Students have very good attitudes to the school. Students like their school very much. They place much value on the accessibility and helpfulness of the teachers and other support staff. They enjoy making friends. They are very pleased with the wide range of improvements that have been made over the past year, singling out the environment and library/ICT suite for particular praise. They are pleased to wear their uniform, on which they were consulted. They have very few criticisms, but would appreciate, for lunchtime, more ample space for eating and more trees in the grounds.

24. Students like the activities that the school offers and support events outside lessons. They find most of the work interesting and homework of about the right difficulty. They generally try their best. The shorter lessons introduced this year are generally better for concentration, but they notice that the new timings are not helpful in practical subjects, which many particularly enjoy. Students often proudly asked inspectors during the week what they thought of their school. Most parents praise the positive attitudes of their children.
25. It is thus no surprise to find that attendance has improved since the previous inspection. It is now above average overall, and no year group has an unsatisfactory record. The percentage of unauthorised absence has fallen sharply during the past year to about half the national average. This mainly results from a tighter system of following up reasons for absence. There has also been an improvement in punctuality, but an appreciable number of students still arrive late for the start of school. This commonly disrupts the first lesson of the day, thereby adversely affecting students' learning and progress. A principal factor is irregularity of bus services on which many students depend. The school quite frequently mediates to try to improve the situation but the matter largely lies outside its own control.
26. The standard of behaviour overall is very good and has improved since the previous inspection when it was good overall. In almost all lessons students listen very well to the teacher and to each other. They participate readily and apply good intellectual and creative effort. Most show sustained concentration and work with commitment. Standards of behaviour in lessons tend to deteriorate on the very few occasions when teaching does not supply adequate challenge, but students are generally very tolerant. Around the school behaviour is sensible and orderly. When necessary, for instance at lunchtime, students queue with patience and good humour. The atmosphere in the dining areas is relaxed and sociable. Students are frequently courteous and helpful. Many show polite interest in visitors and are keen that they should enjoy themselves. School and personal property is appropriately respected.
27. No oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection. A few students do have difficulties in social and behavioural matters. The standard of classroom and general school management is such that there is little detrimental effect to the general progress of learning or to the pleasant social atmosphere outside lessons. The very successful handling of potentially difficult behaviour is reflected in the significant reduction in the rate of school exclusions. The previous inspection reported a level of 47 temporary exclusions. This had been reduced to 8 last year (all boys) which is well below the average for schools of a similar size.
28. The quality of personal development is very good and relationships throughout the school are excellent. A high level of informal respect pervades the school. Students are pleased to work together in pairs or groups. They are glad to contribute to the routines of the school and willingly take on responsibilities. They support each other well. Most are very responsible in their attitudes.
29. These mature and responsible qualities were demonstrated to excellent effect at a meeting of the school council. In a lively session it was not long before the new joiners from the youngest year group could not resist making a contribution. Items on the pre-Christmas agenda required discussion of very difficult matters: when and how to organise the distribution of lockers equitably where demand will outstrip the supply; and when and how to ensure the circulation and confidential return of the questionnaire on bullying. Both were chewed over very thoroughly, with many thoughtful, caring and practical points made.

#### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

30. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and 12 to 13 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 61 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 18 per cent of lessons. Teaching of the very highest standard was seen in 4 per cent of lessons. However, teaching is less than satisfactory in 5 per cent of lessons and poor or very poor in 1 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was noted as sound

and often good. The emphasis that the school's management has placed on improving teaching and learning has led to a good teaching provision, which ensures that the standards that students attain are above the national average in public examinations.

31. The proportion of teaching that is at least good does vary between year groups. In Years 7 to 9, 60 per cent of lessons are good or better; this figure rises to 74 per cent in Years 12 to 13 but declines to 50 per cent in Years 10 to 11. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is a strength of the school and leads to the majority of students achieving well.
32. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in English; good in mathematics, science, geography, design and technology and physical education; satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of modern foreign languages and music where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 to 11, teaching is excellent in drama; good in science, geography, design and technology and physical education; satisfactory in all other subjects with the exception of modern foreign languages and music where it is unsatisfactory. In Years 12 to 13, teaching is excellent in drama; good in all other subjects with the exception of art and design and history where it is satisfactory and music where it is unsatisfactory.
33. Generally the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching. However, students do not have sufficient access to ICT facilities across the curriculum and this impacts adversely on their ability to develop as independent learners. The quality of teaching is excellent in a significant number of Spanish lessons and in these lessons the quality of learning is also excellent.
34. The quality of teaching has many strengths. When teaching is very good, as seen in a Year 7 Spanish class, there is very good subject knowledge, lively exposition and very effective use of question and answer to revisit and consolidate previous learning. In another good lesson, a group of Year 9 students were eager to participate in their English lesson. The teacher shared with the students exactly what the students were going to learn and her expectations of both standards and behaviour. In this lesson the teacher used assessment techniques to assess and improve the writing skills of the individual student. In drama, the teacher has an excellent knowledge of the subject, which leads to confident teaching, students being fully involved in their own learning and clear targets being set for improvement. In a Year 12 lesson, the confident explanation and very effective use of question and answer by the drama teacher created constructive relationships and made the students feel confident and able to challenge themselves further.
35. Good attention is paid to developing literacy skills in Years 7 to 9, especially in English. However, there are inconsistencies throughout the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 to 11. There is no overall strategy for teaching literacy skills. There are inconsistencies in the way the school teaches literacy and in particular writing skills across the whole curriculum. Thus, for example, students are given good opportunities to develop their skills in some subjects but in others few such opportunities exist. In Years 7 to 9, teachers use a variety of strategies to improve students' literacy skills. They use writing frames to support students and in some subjects such as design and technology, technical vocabulary is reinforced on a regular basis.
36. There is no whole-school strategy in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the whole school. However, this is not having a significant impact on the standards of numeracy.
37. Teachers generally plan their lessons well, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Lessons have a more focused structure than in Years 10 to 11. The difference between the satisfactory lessons and those that are better than that lies mainly in the way lessons are planned and structured. In the good lessons, clear learning objectives are shared with the students, and make it clear to them what they should know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. The lesson is carefully structured to ensure that tasks are short and focused and this helps students to sustain their interest. Students concentrate well and want to learn and succeed. Teachers work hard to involve all students although they do not always match the work closely enough to the meet the needs of all students. This was evident in a Year 8 French class where the teacher did not provide suitable



exercises for students with special educational needs which resulted in these students achieving very little during the lesson.

38. The expectations that teachers have do vary from very high, as seen in a Year 12 sociology lesson, through to very low in a Year 9 music lesson. Teachers have high expectations of how students should behave and students respond accordingly. However, the main difference in expectations is in the standards teachers expect students to attain. When expectations are high the teacher provides a clear framework for the lesson, sets challenging tasks and sets homework that extends the learning process as was seen in the Year 12 sociology lesson. When expectations are very low, students produce work that is well below the level expected and achieve very little as was seen in a Year 9 music lesson. Low expectations in some subjects results in higher attainers not always being challenged or extended.
39. Teaching methods are generally good. Teachers use an effective combination of explanation, discussion and individual work that maintain the interest and motivation of students. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 mathematics class where a combination of activities sustained pace and students' interest. There are good introductions to lessons, but the end part of the lesson tends to be weaker and is often only used to set homework.
40. The setting of homework is not embedded fully within the schemes of work and too often it is about finishing off a piece of work started in the lesson rather than extending the learning process or challenging the student. In middle and lower attaining groups in Years 10 and 11, students occasionally do not complete the work that has been set. Teachers comment appropriately in their marking but students frequently do not respond and gaps in the work remain. These gaps represent discontinuities in students' learning and also reduce the practice that students get in writing their own descriptions and explanations.
41. The management of students is a strength of the teaching. Teachers have excellent relationships with students and there is a good deal of trust between teachers and students. Teachers spend a substantial amount of time encouraging students to do well which helps to raise students' self-esteem. Teachers know their students well and there is very little evidence of students misbehaving in lessons. Teachers have very good control of their groups.
42. Teachers make satisfactory use of time. The pace of lessons does vary from brisk through to pedestrian. In a Year 11 geography class, the teacher made good use of the full 50-minutes which helps students to sustain concentration and put a lot of effort into their learning. However, in a Year 11 history class, the pace of the lesson was slow, students became bored and less attentive although they were not disruptive. On this occasion students did not learn very much. The use of support staff is satisfactory. When used well they are fully integrated into the lesson, which enables students with special educational needs to progress well. On other occasions, the support staff have not been involved in the planning of the lesson and are unaware of what is required of them.
43. Teachers make satisfactory use of the resources available to them. Resources were used well in a Year 12 geography class. Students were provided with a range of resources, atlases, textbooks, news cuttings, journals, Internet web sites in order to extend their understanding of changes in population distributions that have occurred over the last ten years. The use of ICT as a tool to aid learning is inadequately addressed in many subjects. Teachers find it difficult to build ICT into their work because of the lack of facilities available to them. This impacts negatively on students' standards of attainment in ICT across the school.
44. The quality and use of ongoing assessment varies from very good through to unsatisfactory. The quality of marking does vary across and within subjects. At best, it is thorough and students are given clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. Some marking fails to do this and a number of errors are overlooked. Marking does not always require a student response and fails to challenge.
45. Of particular note is the high quality of teaching that students in Years 10 to 13 receive who are following vocationally based courses where there are examples of outstanding practice. Students

benefit from well-informed, experienced and well-organised teaching. The warm relationship that exists between teachers and their students was well illustrated in a Year 10 'Motivated by Choice' class where there was mutual respect and where each student was encouraged to give of their best and contribute fully throughout the lesson. The assessment of students' work by teachers is thorough and accurate.

46. Specialist special educational needs teachers have good subject knowledge of the teaching of basic skills and this leads to confident teaching and the respect of the students. High expectations of behaviour and effort generally lead to students being challenged. Often teachers will use effective question and answer techniques, which engage students and deepen their understanding of topics. Specialist teachers have excellent relationships with students. Less experienced special educational needs teachers lack subject knowledge and opportunities are missed to ensure students make optimum progress. In these cases, short-term planning lacks sufficient detail and work is not matched to the needs of the students.

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

47. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities for the majority of students are good. In Years 7 to 9 they are satisfactory and good in Years 10 to 13. The length of the teaching week at 25 hours is in line with the DfEE recommendations.
48. In Years 7 to 9, all students study the subjects of the National Curriculum as well as religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In Year 8 they also study drama. However, music and religious education do not meet statutory requirements fully. In music, the curriculum being delivered does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, and students are not using ICT. Religious education does not cover religions other than Christianity and Judaism in sufficient detail and therefore does not meet fully the Locally Agreed Syllabus. ICT is not developed well across the curriculum.
49. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a core curriculum, with a good range of further subjects from which to choose. In addition, music is offered as an out of school option. The breadth and balance of the curriculum offered is good and meets statutory requirements in all respects. The school is now offering an excellent range of externally accredited courses to meet the needs of students. With the rich wealth of data gathered from the assessment schemes, the school is now introducing a four-strand curriculum, specifically tailored to the individual needs of students; these are known as foundation, standard, extended and advanced.
50. Students in Years 12 and 13 have access to a good curriculum with a range of appropriate courses but all students do not receive the statutory amount of religious education. In Years 12 and 13 students may select from a wide range of courses including one and two year GNVQs at advanced and intermediate levels, and one and two year GCE AS-level and GCE A-level. There are also three Core Skills units.
51. Overall, the school offers a good equality of access to the curriculum for students.
52. The provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school's policy on the structure of teaching groups is reviewed annually and appropriate changes are made to suit the varying, individual needs of the students. Some students are withdrawn and receive support teaching in English, mathematics and science. Many subjects have taken it upon themselves to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of these students. One such development is the excellent 'Motivated by Choice' course for students in Years 10 and 11.
53. There is no overall strategy for teaching literacy skills. There are inconsistencies in the way the school teaches literacy across the whole curriculum. Thus, students are given good opportunities to develop their skills in some subjects but in others few such opportunities exist.

54. There is no whole-school strategy in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the whole school. However, this is not having a significant impact on the standards of numeracy.
55. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for students. Extensive activities take place in dance, drama and sport. Across the school, departments offer curricular clubs, activities and educational visits. The physical education department offers a wide range of activities for all abilities and these are well supported by over half of the students with nine staff involved in organisation and supervision.
56. Whilst the programme for PSHE is good, the teaching of the programme is inconsistent and therefore unsatisfactory. The use of the short tutor time is not efficient and many tutors do not follow the programme consistently. At present, the delivery across year groups is not consistent and allows students to receive a very varied quality of experience. All issues of health education, sex education, and the negative effects of bullying and drug misuse are provided for within the school's programme and citizenship is a strong element. The one-to-one interviews between tutors and students are a valuable part of the programme.
57. The school's provision for careers education and guidance is good. In Year 10 it includes the opportunity for all students to have two weeks of work experience. This is well prepared, monitored and followed up by staff.
58. The school has good links with the community, which enhance the students' intellectual and personal development. These include links with businesses and good constructive relationships with partner institutions. Links with feeder schools are good and where possible, are arranged so that students feel confident and happy in the transition.
59. The last inspection report said that the school did not have an overall curriculum policy, this is not now the case. However, it also said that the school did not meet its statutory obligations for religious education and ICT, this is still the case for religious education. In addition, music is not now meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school has reviewed the timetable thoroughly and the time allocation is now in line with that recommended by the DfEE. Therefore the school has made satisfactory progress with the curriculum since the time of the last inspection.
60. The school makes good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, reflecting the clearly stated school aims for this aspect of the curriculum and an ethos that stresses individual responsibility and accountability.
61. There is satisfactory provision for the spiritual development of students. Assemblies provide opportunities to pray. Students benefit from the positive examples set by staff as when the headteacher read a specially composed prayer. However, as at the time of the last inspection, the school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship. There is inconsistent reference to a deity during form periods on those days when students do not attend assembly. The recently introduced 'Thought for the Day' is meant to encourage reflection but this does not always happen. With the exception of students in Years 12 and 13, all students are taught religious education and the lessons do have a spiritual dimension. However, not all subjects make a contribution to this aspect of personal development, including those that frequently play a major role such as art and design and music. There were opportunities for awe and wonder and quiet reflection during the planting of trees by Year 7. A series of assemblies about the importance of Poppy Day as a symbol of the act of remembrance, received local praise.
62. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of students. As at the time of the last inspection, the Code of Conduct is part of the life of the school and well understood by all. A well-organised system of rewards and sanctions sharpens perceptions of right and wrong as do the commendable role models set by the staff. The excellent relationships that generally exist between staff and students encourage a positive response. Subject teachers stress correct attitudes and behaviour. For example, drama classes deal with the moral issues that surround bullying and physical education provides a context in which fair play, honesty and playing to the rules are

explored. Students ponder issues such as abortion and the sanctity of life in religious education and problems associated with the less developed countries in geography.

63. A very strong feature of the school is the way in which it encourages and manages the social development of the students. The School Council is a model of good practice. Students are involved in the decision making process and matters discussed are substantive and difficult. They nominate a student for the Annual Citizenship Award. Year 9 pupils help with the induction of Year 7 students. Year 11 prefects undergo training and are encouraged to act independently as are the school officers in Years 12 and 13. Year 12 and Year 13 volunteers run a daily help desk for younger students. A residential for Year 12 and 13 students promotes social relations as does group work and activities in subjects such as geography and modern foreign languages. There is a high level of collaboration in drama and during the many opportunities for extra-curricular sport.
64. The school makes satisfactory provision for cultural development. This encompasses the world of engineering and construction as well as fashion, theatre and sport. Concerts are visited. There is a lack of focus on the impact of information and communication technology on culture. Although students learn about other cultures in geography, dance and modern foreign languages more needs to be done to prepare students for life in a multi-cultural society. For example, art and design does not consider the impact of non-western art in-depth and religious education teaches little about the major faiths that are represented in our society.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

65. The school's overall standard of student care is good, with some areas being particularly strong. For instance, procedures for promoting and monitoring good behaviour and attendance are very good, and those for removing oppressive behaviour are excellent. The general quality of informal relations, based on respect and trust, is impressive, and students in all year groups are pleased with the warmth and encouragement shown by school staff. Work is generally assessed well, and students receive good educational and personal support and guidance. Health and safety arrangements are good. Students' welfare has recently been greatly improved by the modernisation of toilet facilities.
66. Tutors know their students well. Students remain with the same tutor during their school life until the sixth form. Each student has an individual interview with the tutor at least twice a year to review progress and targets. Heads of Year are kept informed and any subsequent difficulties arising, for instance with behaviour, are discussed with the year head and, as necessary, with senior management. There is some inconsistency between tutors in the effectiveness of the use of tutor time and the implementation of the PSHE programme.
67. This core structure is well supplemented by a range of other support services. The school's reception deals cheerfully and well with the needs presented to it. The matron is kept busy. The facilities of the medical room are in constant use. The school nurse operates a weekly drop-in clinic. A behaviour support teacher plays a valuable full-time role. The education welfare officer also counsels and interviews students. The externally trained lunchtime supervisory team manages the particular difficulties of rather cramped facilities very well, assisted by teachers. Prefects, organised in teams, play an important role in managing lunchtime movements with discretion. Students in Years 12 and 13, by rota, are also on hand at lunchtime to offer a listening service (PALS), supported by a teacher, to younger students with worries. The headteacher is frequently visible and accessible in the crowd. Altogether, the care structure is extensive and works cohesively to ensure an orderly and kindly ethos.
68. This level of care and good example is an important element in promoting very good behaviour. It is reinforced by a positive behaviour policy based on praise and a clear code of conduct. It also encompasses a well-recognised range of rewards that all students may expect to attain. Classroom management of behaviour is generally very good throughout the school. Lapses in behaviour may lead to withdrawal of the usual credit, though students can redeem themselves by earning subsequent merits. Particularly poor conduct may result in a student being placed in 'academic remove' for a limited time. Care is, however, taken that the student is supplied with the same work as the rest of the class. This closely supervised segregation through the day, with parents being

involved very effectively, discourages further poor behaviour in most cases. Those who continue to experience difficulties in controlling their behaviour, or showing disaffection in the upper school, are closely monitored and helped by mentoring and special programmes. The outcomes of this very careful management and monitoring of behaviour are very good.

69. Similarly the school takes much care concerning bullying. There is good modern policy and charter. A box is provided for registering concerns of individual students. The school records meticulously the details of all incidents known and has built up a comprehensive statistical base. Offenders are tracked down and each case followed through. The friendly PALS service in the school foyer offers help to any student who may feel themselves in need of it. The school council is about to issue a questionnaire to all students in order to mount a whole-school survey. All in all the measures taken are excellent.
70. Attendance is also very well promoted and monitored. Students with high levels of attendance are rewarded termly and those with weak attendance are also rewarded for improvement. The electronic registration system (OMR) works effectively. Phone contact is made by office staff daily with parents or carers of those who are absent without notice. Tutors review absence weekly and chase up reasons when necessary. Students with less than 90 per cent attendance are recorded for special attention. One in five students is on this list, which is monitored half-termly. Many appear because of holidays taken during school terms. The school tries in several ways to dissuade parents from booking such holidays, with variable success. Last year one in four of the students on the target list subsequently achieved attendance of more than 90 per cent.
71. Lateness has reduced but continues to be a problem. It is monitored from the electronic record and signing-in arrangements. With irregular arrivals of buses the school has difficulties, but does its best, in attempting to minimise disruption and verify causes. The education welfare officer has worked frequently with the school in monitoring and improving attendance, but she has now ceased to be so closely attached.
72. Students in Years 12 and 13 maintain their own registration and attendance system. A new electronic 'swipe card' method has just been installed. Early indications are that it will provide a very accurate and clear record.
73. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good and the school has made good progress with this aspect since the last inspection report. A rich wealth of data on students' attainment is collected and recorded when they enter the school, including National Curriculum tests results for students aged 11 and the results from cognitive ability tests. This information is then made available to curriculum leaders and heads of department for their guidance. As students progress through the school, information is gathered on their attainment and stored centrally, updated regularly and available to all teaching staff and this information is also used for students progressing on to Year 12. Records on students' behaviour, effort, homework and progress also complement the system. Overall, although the schools' procedures are good, there is too wide a variance within departments. In science, the procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good, with regular end of module tests following a common format. Modern foreign languages have consistent procedures for assessment and in geography there are now very good procedures for assessing both students' attainment and progress. However, in music they are poor, with no exemplars or evidence of the end of Year 9 Teacher Assessments kept and the levels used for these are not in line with the National Curriculum criteria. The procedures for assessment in religious education were described as poor in the last inspection report and remain so still.
74. The use of assessment in planning the curriculum is satisfactory. There is a rich wealth of assessment data available to departments, but its use is not always consistent. Across subject areas and within departments, there is some lack at present of consistent, systematic or objective monitoring of students' progress across the key stages. There are examples of where good practice is firmly established. In geography for example, there is good use of assessment information, so that high achievers are identified. Science makes good use of the analysis of results each year to determine strengths and weaknesses so that students are entered for the most appropriate examination paper. The mathematics department track students' progress through the recording of

marks and this is relayed to the students so that they have a sound understanding of their learning and the information gathered can be used to address curriculum planning. However, across other subjects, the use made of assessment data is still not fully effective or embedded in the everyday workings of departments. For example, the physical education department is currently working to incorporate the new National Curriculum levels but this has not yet been completed. In music the use of assessment data is poor, as it is inconsistent and not based upon agreed criteria and the curriculum is not then modified to meet the needs of individual students in Years 7 to 9 or for individual target setting for these students.

75. A new special educational needs co-ordinator has been appointed recently and she is providing good management and leadership of this aspect. She is striving to introduce many new systems for identifying, assessing and monitoring the progress of this group of students. However, individual education plans (IEPs) are not in place for all students on the special educational needs register. For all stated students, assessment, recording and reporting all meet statutory requirements.
76. Welfare and child protection arrangements are good. The school now has a wide range of modern welfare policies. The one for health and safety is comprehensive and clearly sets out the responsibilities of individuals. Equipment is regularly monitored for safety but the school recognises that further attention is necessary for full risk assessments. Two senior experienced members of staff are designated in relation to child protection. All teachers are issued with the guidelines and annual in-service training is provided for new staff. Members of the lunchtime staff receive their own guidance. These procedures result in a good standard of overall alertness. Students' awareness of personal, social and health education issues, such as healthy eating and the dangers of drugs, is effectively promoted. Students speak well of the medical attention that the school provides, and good records are maintained.
77. During the past year many improvements have been made to the premises, including new furniture, better decoration, and the installation of gravelled paths and pleasant seats. Most importantly, the main toilets have been completely modernised. Students' practical concerns have been taken into account. Students' opinions are sought through the system of year councils. Members of the school council have been involved in drawing up the 10 year premises plan and they are given an active role in welfare improvements, such as the provision and allocation of lockers. This sensible encouragement of citizenship, and the clear benefits produced, has given a powerful spur to students' present feelings of well being, self-worth, confidence and progress.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

78. Parents have a high opinion of the school. The school is popular and its reputation is growing. They like its approachability and welcome. Parents have particular regard for the fact that their children are expected to work hard and achieve well. They think that the teaching is good and that the school is well led and managed. As a result their children make good progress in their work and general development. Parents find the school quickly responsive to problems raised. They are impressed, for instance, with its speedy monitoring of absence. They say that the school has clearly improved in many respects over the past year.
79. On the other hand there continues to be a significant level of dissatisfaction regarding communications. Many parents feel that they have not been provided with sufficient knowledge of how their children are getting on. Written reports have been of a poor quality. Parents report that the year group meetings to review students' progress do not fully satisfy their needs. Concerns have not always been brought to the attention of parents. Homework has sometimes been inconsistently set. There has been a dearth of newsletters.
80. The inspection agrees with all the above parental comments, both positive and negative. The school had already recognised the areas parents had commented upon as needing improvement. For example, a good-quality newsletter has been produced for circulation. It is intended that this will form a regular termly feature for students and parents. Written academic reports in a much-improved format will also be provided termly.

81. Parental information is at present broadly satisfactory and is set to improve. Written information concerning what the school provides is contained in the prospectus, and a review of its activities during the year is presented in the governors' annual report. Both documents are user-friendly and comply with statutory requirements. The school consulted parents concerning the home-school agreements introduced last year and the proposed draft was modified in the light of suggestions made.
82. Parents are kept informed about what their children are learning through the homework diaries. They are requested to sign these weekly and most do. Curricular information is given through various meetings. Parents praise the induction arrangements in Year 7. There is a similar options curriculum meeting in Year 9 and one before entry to the sixth form. Parental meetings are held in connection with other specific programmes. Many would wish the school to work more closely with parents. Parents are, however, always able to request meetings to discuss concerns and acknowledge that when problems are raised staff address them quickly. The school is keen to celebrate with parents the achievement of their children.
83. Most parents are supportive of the school. Parents' evenings are usually well attended. Almost all parents comply with the expectations in the home-school agreement in assisting their children. When problems do occur most parents work well with the school in supporting the measures taken. Many have contributed to the recent revival of the parent, teacher and friends association. The five parent-governors play an important part in the general direction of the school.
84. Overall, parents contribute effectively to the work of the school. The school is currently working well to improve the quality of its links with parents.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

85. The quality of leadership and management of the school is very good overall. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership. He has established a very clear direction for the work of the school. Central to the school's work is improving the achievement of all students. The result of this approach can be seen in the students' very good attitudes, the good teaching provision, the significant improvement in the most recent set of GCSE examination results and the well above average GCE A-level GNVQ results.
86. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is fully supported by a well-informed and experienced senior management team. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a good capacity to succeed. Since the arrival of the current headteacher many new systems have been introduced which are having a positive impact on the work of the school.
87. The school's mission statement is very relevant to the needs of the students and permeates much of the work of the school.
88. The senior management team has introduced many new systems and structures that provide a very good framework for the work of the school. The senior management team is not complacent in its approach and actively seeks new solutions to areas identified for improvement in the school improvement plan. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the structure of management and this enables the school to operate smoothly and efficiently.
89. The leadership and management provided by many middle managers is satisfactory but varies from very good through to unsatisfactory. Heads of Year provide good support and care for students. A new special educational needs co-ordinator has been appointed recently and she is providing good management and leadership of this aspect. The school has made many good appointments. There are examples of very good leadership and management at this level. For instance, the new subject leader for modern foreign languages provides very good leadership and management, which has resulted in many of the deficiencies of the subject being recognised and strategies for improvement being put into place. However, across the school the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous as is the case in music and religious education and results in the varying quality of teaching, inconsistent quality of marking and ICT not being implemented fully within subjects.

90. The governors have a very good understanding of the school's work and they have identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. Committee structures are good and there is a good and effective working partnership with the senior management team in shaping the direction of the school.
91. The governing body does not fulfil its statutory duty in ensuring the National Curriculum entitlement for all students in religious education and music and the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
92. At the last inspection, the school development plan was not costed fully which made the second and third years of the plan less precise. A new system and cycle of school development planning has been introduced and this has resulted in a school improvement plan which is of good quality, focuses on raising achievement and sets a clear agenda for improvement. The plan is linked to the school's mission statement. Subject development plans are embedded within the school improvement plan. The school's priorities are appropriate and many of the issues noted in this report are highlighted in the school improvement plan.
93. The school applies the principles of best value extremely well. The headteacher has set challenging targets for improvement. The school compares its performance with similar attaining schools in the authority and nationally. The most recent set of GCSE results indicates that in many subject areas there has been improvement and these subjects are taking appropriate action on a number of issues such as using assessment data to set targets and are sharing good teaching practice.
94. The school makes very good use of new technology. A new system of registering students' attendance electronically has been introduced.
95. The financial planning in the school is excellent. The school has clearly defined systems for tendering and ordering. The last Auditor's report, carried out in 1998, made a number of recommendations and the school has responded in a positive manner. The school receives a basic budget that is broadly in line with the national average. A very tight rein is kept on spending by the administrative staff and the senior management team. Through careful and prudent management of the budget, the school has a satisfactory level of surplus funding. The school is providing good value for money.
96. There is a satisfactory range of suitably qualified and experienced staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. There is good provision of support staff in science, design and technology and ICT. There are not sufficient learning support assistants for students with special educational needs and those assistants that are in place are not deployed in the most efficient way. There are good procedures in place for induction of staff new to the school and for newly qualified teachers.
97. Significant financial investment in the school's resources has been made since the last inspection and as a consequence learning resources are broadly satisfactory and offer effective support for the whole-school curriculum. The provision of a new network for ICT is a substantial improvement for the future development of the subject. However, an insufficient number of machines constrain the use that individual subjects make of ICT and constrain investigative and research skills. Recent refurbishment of the library makes this a good learning environment. Overall, the number of library books is appropriate; however, in some subject areas the quality and quantity of books is unsatisfactory, for instance, to support Year 12 and 13 science. Weaknesses in learning resources are found in religious education, modern foreign languages, special educational needs and history; these departments have insufficient textbooks for all students to have an individual copy. In the special educational needs department the majority of the learning resources are dated and inappropriate for teaching purposes. There is a lack of suitable reading material to encourage the Year 10 and 11 reluctant readers.
98. Overall accommodation is unsatisfactory. Some classrooms, particularly in mathematics and modern foreign languages are small and place severe restrictions on teaching and learning. Facilities for performing arts are unsatisfactory. The two sets of temporary classrooms are in poor



condition, both internally and externally. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory because there are a significant number of lessons that take place in ordinary classrooms rather than in laboratories. Although teachers do their best to minimise the impact of teaching in classrooms, there is nevertheless a constraint on the learning activities that can be undertaken in those lessons. The dining area is very cramped, although the staggered lunch arrangements have eased congestion. The site is clean and well maintained with very good caretaking arrangements. A full audit of all accommodation has recently led to a series of planned improvements and refurbishment in the library, some classrooms and student toilets.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

Improve the standards that students attain in French and German by improving the quality of teaching across the department to that seen in Spanish classes (para 3, 5, 16, 32, 181-184).

Improve the standards that students attain in music by:

- improving the quality of teaching within the department (para 3, 16, 32, 191-195).
- improving the quality of leadership and management of the department (para 3, 16, 32, 191-195).

Improve students' levels of literacy across the curriculum, especially their writing by:

- ensuring that all subjects include the teaching of writing skills in their schemes of work (para 12, 35, 53, 105, 109, 110 and 165);
- ensuring all teachers place a greater emphasis on the teaching of these skills when planning their lessons (para 12, 35, 53, 105, 109, 110 and 165 )
- providing students with more opportunities to practise their writing skills (para 12, 35, 53, 105, 109, 110 and 165).

Improve the use of ICT across the curriculum by:

- ensuring all subjects build ICT into their schemes of work and lesson plans, and teach the ICT content of the National Curriculum within their subject (para 177, 48, 97, 118, 130 and 160)
- when funding become available increase the ratio of computers to students (para 177, 48, 97, 118, 130 and 160)

Improve the quality of monitoring by middle managers by:

- ensuring that there is a systematic approach to the monitoring of faculties by all middle managers and that policies are applied consistently across the school, including the homework policy (para 40, 89, 142, 151, 160, 119 and 214);
- extending the school's system of self-review to ensure monitoring and support of teaching becomes sufficiently rigorous (para 89, 142, 151, 160, 119 and 214 ).

### **Minor weaknesses**

Continue the good work already started by the special educational needs co-ordinator in identifying, assessing and monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs (para 75).

Raise all teachers' expectations so that higher attaining students, including the gifted and talented, are extended fully and attain the highest grades possible (para 38, 139, 165).

Ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory duty by:

- providing a daily act of collective worship for all students (para 61 and 91).
- ensuring that students have their full entitlement to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for music (para 48);
- ensuring that students have their full entitlement to the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education (para 48, 213, 214);

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	187
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	65

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	14	43	34	4	0	1

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's students

#### Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1076	226
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	248	N/a

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	20	3
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	197	5

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

### Attendance

**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.9

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.6
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	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	110	110	220

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	85	81
	Girls	97	81	69
	Total	181	66	150
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (85)	75 (73)	68(66)
	National	63 (63)	62 (62)	56 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (51)	51 (42)	33 (30)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	91	88	81
	Girls	96	85	79
	Total	187	173	160
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (86)	79 (72)	73 (70)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (50)	37 (46)	28 (33)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	117	105	222

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	51	112	116
	Girls	58	100	101
	Total	109	212	217
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	49.1 (47)	95.5 (95)	98.2 (98)
	National	49 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	94.4 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	40.3 (38)
	National	38.7 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	36
	National	N/a

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations				Year	Boys	Girls	Total
				2000	122	127	249
Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent			
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	
School	17.7	20.5	19.6 (14.4)	1.4	0.5	1.0 (2.1)	
National	N/a	N/a	18.2 (17.9)	N/a	N/a	2.7 (2.8)	

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	15	100
	National		82.5

***Ethnic background of students***

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	1296
Any other minority ethnic group	0

***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	8	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)	79.1
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	493.5

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	19.8

**Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000 0
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	£
Total income	3097796
Total expenditure	3093102
Expenditure per student	2422
Balance brought forward from previous year	179098
Balance carried forward to next year	192937

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1302
Number of questionnaires returned	305

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	49	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	52	7	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	53	15	1	2
The teaching is good.	30	64	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	48	23	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	48	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	19	56	18	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	54	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	59	2	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	50	9	2	10

### Other issues raised by parents

Some problems in humanities based subjects due to lack of curriculum time.  
 Support for students with special educational needs.  
 A lack of newsletters.  
 Concerns about the quantity of homework.  
 Written reports are of poor quality.



**PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

**ENGLISH**

99. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above was well above the national average and the proportion attaining Level 6 and above was above the national average. Teacher assessments were broadly consistent with test results. The average National Curriculum points score was well above the national average when compared with all schools and with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. Overall, results have improved significantly since the last inspection report. Results in English in 2000 were better than those attained in mathematics and science.
100. In 2000 the proportions of students attaining grades A\* to C and grades A\* to G for both English and English literature were in line with the national average. There is no significant difference in the results obtained by boys and girls. Students' results in English are not significantly different from those obtained in most other subjects. Results have fluctuated in the last three years from being well above national average to being in line with it.
101. Results at GCE A-level in 2000 were well above the national average. There has been a clear improvement in results over the past three years.
102. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are well above the level expected of students of the same age nationally and represent very good achievement. By the age of 16, students' standards of attainment are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally and represent satisfactory achievement. By the age of 18 attainment is in line with course expectations. This does not represent a decline in standards from 2000 but is a reflection of the prior attainment of that particular cohort of students. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well.
103. Students' attainment in speaking and listening is a strength at all levels in the school and it is clear that students enjoy practising their skills. By the age of 14 students confidently take part in whole class, group and paired discussion, expressing themselves fully and holding the interest of their listeners by using a varied vocabulary and often using imaginative turns of phrase. Higher attainers can adapt their style to formal or informal situations whilst lower attainers lack this capacity. By the age of 16 students express themselves with increasing clarity and cogency, as was seen, for example, when a Year 11 class discussed in close detail the linguistic features of a passage they were preparing for their mock GCSE examinations. By the age of 18 students interact well with each other and with their teachers when examining set texts. In one Year 13 class, for example, a particularly lively discussion took place on Alan Bennett's depiction of a vicar in one of his "Talking Heads".
104. By 14 students read a good selection of novels, plays and poems suitable for their age. Students enjoy reading aloud and are almost always keen to read to their class. Higher attainers read with good understanding and mostly with good expression, though some are so eager to read ahead, and do so with such rapidity, that their diction suffers and they become difficult to follow. Lower attainers are also keen to be involved. Whilst on occasions they will guess at words rather than work them out using phonics, they can generally work out meaning from the wider context. By 16 and 18 students go on to study more demanding texts. In lessons students frequently display considerable insight as, for example, when a Year 10 class examined how stage directions might be used to create a particular interpretation of a scene from *Macbeth*". However, many middle and lower attaining students find difficulty in articulating their full responses in writing, and using the appropriate language. At 18 students are able to discuss fine nuances of meaning in what they read, as was seen when Year 13 students discussed how Oscar Wilde achieved his comic effects in *"The Importance of Being Ernest"*.
105. By the age of 14 students are able to write in a variety of different styles, including description, narrative and reportage. Examples were seen of students producing high quality work on demanding topics, such as providing well reasoned explanations of the meaning of some of William Blake's poems. By the age of 16 students have consolidated their skills and widened the range of writing to include, for example, discursive writing. Well-argued essays were seen on boxing and foxhunting, for example. However,

whilst higher attainers do develop the capacity to write with clarity and cogency, the work of many middle and lower attaining students lacks cohesion. Additionally, inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar sometimes mar their work. By the age of 18 students are able to produce accurate, well-structured, well-expressed essays on a variety of literary topics.

106. The quality of both teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 12 and 13. When teaching is most effective, teachers display very good knowledge of the subject and of the requirements for the courses they are teaching. This was seen, for example, in a Year 12/13 lesson on Shakespeare, which involved considering the dramatic effectiveness of his use of iambic pentameters. This leads to students having confidence in their work and being ready to ask questions. They also develop a clear sense of what is required to attain high standards. Lessons are well planned, both as individual lessons and as sequences. As part of their lesson planning, teachers also ensure that good quality resources are available. This was seen, for example, in lessons in Years 7 and 9 that involved the use of ICT. Students had prepared their material well before starting to use computers and had a good understanding of why using them was relevant for the task in hand. They had a clear sense that they were making progress and had “ownership” of their learning. Time is used efficiently, variety is introduced into lessons, a good pace is maintained and discipline is good. When teaching is less effective, some higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged and knowledge gained through speaking and listening in lessons is not sufficiently consolidated through writing. The quality of marking is variable. Normally it is thorough and students are given clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. Some marking fails to do this and a number of errors are overlooked. Students’ attitudes and relationships with others contribute well to their learning. They co-operate well with each other, boys and girls work together with ease, and show respect for the views of others. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and help to create a pleasant and purposeful working environment.
107. The leadership and management of the department is good and has resulted in good progress being made since the last inspection report. There has been a marked improvement in attainment, and in the quality of teaching and learning, in Years 7, 8 and 9. Standards have also improved in Years 12 and 13. In Years 10 and 11 standards are similar to what they were previously.

### **Literacy within the school**

108. Standards of literacy are in line with the national expectation. However, there are inconsistencies in the way the school teaches literacy across the whole curriculum. Thus, for example, students are given good opportunities to develop their skills in some subjects but in others few such opportunities exist. Additionally, whilst students in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 and 13 develop their skills at a good pace, the rate at which students in Years 10 and 11 do so is slower than might be expected.
109. In some subjects students are provided with ample opportunities to practise and develop their skills in reading. In English, students read a good selection of varied literature, are happy to read aloud and participate in class and group discussion to look closely at the meaning of particular passages. In design and technology students are able to read a variety of materials, including some from the Internet, and in geography they undertake research into such topics as migrating populations and de-urbanisation. However, relatively few such opportunities exist and in many lessons students’ reading is confined to worksheets.
110. Whilst higher attaining students achieve good standards in their writing, the work of many middle and lower attaining students is marred by errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. There is a lack of consistency across all subjects as to how such basic errors are addressed. The opportunities, which exist in subjects to develop skills of writing for particular audiences, are not fully exploited. Students are not required to produce extended writing, especially in Years 10 and 11, to the extent that might be expected.

## MATHEMATICS

111. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at age 14 the proportions of students attaining Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were above the national average. The average National Curriculum points score in 2000 was above the national average for all schools. There was no significant difference between the teacher assessment and test results. When compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, the National Curriculum average points score was very high and place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The attainment of girls was broadly in line with that of boys and the results in mathematics were below those in English and in line with those in science. Overall, results have improved significantly since the last inspection report.
112. In the 2000 examinations, the proportions of students achieving grades A\* to C and A\* to G were broadly in line with the national averages. The average point score for GCSE was broadly in line with the national average. There has been an improvement in results over the past three years in line with the national trend. There was no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. Students' results in mathematics are not significantly different from those obtained in most other subjects.
113. Results attained in mathematics at GCE A-level in 2000 were in line with the national average. The proportion of students achieving A or B grades was above average, but the proportion achieving A to E was below the national average.
114. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at age 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. When investigating problems, middle-attaining students organise investigations well. In the hexagon problem, they record their results in tables to help them analyse outcomes. Low attaining students know and use the approximate equivalents of metric measurements and can carry out simple calculations involving conversions. Students have a sound understanding of percentages, and middle attainers can calculate percentage increase and decrease. Higher attaining students calculate the perimeter and areas of circles and progress to calculating the areas of compound shapes and sectors. Students have a good understanding of data handling. They create cumulative frequency graphs and use them to investigate the interquartile range.
115. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students are attaining at age 16 are broadly in line with the level expected of students of the same age nationally. In completing coursework, higher attaining students are beginning to develop good skills in investigations by carrying out substantial problems. They develop and follow alternative approaches when investigating the House of Cards. They use mathematical language well and present sound arguments for their generalisations. In shape, space and measures, students acquire a range of skills. The low attaining students have a sound understanding of transformations. They can complete questions on reflection, rotation and enlargement, but their understanding of translations is weaker. High attainers use Pythagoras theorem and the trigonometrical ratios effectively to solve problems in two dimensions. Students understand how to calculate the probability of combined events and the low attainers understand how to construct pie charts by calculating the proportions by dividing the pie into  $360^\circ$ .
116. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that by the age of 18 students are attaining standards that are in line with course expectations. In pure mathematics, students solve trigonometric equations, applying Pythagoras identities appropriately. Students confidently apply the chain rule for differentiation and develop this into understanding how to apply the product and quotient rules. They competently differentiate polynomials and apply their understanding of this when differentiating composite functions. They have a good understanding of motion in a horizontal circle and use differential equations well when considering non-uniform acceleration. In statistics, students understand when to apply one-tailed and two-tailed tests.
117. Overall, students' achievement in mathematics is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. In Years 12 to 13 students' achievement is satisfactory. Students with special educational achieve in line with other students. Students concentrate well in lessons and their behaviour is very good. This has a positive effect on both their achievement and attainment.

118. The overall quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 and 13 and students' learning is good in these years. Learning differs from overall achievement in Years 12 and 13 as students concentrate well in lessons and apply themselves well to tasks and often take responsibility for their own learning. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 resulting in satisfactory learning in these years. There are many good features of the teaching and teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics in Years 7 to 11. It is very good in Years 12 to 13. This is illustrated by very clear explanation of tasks and the confident and appropriate use of mathematical terms. This promotes respect by the students. The very good relationships between students and teachers promote an eagerness to learn. The teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is sound but there is insufficient use of ICT to support mathematics effectively. There are good displays around the classrooms of key words and these are introduced in lessons. The majority of students spell mathematical terms correctly. Teachers generally plan lessons well. There are clear learning objectives and effective structure to the lesson. In the better lessons there is good effort and concentration by students and a good pace of working and amount of work achieved in lessons. This has a positive effect on their acquisition and consolidation of skills and understanding. However, there are a few occasions when the pace is slow and students spend too much time working through exercises. In these lessons students tend to stray off task and, although they work at a sound pace, they do not achieve maximum potential. In the majority of lessons teachers assess students' understanding effectively, but there are occasions when the opportunity to assess and deepen students' understanding by questions and answers is overlooked. In the better lessons, there are high expectations of both behaviour and effort that leads to students being challenged. However, in Year 11, a proportion of students is being insufficiently prepared and challenged by not being given the opportunity to attempt the higher tier at GCSE. Teaching methods are generally good. Teachers use an effective combination of explanation, discussion, and individual work that maintains the interest and motivation of students. There are good introductions to lessons, but the plenary part of the lesson tends to be weaker. Teachers identify what they expect students to achieve in lessons, but the review sessions are frequently too short and consist of reading out answers to questions. Students do not have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt in the lesson. The management of students is very good and as a result students' behaviour is very good enabling them to make the best progress. They listen attentively to their teachers and are polite and courteous. The very good relationship between teachers and students promotes a good working atmosphere in the classroom. Consequently, students are keen to progress and they make gains in understanding and experiencing new mathematics. Teachers work well with educational support assistants to ensure that students with special educational needs make effective progress. Teachers plan homework well so that it consolidates and extends learning. Marking is thorough and the majority of teachers write constructive comments that help students to see where they have made mistakes.
119. There are good procedures for assessing students' performance as they progress through the school. Regular testing takes place and this allows students to see how they are progressing in comparison with national criteria. Although the procedures for monitoring attainment are good, there is insufficient rigor in the monitoring of teaching to ensure that students make the best possible progress. The use of ICT is inadequate. This use needs to be addressed by integrating ICT more fully into schemes of work, so that it can be used as a resource for all years in order to enhance students' mathematical skills. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although there is a suite of rooms for mathematics, there are insufficient rooms to accommodate the mathematics teaching. Some of the rooms are too small for the large groups of students and this limits teaching methods.
120. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Students' standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9 have improved and standards of attainment in Years 10 to 11 have been maintained. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. This is the effect of better planning and management of students.

## Numeracy within the school

121. Levels of numeracy across the curriculum are broadly in line with the standard expected. There is no whole-school strategy in place for improving standards by developing and co-ordinating numeracy across the whole school. In science, general standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Graphs are generally good, but occasionally units are missed off axes. In the GCE AS-level physics, there are some weaknesses in rearranging equations. These are more noticeable as the new course takes a wider range of attainment and not all students may have taken the more rigorous higher paper in GCSE mathematics. In Years 12 and 13, teachers in physics give good clear explanations of mathematical techniques and this contributes to students' competency in mathematics. Students' data handling skills are practised well in geography and in physical education where a variety of graphs are used to represent data. In geography, students analyse data from fieldwork of a pedestrian count and as a consequence of accurate charting of data, they make deductions about pedestrian movements. In Years 12 and 13, students analyse population data and give reasons for the population statistics. They understand that population pyramids can be used for future planning. In modern foreign languages, students use ICT to produce pie and bar charts of daily routine and household tasks. It was pleasing to see data handling skills applied in English where a graph is used to represent 'tension rating' in Shelagh Delaney's play 'A Taste of Honey'. In design and technology, the development of numeracy is good. Students calculate cost of materials; they measure quantities accurately and apply data handling skills. Students in food technology interpret and present sensory analysis of products. A good example of numeracy is seen in GNVQ engineering in the 'Nutcracker Project'. Students' work involved measurements and costing of materials. They applied data handling skills by producing graphs and their numeracy skills were practised as they calculated fractions and percentages.

## SCIENCE

122. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of students at the age of 14 achieving Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were above the national average. The average National Curriculum points score was above average for all schools nationally. When compared with schools with a similar number of students eligible for free school meals, results were very high and place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The test results in science were similar to those in mathematics but not as good as those in English. Boys gained better results than girls in 2000 but the results of boys and girls were similar in 1999 and on average over the years 1996 to 1999. The test results have been consistently above the national average since 1996.
123. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* to C in the 2000 GCSE double award science examinations matched the national average. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* to G, and the average points score per student, were both above the national average. Girls gained more grades A\* to C than boys, reflecting the situation nationally. Students' results in science are better than those obtained in most other subjects. GCSE results in science have remained fairly constant over the last few years. The 2000 GCE A-level results in biology were well above the national average and those in physics and chemistry were average.
124. Students in the current and recent Years 10 and 11 entered the school with levels of attainment that were slightly below the national average. They respond well to the good teaching they receive and students of all levels of attainment, including students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well.
125. By the ages of 14 and 16, students achieve better overall results than might be expected in relation to their earlier attainment. Most students taking GCE A-level chemistry and physics achieve at least satisfactory standards relative to their prior attainment. However the few who enter the courses with relatively low attainment in GCSE examinations cannot take full advantage of the good teaching they receive and do not achieve satisfactorily. Students achieve particularly well in GCE A-level biology.
126. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally and confirm the Teacher Assessments. By the age of 16, students' standards of attainment are also above the level expected

nationally. Standards at the age of 16 are better than those indicated by the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A\* to C in 2000 and more closely reflect the average points score which takes into account the attainment of all students. Students in the current Years 12 and 13 are attaining standards that match the course expectations in physics and chemistry and are above expectations in biology.

127. Most students in the school have a good knowledge of the basic facts associated with topics they have studied recently. For example, a lower attaining group in Year 10 knows the function of the heart and the basic structure of the circulatory system. Higher attainers often show very good understanding, notably in Year 9 where some students can use the equation linking speed, distance and time to calculate a value for whichever quantity is unknown. Students generally have good investigative skills. Their numeracy skills are broadly satisfactory. However, in physics and chemistry groups in Years 12 and 13, students take longer than expected to complete calculations and some students in a Year 12 physics group find re-arranging equations difficult. Students in the middle attaining groups in Years 10 and 11 do not achieve quite as well in examinations as their attainment in lessons would suggest. One reason for this is a lack of precision in some students' written answers. They make satisfactory use of scientific terminology but often use 'everyday' words inaccurately so that the meaning of their answer is not clear.
128. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups in the school. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject. They focus strongly on exactly what they want students to learn. The objectives for the lesson are shared with students at the beginning of the lesson and then reviewed at the end so that students are aware of the progress they have made. In most lessons there is a good variety of activities to hold students' interest and concentration. Students are given independence in making their own notes on the topic but there is always plenty of support from worksheets, textbooks and, when necessary, the teacher, to ensure that all students learn quickly and effectively. Teachers provide regular and useful homework in order to extend students' learning. However, particularly in middle and lower attaining groups in Years 10 and 11, students often do not complete the work that has been set. Teachers comment appropriately in their marking but students frequently do not respond and gaps in the work remain. These gaps represent discontinuities in students' learning and also reduce the practice that students get in writing their own descriptions and explanations.
129. In some lessons teaching and learning are very good. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher expected maximum effort from students, offered them constant support and encouragement and provided many activities, including quick-fire questions, reading aloud and labelling a diagram, to reinforce students' learning about the parts of the ear and their functions. Students responded with intense concentration and a real desire to do well. In a biology lesson in Year 13, skilful teaching, with very clear instructions and explanations, enabled students rapidly to develop their skills in microbiological techniques and, in their words, 'to feel like real biologists'. There are a few lessons where teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good. These lessons contain some weaknesses as well as strengths. The most common weakness is for an activity, whether it is listening to the teacher, watching a video or working on a written exercise, to go on for too long so that students' concentration flags and the pace of learning slows.
130. There are good plans for the use of ICT in science lessons and students describe some interesting projects. For example, students in Year 10 used the Internet to find out about heart disease and then used word-processing to prepare a newspaper article on the subject. Many students, however, indicate that they only occasionally use computers in science lessons and it is clear that the use of ICT is not yet firmly established for all teaching groups.
131. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory because there are a significant number of lessons that take place in ordinary classrooms rather than in laboratories. Although teachers do their best to minimise the impact of teaching in classrooms, there is nevertheless a constraint on the learning activities that can be undertaken in those lessons.
132. The leadership and management of the department is good. Teachers and technicians work well together as a team and there is a clear commitment to raising students' attainment. A major strength of the department is the consistency of good quality teaching, which is provided for students. Teachers are enthusiastic about science and the growing popularity of the subject in Years 7 to 11 is indicated by the increasing numbers of students choosing to study science subjects in Years 12 and 13.

133. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Attainment at the age of 14 and 16 has improved. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 now matches the good quality teaching in Years 7 to 9 and Years 12 and 13. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching. The department's arrangements for assessment are now good.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

134. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was in line with the national average as was the proportion of students achieving grades A\* to G. There was only one student who achieved a GCSE grade A or higher. Girls achieved significantly better than boys. Students' results in art were not significantly different from those that they obtained in most other subjects. Results attained in art at GCE A-level in 2000 were in line with the national average. The proportion of students achieving A or B grades was below the national average.

135. Teacher Assessments in 2000 for students aged 14, were very high and do not reflect the work seen during the inspection. The procedures for assessing students' work are not sufficiently rigorous or accurate and result in the over-inflated assessments.

136. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at ages 14 and 16 are at the level expected of students of the same ages nationally. By the age of 14, students use pencil to create a variety of textural and tonal effects when drawing trees. They design board games and design money inventively to tie in with it and by the age of 14 demonstrate their abilities in the use of pattern in their designs for shower curtains and wrapping paper and by developing these into printmaking. By age of 14, students have developed satisfactory observational skills. Painting skills are more variable, but most students understand about mixing paint and using the correct brush for particular effects. They do not always research the work of famous artists in detail. For example, in one lesson the students missed the opportunity to introduce the style of Henri Rousseau into their work. Students' work on display includes some interesting clay projects. Students do not always make effective use of sketchbooks to record the development of their work. Higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged to produce work of a high standard.

137. By the age of 16, students follow their own interests to fit the three projects in the examination syllabus. Some of those in Year 10 can draw sensitively and develop work from observation based on the work of Cezanne. Some students in Year 11 are developing ideas inspired by a visit to the Albert Dock and the work of Derain, whilst others use the view from the art room as a basis for landscape work. However, higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged and their work lacks detail.

138. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain by the age of 18 are in line with course expectations. Students in Years 12 and 13 continue to develop projects based on personal interests. High attaining students have researched their ideas well and are developing them into a variety of media including clay; plaster; silk screen printing; embroidery; silk-painting; oil and chalk pastel; paint and pencil. Sources of inspiration include puppets; China Town in Liverpool; gnarled tree bark and roots; Charles Rennie Mackintosh; Rodin and the Futurist work of Duchamp and Bari. Students do not always speak clearly about the direction their work will take because of a lack of planning and a lack of understanding.

139. Students' achievement in all years is satisfactory although higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

140. Attitudes and behaviour are good at all key stages. Students are unfailingly polite and respectful. They get out equipment and clear away without fuss. They listen attentively to introductions and respond positively to instructions. Students answer questions eagerly and are willing to discuss their work seriously. Personal development is a high priority in the art and design department and students at all stages can express opinions and develop individual preferences. Their ideas are shared and valued by all.

141. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. Teachers have a good subject knowledge in fine art; 3 dimensional work including ceramics; the design process and printmaking. A great strength in teaching is the effective one to one dialogues which teachers have with students during lessons. Students appreciate help and advice and most of them act upon it. The support in lessons for those students with special educational needs is satisfactory although theory work is not always well matched to the needs of these students. Demonstrations help students to learn how to, for example, observe and record, use tools and mix and apply paint. Basic art and design skills are satisfactorily taught in drawing, painting and creating three-dimensional items. Teaching of other basic skills is not strong in the department. Students gain literacy skills when searching for information and writing up their notes, but students with special educational needs often find this difficult, as they cannot always understand the specialist terminology. The use of ICT is weak, as the department has only just received their first computer and computer-aided art has not yet featured in many lessons. Planning and lesson preparations are weak. Teachers do not always convey what is to be taught in the lesson, which often leaves students unsure what the focus for the lesson is. The scheme of work for Years 10 to 11 is very poor and provides little direction for the subject apart from that provided in the examination syllabus. There are very few extension tasks within modules of work to stretch the topics and give students chances to handle different media; this limits higher attaining students. Teachers expect students to try hard and produce their best. The good relationships that teachers have with students encourage students' personal development. The department works hard to provide good display around the department and the school.
142. The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory. Assessment, recording and reporting is not rationalised and results in unrealistically high Teacher Assessment. The scheme of work lacks specific detail for Years 10 to 11. The development of ICT is only just beginning with in-service training not yet underway. The lack of an extractor fan in the kiln area remains a health and safety issue. There is no systematic and regular monitoring of teaching in order to share good practice within the department. Leadership within the subject does not sufficiently direct the content of the teaching.
143. Since the time of the last inspection report the standards that students attain are similar to those noted previously. The department is still not achieving results at the highest level. Since the majority of other areas identified for development in the last report have not been addressed progress is unsatisfactory.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

144. Taking all four material areas together, the proportions of students achieving GCSE grades A\* to C and A\* to G were in line with the national average in 2000. Results show considerable improvement on those of the previous year. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Overall, students tend to achieve similar results in design and technology to those in the other subjects that they study. However, there are considerable differences between the different areas within design and technology. For example, in resistant materials the proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C was well above the national average and these students obtained significantly better results than in most other subjects; the opposite is true for food technology.
145. Results at GCE A-level are above the national average.
146. Teacher Assessment at the age of 14 indicates standards which are well above the national average. This overall assessment however, does not match the level of work seen in lessons which is above the level expected and not well above.
147. In work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. The achievement of students, including those with special educational needs, in Years 7 to 9 is good, given their level of ability when they enter the school. Students gain a wide range of basic skills in designing products in a range of specialist areas such as food, graphic products, textiles, resistant materials, electronics and systems and control. Throughout Years 7 to 9 students are guided through using the design process which is a common feature in all the work they do. Students show a good ability to analyse and draw conclusions using existing products and use the information well to support their own design ideas. Students are well supported in planning their work using structured worksheets. They generate and use numerical data in the form of charts,



graphs and food calculations. Students use a suitable range of graphics skills to support their design proposals. The range includes both two and three-dimensional drawings and the vast majority of students are able to annotate their drawings to explain features and methods of constructing their designs at each stage of its development. Students with special educational needs make good progress to achieve good standards with the individual support they receive from their teachers. Students use ICT in the work they do, which includes computer aided design and computer aided control using specialist 'kits' to control objects. In the work seen, students are taught to write the sequence for this control work before entering the information into the computer. Students also use computer-aided sewing machines to design and manufacture creative work in textiles. The use of ICT to improve the quality and presentation of students' work is still limited. Students cover good foundation skills in the use of electronic circuits and they build well on their basic knowledge of electronic circuits with an ability to solder correctly resistors and capacitors in the construction of their circuits. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where students were designing a presentation gift box. They were able to solder the components in the right order to complete the circuit in readiness for testing it. Students at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, achieved good end results. Their supporting designs showed a good range of original ideas.

148. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 16 is above the level expected nationally. Achievement over time is good. Students use a good range of investigation and research skills to build their knowledge base about the products they are designing. They are able to generate a range of initial ideas from which they can select the most appropriate ideas for further development. Students at all levels of attainment use the design process well to show the strengths and weaknesses of each design before they make the final choice. They develop work of very good quality, including a range of making skills that also take account of large-scale manufacturing processes. For example, in Year 11, students design storage units that demonstrate that they are able to design and make a wide variety of products. All students cover a good range of design skills as well as craft skills in the material they work with. Higher attaining students are able to produce good quality products that include advanced making skills such as dovetail joints and the designs were supported with accurate, well-developed plans. Project work includes the testing of processes, materials and finishes as they develop their final designs. All the work reflects a high degree of research to gain such a broad range of ideas and to include the variety of construction techniques. Higher attaining students are also able to apply accuracy and depth to the development of their designs in all material areas. Lower attaining students are able to design products well suited to the courses and are supported by their teachers to complete each stage of the development process.
149. The work seen of students currently on the GCE A-level course is in line with course expectations and their achievement over time is good. In the work seen during the inspection, students have a good knowledge of the products they design and use British Standard data to good effect. Students develop advanced practical skills as part of the modelling and construction of their products. In the GNVQ engineering course the quality and standard of project work were well above the level expected. Students cover both designing and making skills and increase their knowledge of a range of materials and engineering processes very considerably through both theoretical and practical tasks. An example was the process of casting where students demonstrate the use of the process combined with a high standard in the finishing processes.
150. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9, in Years 10 and 11 and Years 12 and 13. Teachers use interesting methods and projects that enthuse and stimulate the interest of students, for example in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson where students working in metal were designing animal paperweights. Their designs included shapes based on crabs, turtles, fish bones, spiders and a whole range of other creepy crawlies. There was excellent use of the basic metalwork processes to create exceptionally interesting features in the designs they created. The students were particularly proud of their work and were confident in explaining the processes they used to achieve the end results. Teaching includes coverage of industrial practice and this has a very positive impact on the importance of manufacturing quality products. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 9 textiles lesson where the teacher had set up an industrial simulation project. Students were working in groups to produce sets of juggling balls. Each group working through the process from measuring and cutting the fabric to machining. The work progressed at a rigorous pace and one person in the group performed the quality control checks. The students worked particularly hard and in discussion were able to identify the

importance of each person working in such a group. They were aware of not letting the group down and keeping the quality at a high standard. This was particularly effective, giving students the opportunity to evaluate product development strategies and also to identify the need for good quality control. Teachers usually plan their lessons well and have high expectation of their students. Teachers give good individual support to students of all levels of attainment including those with special educational needs. This has a very positive impact on relationships between staff and students, which creates a very good learning atmosphere. Some teachers succeed in stretching students of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. Some higher attaining and middle attaining students sometimes fail to analyse in sufficient depth and explanations are inclined to be short answers rather than explaining in sufficient depth. All teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary when students record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of the students' literacy skills. All lessons are fifty minutes long and this is particularly short to enable more challenging work to be attempted in food technology. Although teachers work very hard to plan creative and stimulating projects, they are limited in practical lessons to focus mainly on completing the work in time for the next lesson. This prevents teachers taking the time to gather the group together to emphasise some of the more important teaching. There is just enough time to complete the practical work. This clearly affects the quality of the learning when teaching points have to be discussed in the following lesson or missed out altogether.

151. Management of the department is very good and benefits from a strong team approach. Teachers work well together and are supportive of each other. There is an appropriate system in place to monitor and record the attainment of students, and this is beginning to have a positive effect on standards.
152. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is now good overall. Achievement is also good. The department now works well together and there is a much more consistent approach to the work of the department.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

153. The proportions of students achieving grades A\* to C and A\* to G in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were broadly in line with the national average. Students' results in geography were not significantly different than those they achieved in most other subjects. There is no difference between boys' and girls' results. Results in GCSE examinations over four years show good improvements in students achieving A\* to C grades. In the 2000 GCE A-level examinations the results in geography were broadly in line with the national average. Over the last four years there has been a significant improvement in the GCE A-level results in geography.
154. Teacher Assessments in 2000 for students aged 14, were well above the national expectation overall although work seen during the inspection does not confirm these results.
155. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are at the level expected for students of the same age nationally. By the age of 14, students, including those with special educational needs, have a secure knowledge of the life style and culture of the Maasai in Kenya. They know that the Maasai live as nomadic farmers, moving about in order to allow their cattle and goats to feed off the Savanna plains. They know the different cultural roles of the Maasai men and women and compare them with our society in the United Kingdom. Students in Years 7 to 9 are developing basic geographical skills; in Year 7 map skills are developed through studying symbols, direction and scale, which form the basics of simple cartography. Low attaining students have problems in understanding the concepts of direction. Year 8 students' work shows the study of conservation issues in the Amazonian rain forests and the moral and ethical issues associated with destruction and pollution of our environment. Overall, students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in map work, use of keys and scales and observational skills in order to make simple evaluations. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
156. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 16 are above the level expected for students of the same age nationally. Students build on mapping skills developed in Years 7 to 9 in order to decide the area which makes up a river basin; low attaining students have difficulty with this third dimensional idea in determining accurately the watersheds dividing

river basins. By the age of 16, students successfully analyse data from a recent geographical field trip using plotting techniques; many students demonstrate good skills undertaking a difficult geographical technique. Number skills successfully support data analysis. Students draw an isoline map in order to analyse the number of people using different parts of the centre of Southport in September; they make conclusions from the isoline maps. High attaining students acknowledge the limitations of this technique and suggest improvements in data collection. Students achieve well in Years 10 to 11.

157. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain by the age of 18 are in line with course expectations. Year 12 students studying AS-level know the criteria, which decide a developing country from a developed country. They successfully demonstrate the skills of analysing population statistics and how population pyramids can be used for future planning. Year 13 students studying GCE A-level show a high level of understanding of the processes of river erosion. They understand that the profile of a river is in balance and that any changes, human or physical, have consequences, for example, a tarmac car park will lead to rapid rainwater run off with potential for flooding. High attaining students understand the impact of hydrolic processes and ways of working out the efficiency of river channels. Students in Years 12 and 13 are successfully linking their knowledge and understanding of different aspects of geography. They analyse data and make successful conclusions. Students achieve well in Years 12 to 13.
158. Students use a range of resources, for instance Year 12, atlases, textbooks, news cuttings, journals, internet web sites in order to extend their understanding of changes in population distributions that have occurred over the last ten years. Year 9 students similarly do research into the culture of the Maasai. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 show good acquisition of geographical skills and knowledge; good progress continues, in Years 10 and 11, as well founded skills are developed and applied successfully. Students learn to link the aspects of physical, human and economic geography, they analyse data and develop concepts. In all lessons throughout the age range, students with special educational needs are well integrated and make progress in line with their peers.
159. Overall, the quality of teaching and the learning that such teaching promotes is good in all years. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection; however, there are some occasions when there are some shortcomings. The quality of teaching combined with good relationships, good behaviour and attitudes has a positive impact on students' learning. Teachers show very good knowledge and understanding; they apply this very successfully which has a positive impact upon students' learning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, very good knowledge of river erosion challenges students and as a consequence extends students' understanding. Teachers usually have high expectations of both effort and behaviour of students, as illustrated in Year 9 lessons on Maasai nomads of Kenya. Students work hard and maintain their efforts and concentration and persevere in order to produce their best results. However, on occasions, low expectations, insufficient challenge and pace constrain achievement, for example, in Year 7 mapwork. Teachers make effective use of questions and answer to recapitulate and reinforce students' knowledge and understanding at the start of most lessons. Long-term planning and organisation are good; they ensure progression and continuity from year-to-year. All lesson plans show clear learning objectives, which allow teachers to evaluate teaching and learning. Good relationships, very good subject knowledge and effective evaluation ensure all students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning. Teachers make use of information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet individual student's needs. Teaching strategies do not always involve students in their learning; in order to ensure they understand the topic. At times, there is an insufficient range of tasks and activities in order to cater for the whole range of students within a class.
160. The head of department shows good leadership and management of the department with clear educational direction. Curriculum, assessment and policy documents are clear. Departmental targets are related to the school's improvement plan. ICT is insufficiently developed and constrains enquiry elements. Assessment procedures and use of data are now very good and enable successful tracking of students; this is a strength of the department. The monitoring of teaching is undertaken within the department by the head of department. Further development of regular and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning is needed in order to share good practice and focus on improved student outcomes.

161. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; many of the issues identified in the previous report have been addressed. Significant improvements have been made in assessment procedures and use of data to track students. Teaching and learning are now good across the school and as a consequence there have been good improvements in examination results at both GCSE and GCE A-level. Girls no longer out-perform boys; resources have improved. The department works successfully as a team and it is committed to the raising of standards.

## **HISTORY**

162. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was well below the national average, with few gaining the higher grades A\* and A. Boys attained significantly better results than girls, but both boys and girls gained results that were below their respective national average. Students achieved less well in history than they did in the other subjects they studied. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to G was below the national average. GCE A-level results from a small entry in 2000 were very low. No student obtained A or B grades.

163. Teacher Assessments in 2000 for student's aged 14 were broadly in line with national expectations although evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that students are working below the level expected.

164. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the ages of 14, 16 and 18 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Achievement is satisfactory in all years although higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

165. At the age of 14, most students show understanding of the events, people and periods studied and are able to place them in a chronological framework. Year 7 students, for example, understand who were the three contenders for the throne of England at the time of the Norman invasion and why the situation had arisen. The students were set basic research tasks and had access to a limited range of evidence, mainly text and pictures. The restricted range of evidence used reduces the attainment of many students. At the age of 14 students know about the rise of Adolf Hitler to power and are able to extract information from text and to ask pertinent questions. Students are not given enough opportunity to raise their attainment through extended writing. Lower attaining students have insufficient access to carefully structured written tasks.

166. At the age of 16 students show a good level of knowledge about the Vietnam War. They understand America's foreign policy as it relates to communism, the type of warfare and the impact the war had on America. The students' responses to questions and their follow up questions demonstrated the depth and range of their knowledge. There are insufficient opportunities for extended writing to enhance students' learning and to familiarise them with examination questions.

167. There are 18 students studying history in the current Years 12 and 13. Students are encouraged to carry out research on individuals and themes and to present their answers to the group. The presentations are variable in quality and not all students contribute. On occasions, debating skills take over from historical facts. Again students of all abilities do not benefit from opportunities of extended writing.

168. The quality of teaching in all years is broadly satisfactory. In all years the students benefit from knowledgeable and specialist teachers, who ask clear questions that develop the majority of students understanding. Year 8 students, for example, responded well in discussion about the reasons for Philip II's launching the Spanish Armada. However, their learning is not always consolidated by recording answers in a structured form. In some lessons students are not fully involved, leading to lapses in concentration and thereby reducing achievement. Most lessons incorporate resources to support learning. The quality of the resources is mixed. There are some good quality textbooks and work sheets, but some reprographic resources are illegible. The reliance on common resources and tasks for all is not meeting the needs of many students. Most lessons are teacher-led and directed and on many occasions students are not actively involved. When students in Year 9 are given the opportunity to use local history to enhance their knowledge of war memorials some good work is produced. The range and

quality of homework in Years 7 to 9 are below that normally seen. The quality of marking is variable; marking does not always inform students how they might improve their work.

169. In Years 12 and 13 students take their learning seriously and advanced preparation of the work on Italian Unification enables most to respond in discussion leading to good progress being made in the lesson. Teaching expertise and questioning engaged students orally and there are incidences of inter-student discussion. Learning objectives are not clearly defined and in some lessons there is a lack of pace and challenge. Plenary sessions are often brief and do not always review and consolidate understanding.
170. The National Curriculum Programmes of Study at Years 7 to 11 are in place, but curricular opportunities are not extended through the provision of visits. The use of ICT to extend learning is not embedded in the schemes of work. The leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The department has an assessment policy but it is not adhered to. There is no systematic monitoring of students' progress, including that of those who have special educational needs. Student targets for future improvements are not identified. There has been some improvement in the book provision for Years 7 to 11, but deficiencies remain and this reduces the opportunity for study in school and for homework, particularly in Years 8 to 9. The poor accommodation makes it very difficult for students to participate in role-play to develop their skills of empathy.
171. Since the last inspection the department has made unsatisfactory progress. There has been a slight improvement in GCSE results at grades A\* to C, but the results are well below the national average. There is not a bank of resources such as artefacts, pictures and maps to supplement the textbooks that are used. In Years 10 to 11 current assessment procedures are not used to improve students' learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

172. Teacher Assessment in 2000 for those at the age of 14 indicates that all students achieve levels well below the national average. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Students in Years 10 and 11 have not been entered for GCSE courses in ICT in the last two years. ICT for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 is integrated into lessons across the curriculum. Students in Year 10 have started the GNVQ Intermediate Course, which was introduced as a discrete subject in September 2000. Standards are satisfactory as a result of the broad range of basic skills they cover mainly in design and technology lessons.
173. Teacher Assessment at the age of 14 indicates that students are working at levels well below the national average. However, this does not match the evidence of work gathered during the inspection, which indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally. This represents satisfactory achievement of all students including those with special educational needs given their levels of attainment on joining the school. In Years 7 to 9 students cover the basic ICT skills in a number of subjects across the curriculum. These include the use of desktop publishing to present a range of coursework tasks, they set up and use spreadsheets to process data, cover aspects of computer aided design, computer aided manufacture and computer control. Many students use the Internet effectively to research information for both classwork and homework tasks. Higher attaining students work with confidence and apply a good range of skills to the work they do in some subjects. They explain the processes they follow and show understanding of the software they use. The vast majority of students at the age of 14 apply a satisfactory range of ICT skills in the work they do and have a sound understanding of the processes and procedures needed to complete the tasks set in different subjects. However, the continuity and increase in the level of these skills for all students is not a reliable process in Years 8 and 9 where the coverage of ICT is inconsistent across the curriculum to ensure that all students develop and practice these skills in sufficient depth. This was seen in a Year 7 mathematics lesson where students were being taught to use spreadsheets. The teacher provided the data for students to enter and they were asked to enter the formula. The following task then required them to change some of the data they entered the first time. Students followed the instructions, but were unable to identify the changes that had occurred in the results or what the overall effect of the changes were. This presented a gap in their overall understanding of the flexibility in using spreadsheet and the effects of changing data. As part of their ICT skills, students use a specialist database to search information on a variety of career choices.

174. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain at the age of 16 are at the level expected of students of the same age nationally and this represents satisfactory achievement. The vast majority of students apply a satisfactory range of ICT skills in the work they do across some subjects in the curriculum. They show increases in their knowledge and application of desktop publishing and use of spreadsheets to process and present data they collect for their GCSE coursework projects. Higher attaining students show understanding of the wider options open to them and are able to select the most appropriate use of ICT. Many use the Internet well for specific research purposes, scan graphic and text documents and use graphics well to demonstrate design work. In Year 10 GNVQ lessons, students use a commercially prepared scheme, and are at the early stages of it. So far they have concentrated mainly on communicating and handling information, with higher attaining students showing a more creative approach with greater accuracy and depth in their explanations. The vast majority of students complete the set tasks to a satisfactory level, although they lack some of the basic ICT skills and knowledge and therefore need a lot of support from the teacher to complete the full expectations of all the tasks to the right level. In the main, students are able to evaluate and comment on their progress and overall success of their own achievement as well as identify ways of making further improvements.
175. In the work of students studying the GCE AS-level course in Year 12, attainment is in line with course expectations but students work hard to cover the level of knowledge needed for this course. Not all students have studied ICT at GCSE level. This does not prepare them with sufficient knowledge to cope with the level of work expected at GCE AS-level. In lessons seen, students found difficulty in understanding the information to the depth required for the course; this is evident in the discussions in theory lessons. They have a higher level of practical application of ICT for example in a lesson using databases. Students showed a good knowledge of the software being used and could view the database entries in both design and datasheet view. Attendance to lessons however is poor and this has adversely affected levels of attainment.
176. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in Year 12. This brings about satisfactory learning in lessons in Years 7 to 11 and good learning in Year 12. Whilst students' achievement is satisfactory there is insufficient use of ICT in other subjects to ensure that they consolidate their skills through regular practice. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and adopt a satisfactory level of planning which enables students to feel confident in the knowledge base they develop themselves. Teachers are generally well prepared for lessons, which start with clear objectives and this is supportive in focusing the students in their learning. Teachers explain the technical language of the subject and encourage students to use it correctly. Students with lower than average reading skills benefit from this opportunity to extend their vocabulary in the subject. Worksheets are produced which are helpful in moving the students' learning forward but some tasks fail to extend the higher attaining students fully. Although extension tasks are planned, teachers often miss the opportunity to assess the students understanding, which forms a necessary part of the quality of the extension work they do. ICT was well used to help students to understand more difficult mathematics concepts and this was seen in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where students were using spreadsheets to find the  $n$ th term of a sequence. The pace of learning for some students in the same lesson, however, was slowed down by a computer not working and others having to share. Teachers use a good range of resources, which support students well in their learning by directing them to focus on specific tasks.
177. The use of ICT in other subjects to support the delivery of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and to raise standards of GCSE coursework in Years 10 and 11 is inconsistent across the curriculum. Good use was seen in design and technology where students cover projects using computer aided design including the use of a light pen, computer aided manufacture and computer aided control. They also use desktop publishing and spreadsheets to process and present information they use particularly for GCSE coursework. Good use was also seen in modern foreign languages, where students use ICT to edit and improve the quality of their work, and also produce and present data in the form of graphs and charts as a result of surveys they carry out in lessons. Some good examples of desktop publishing were seen in English. There is satisfactory use of ICT in science, where students use desktop publishing to produce a booklet on heart disease, search the internet, use spreadsheets to process data on height and arm length. They also log data they collect in lessons. ICT is underdeveloped in art and design, history, geography music and physical education.

178. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has addressed a number of issues. The school has invested a considerable amount of funding in the development of a new computer network system. Standards of attainment are now at the level expected nationally although teaching and learning remain at a satisfactory level. There is still a need to improve the ICT facilities in some areas of the school where students have to share the resources across the curriculum. The GNVQ course in ICT is now established and this is a positive step to increase the use of ICT for students in Years 10 and 11. The subject now meets statutory requirements in terms of both the National Curriculum and reporting to parents but assessment and recording the information on attainment is not sufficiently linked to the level descriptors of the National Curriculum.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (French, German and Spanish)**

179. The proportion of students achieving A\* to C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was well below the national average in both French and German. The proportion of students who gained a pass at A\* to G was broadly in line with the national average. Results for boys were lower than those for girls, much more so than found nationally. Results in 2000 were below those of 1999 and indicate a trend of declining results since the previous inspection. There were too few students entered for GCE A-level to make statistical comparisons valid, but year 2000 entries showed an encouraging rise in numbers and in the levels which students attained.

180. Teacher Assessments in 2000 for students aged 14 were well below the national expectation and are confirmed by the work seen during the inspection.

181. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that students' standards at age 14, and at age 16, are well below that expected nationally. By the age of 18, students attain standards that are above course expectations. Girls' attainment is higher than boys', much more so than found nationally, but inspection evidence suggests that the gap is closing in Years 7 and 8 in Spanish. There are differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subject. Speaking is the strongest because there is an emphasis on it in many lessons. Writing is the weakest because there is no literacy strategy in the school from which students could benefit. However, inspection evidence indicates a strong rise in attainment in Year 7 and 8 Spanish. The school has chosen to focus on Spanish as its main language and inspection evidence indicates that this decision was entirely correct.

182. Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and this applies to students with special educational needs as much as to their peers. Standards have declined since the previous inspection except in Years 12 and 13.

183. By age 14, students can answer questions, in a basic way, about such topics as their leisure activities and hobbies, parts of the body, illnesses, their likes and dislikes and finding their way about in town. In general, students listen carefully to the teacher, to audiotapes and to other students when they are talking. The vast majority is able to concentrate well when other people are speaking. Students are confident speakers and try hard with pronunciation. By age 14 students are able to carry out short conversations with two or three exchanges. Students in Year 7 Spanish groups show great enthusiasm, and some skill, in carrying out conversations and many of these students match the attainment of those who are much older. Only a minority of 14 year olds is able to carry out longer conversations using a range of tenses and showing ability to adapt their language to fit different circumstances. Students develop their reading skills through a reading programme, that takes place regularly throughout the year, and through reading textbooks and worksheets to find the answers to questions. In their written work, a small majority of students write short paragraphs of three or four sentences, with reasonable accuracy by age 14. Although there are some examples of students in Year 9 being able to write longer paragraphs, in French, about their leisure activities and about their likes and dislikes for example, this is not general. Overall, the work done in Years 7 to 9 does not provide a strong base for development towards GCSE in Years 10 and 11.

184. By age 16, students extend these topics as part of their examination preparation and add others such as their views about school uniform, pocket money, and people's views about leisure activities. In many lessons students do not have sufficiently good opportunities to develop and use their spoken language

and the unsatisfactory base established previously is reinforced rather than reduced. Only a small number of higher attaining students are able to write at length and with reasonable accuracy about such topics as health and fitness, and with some touches of humour about a "Catastrophic Weekend." Spelling is a weakness in the work of many students. Students in Years 7 to 11 have good opportunities to use ICT to write, edit and enhance their work. This work also makes a satisfactory contribution to numeracy development when students use graphs and tables to present data gained from surveys they have carried out.

185. Because of the level of good teaching, students in Years 12 and 13 attain standards that are above course expectations. They develop a good grasp of the complex grammatical structures that are necessary for speaking and writing at this level and confidently read authentic texts such as those that would be read by native speaking teenagers. This was well demonstrated by Year 13 students who were able to confidently read challenging texts about the role of women in French society. In written work they are able to translate accurately both into and from the language being taught. They are able, for example, to give good detailed accounts of the story of Candide and can explain the actions and motives of the main characters. They write good accounts of holidays and their views on doing household chores. Of the four aspects of the subject, speaking is slightly the weakest and students are rather reticent about speaking at length for work at this level.
186. In Years 7 to 11, the quality of teaching and the learning it promotes is unsatisfactory overall although there is also good, very good or excellent teaching in one-third of lessons seen. The majority of the good to excellent teaching is with Year 7 Spanish classes and this is the main contributory factor in the strong rise in standards that is evident in these groups. Teaching in Years 12 and 13 is good. A strong feature of all of the teaching is good class control. Students' behaviour in lessons is very good and this is the case even when teaching is unchallenging and boring. Students show good attitudes to work and try hard with presentation of written work and pronunciation. There are good relationships between students and with their teachers. Students show respect for each other and do not laugh or make fun of others when they make mistakes. Where teaching is unsatisfactory it is mainly because the lessons lack pace and challenge at a suitable level for the students. There is often a high percentage of English spoken and this diminishes the impact of the language being taught. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 11 German lesson which included a listening exercise on cassette where students had a "fill the blank" worksheet to complete, there was no recognition of the range of attainment in the class and all students completed the same work. Where teaching is at its best the teacher uses very good subject knowledge to plan a range of interesting and highly challenging tasks for the lesson. The teacher has excellent teaching methods that may include imaginative use of the overhead projector, rhythm, mime and skilled use of question and answer as well as writing and listening tasks. Students clearly enjoy these lessons and are involved in them to the extent that they do not have time to misbehave or relax from start to finish. These teaching strategies lead to excellent learning and fast progress particularly in spoken language. This can clearly be seen in Year 7 Spanish lessons where many students show levels of attainment equal to their peers in Year 9.
187. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development. In lessons there is a moral dimension and students are taught right from wrong. There is good provision for social development through taking turns and working together. The languages club is very well attended and adds to the good social provision. There is also a homework club. There is a cultural element in most lessons when students learn about other countries and the lives of people in Europe. There are good assessment procedures in place. These provide consistent data for tracking students' attainment and progress and for making decisions about the curriculum to be offered to students. The use of this data is now being developed for setting departmental and individual targets. There is a very good scheme of work and handbook in place and these provide a good basis for lesson planning. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Many classes are large and many of the rooms are too small to allow for the range of teaching methods in use in modern languages. For example, group work, role-plays and drama would be very difficult in most rooms. The department's resources are unsatisfactory. There is particularly a shortage of good textbooks. This has been recognised by the school and there has been a substantial investment in improvement. The curriculum arrangements make it difficult for students to study two languages in their option choices at Year 10. There is no regular, systematic monitoring of teaching in order to share good practice at the present time and this is a factor in the high level of unsatisfactory teaching.



188. There has been a decline in standards and results since the previous inspection although results at GCE A-level show an improvement. There is now a significant level of unsatisfactory teaching that was not reported previously. Taking this into account the subject has made unsatisfactory progress since that time. The new head of department and the senior management of the school have shown very good leadership in identifying areas of weakness that need development and in setting ambitious but realistic priorities for the future. These have not yet had sufficient time to make a real impact.

## **MUSIC**

189. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was well below the national average. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to G was in line with the national average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Students' results in music were not significantly different from those that they obtained in most other subjects in the school. There was only one candidate who took music GCE A-level, gaining a pass with a grade E.

190. Teacher Assessments in 2000 for students aged 14, were well above average although these are not confirmed by the work seen during the inspection.

191. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are well below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Student achievement is unsatisfactory. This anomaly between the level of attainment reported through the teacher assessments and that seen is due to the criteria used by teachers is not in-line with the criteria of the National Curriculum. The majority of students are unable to perform on keyboards using an appropriate technique or by reading from staff notation. When improvising they do so by creating simple pieces, which use repeated rhythm patterns and a limited range of notes. In their performances, the majority is not aware of fitting with others in the group. Most can evaluate and appraise simple pieces of music but do so only at a basic level using a limited musical vocabulary.

192. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain at the age of 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Student achievement is unsatisfactory. Students have only limited compositional skills and their pieces lack extended form or structure. During listening exercises they are not confident in placing music accurately within historical, social or geographical contexts. However, due to the availability of good quality peripatetic teaching, they perform appropriately on their selected instruments, both as soloists and in ensembles.

193. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain in Year 12 in the GCE AS-level course are below course expectations. Student achievement is unsatisfactory. In analysis, they do not respond using an appropriate vocabulary and are not confident in recognising basic musical devices and key signatures. They compose by adding a part to a given melody or harmony but lack confidence and independence to succeed without support. They do however, perform at an appropriate level on their chosen instrument.

194. Throughout the year groups, the teaching provision is unsatisfactory, which results in the majority of students having unsatisfactory achievement. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject and as in a Year 11 lesson, their clear explanation at the start of the lesson enabled the students to fully understand the tasks to be completed. During group and individual work, teachers move well between students, supporting and guiding, as was seen in a Year 9 lesson where many students were then able to complete the tasks successfully. In both a Year 11 and a Year 12 lesson, the good relationships developed between the teacher and the students meant that they were confident and able to tackle the work without fear of the consequences of making a mistake. In all lessons observed, teaching started with clear targets for behaviour and effort which means that many students are focused on their work. However, many lessons are teacher led, with few opportunities for students to work independently and opportunities are missed to use techniques such as question and answer to involve and challenge the students. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, where the students' understanding was not established, this resulted in the students achieving very poorly. Teachers do not insist on students performing on keyboards using a correct technique and as in a Year 8 lesson, this results in the students consolidating bad habits, which restricts their accessing work of a higher level. In Years 7 to 9 much of

the work is inappropriate for the students' levels of attainment. This leads to a lack of concentration and as was seen in a Year 7 lesson, unsatisfactory learning progress for these students. In the teaching of higher attainers there is some lack of confidence and this is leading to insecure teaching with a result that students do not achieve as well as they should. Throughout the teaching in Years 7 to 9 there is poor, and in Years 10 to 12, unsatisfactory, use of assessment to monitor progress and to set targets for all students and the use of homework throughout is poor.

195. There is unsatisfactory leadership and management of music. Areas of the National Curriculum are not covered in Years 7 to 9 and students can only take music GCSE out of school hours. Instrumental students have opportunities to take part in good quality extra-curricular groups. Teaching and learning have not been effectively monitored which has resulted in the unsatisfactory levels of both and this has resulted in low expectations of the students. There is no use at present of ICT, either within the classroom or to support teaching and learning. The accommodation is poor. There is a small music teaching room with unsatisfactory storage attached. There is the use of a room within the physical education department for peripatetic teaching, and some Year 9 classes are being taught in the nearby primary school. Resources are unsatisfactory with at present no access to ICT and a mixed range of electric keyboards and classroom percussion.
196. Since the time of the last inspection report, levels of attainment at all ages have fallen from in-line to below at ages 16 and 18, and at age 14, well below, the level expected nationally. Teaching and learning were described as always satisfactory, this is not now the case and all areas of the National Curriculum were covered, this is not now so. However, the department has increased the range and opportunities for students to have peripatetic lessons. This means that overall, the department has made poor progress since the time of the last inspection report.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

197. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* to C in the 2000 GCSE examinations was above the national average. The proportion of students gaining grades A\* to G was in line with the national average and all students who entered the examination gained at least grade G. Girls performed better than boys in this examination. Students' results in physical education were similar to those in the other subjects they studied. The proportion of students gaining grades A/B in the GCE A-level examination was in line with the national average. Girls performed better than boys in this examination.
198. Teacher Assessments in 2000 for students aged 14, were above the national average and these are confirmed by the work seen during the inspection.
199. In the work seen during the inspection, students' attainment in physical activities at ages 14, 16 and 18 is above the levels expected of students of the same ages nationally. This represents a good level of achievement in all years, given the students' prior attainment.
200. By the time they have reached the age of 14, the majority of students, including those with special educational needs, attains standards which are above the level expected in games. Most students perform skilfully and demonstrate a secure understanding of the principles of play in invasion games. Students show good ball control, use space well and develop their skills, effectively, alongside tactical awareness in small-sided games. Good work was seen in hockey, netball and football. Girls and boys make equally good progress in games. The performance of high attainers is well illustrated by the Year 7 girls' hockey team, which won the Sefton Schools' Championships, and the Year 9 boys' football team, which reached the third round of the English Schools' Soccer Championships. Students achieve well and attain sound standards in gymnastics in Years 7 to 9. Girls, in particular, achieve good body tension and quality of movement in performance. Planning and performing skills develop satisfactorily in the majority of lessons, but students' skills of observation and analysis of movement are less well developed. There are limited opportunities for students to observe, evaluate and comment on performance against specific criteria, for example. Most students have a good understanding of health and fitness issues. They know the effects of exercise on the body, and why they need to warm up before exercise. Many students can name the muscles they are stretching. Students' literacy develops well in almost all lessons, particularly in relation to key words and the technical language of the subject.

201. By the age of 16 improvement in games continues. High standards are maintained, even though students' progress and continuity are inhibited by the lack of time allocated to physical education. Many students, including some with special educational needs, apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics to good effect in the full games of football and hockey. This was particularly evident in a GCSE hockey lesson, where students demonstrated the ability to anticipate play, react quickly under pressure and move to the ball, effectively, in competition. GCSE written coursework reflects a wide range of attainment, but, overall, students have an above average knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. This was evident in a discussion of the issues surrounding Women in Sport, where high attaining students were articulate in explaining the lack of role models in women's sport, and why girls tend to drop out of sport at an early age.
202. By the age of 18 students attain standards above course expectations in practical activities. This was well illustrated by Year 12 GCE A/S students studying dance, who showed excellent quality of movement as they performed their trio choreography, and GCE A-level students in Year 13, who showed an impressive knowledge and understanding of basketball, as they observed and analysed each other's performance. Students' written coursework shows a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects.
203. High standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport, and over a half of the school population participates regularly in an extensive programme of clubs, inter-house and inter-school competitions. School teams in most of the major games have a good record of success in local and district competitions. For example, the Under 15 and Under 19 boys' football teams reached the finals of the Sefton Schools' Soccer Championships, and recently, the Under 15 girls' tennis team won the Sefton Schools' Championships. The school is particularly proud of the successes achieved by students in athletics. This year the boys' athletics team won the Maghull and Ormskirk Schools' Championships and nine students represented Sefton in the Merseyside Championships. Two students went on to represent the region at the English Schools' Athletics Championships.
204. The quality of teaching, and the learning that it promotes, is good throughout all years. Teaching and learning is very good in examination classes. Very good relationships between the staff and students are at the heart of the quality learning environment that exists in the department, and lively, enthusiastic teaching that motivates students and stimulates learning is a strong feature of most lessons. Effective management of students is reflected in their very good behaviour, standards of dress and high levels of participation in lessons. Students have very good attitudes to learning, put good physical effort into their work and often take a pride in performance. They benefit from knowledgeable teachers, whose careful planning and clear objectives help students to make good progress. In the majority of lessons teachers build on students' previous experience, and well-designed tasks enable them to improve newly learned skills through practice. Extension tasks to challenge high attaining students are planned, but these are not always sufficiently demanding, and there is little use of target setting in practical lessons. Some teaching lacks the necessary rigour to ensure the maximum progress of high attainers in lessons, although very good opportunities are provided for the gifted and talented in the extra-curricular programme. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and progress at a rate, which matches that of other students in the groups. This was well illustrated in a gymnastics lesson, where students were keen to demonstrate what they had achieved.
205. When teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of their students, who are challenged both physically and intellectually at a demanding pace. This leads to very good learning, well illustrated in a Year 10 hockey lesson where the pace of the lesson put physical demands on the students, well-balanced by searching questioning to extend students' depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of strategic play. Very good learning was also evident in theory lessons, where a range of teaching strategies effectively involved students in an active role in a variety of learning experiences, so that the major learning points were constantly reinforced. A strong feature of some lessons, particularly in girls' gymnastics, is the care with which students' literacy skills are developed, and this good practice should be extended to include numeracy and ICT, where appropriate. The marking of GCSE written coursework is regular and encouraging, but there are few comments aimed at helping students to improve their work and insufficient demands are made on them to complete unfinished work.

206. The quality of leadership and management is good, and the staff forms a strong, committed team. High standards are the basis of the department's ethos, and the teachers have a shared sense of purpose, with the capacity to succeed in improving standards of attainment still further. Development planning identifies appropriate priorities to this end. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. But, there is still work to be done in extending the range of teaching strategies in practical lessons in the Years 7 to 9, to involve students more actively in taking some responsibility for their own learning and thus, gaining greater independence. A good beginning has been made in the implementation of Curriculum 2000, but schemes of work require further development to give a sharper focus on learning objectives and outcomes. The inadequate time allocation for core physical education in Years 10 to 11 requires review. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance is an area for development, to ensure consistency in practice across the department aimed at raising standards of attainment. Similarly, the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching will share the very good practice that exists, and ensure consistency in the teaching and learning of all aspects of the curriculum.
207. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Above average standards of attainment have been maintained in Years 7 to 9, and 10 to 11, and the first GCE A-level course results are in line with the national average. The good quality of teaching has also been maintained.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

208. All but a few students study for the GCSE examination or take the Certificate of Achievement in Religious Education. The 2000 results for the latter course indicate that the school has made a successful start in introducing this new examination. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was well below the national average although the proportion of students achieving grades A\* to G was broadly in line with the national average. Boys did better than girls. Generally, the students attained higher grades in their other subjects than they did in religious education. These results are representative of those of earlier years and are mirrored in the work seen in the school.
209. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards that students attain at the age of 14 are below the expectations of the Local Agreed Syllabus. This syllabus is not completely covered in the schemes of work and insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of religious education. Students know little about a range of world faiths and their work often lacks a detailed, in-depth understanding. However, although achievement overall is unsatisfactory, some of the work seen in books and in lessons shows that attainment for specific aspects of the curriculum is at the level expected. For example, most of a Year 7 class are able to explain the significance of baptism and Year 8 students can recount the story of The Creation. On a few occasions, attainment is above that normally expected. For example, Year 8 students did good work when considering non-Christian evidence about the existence of Jesus, with some well considered comments by the higher attaining students on Josephus's views. This class reacted with enthusiasm to the opportunity to be involved in their own research.
210. Evidence that was gathered during the inspection week indicates that the attainment of the GSCE students is at the level expected although little high quality work was seen. Students have a sound understanding of the basic tenets of the bible and can relate these to moral and social questions such as the prevalence of divorce. At other times, however, there is an insufficient challenge to identify the links between the topic that they are studying and the key, ultimate questions that all religions seek to answer.
211. GCE A-level results from a small entry in 2000 were very low and were generally in line with the other results of these students. Discussions with Year 12 and Year 13 students, and a scrutiny of their work, indicate that students' standards are in line with course expectations although few appear set to achieve the highest grades. Year 12 are studying a number of Old Testament prophets and have begun to extend their understanding of subjective religious experiences. However, they have yet to produce a completed essay, thus being denied the opportunity to practice the rigour of synthesis and evaluation and to hone their writing skills. Year 13 students have covered the main aspects of the GCE A-level syllabus and have a file of satisfactory notes and handouts. Although there are exceptions, some of the Year 13 work is too descriptive and lacks in-depth analysis. The weaknesses that exist at GCSE level continue in Years 12 and 13 and depress standards.

212. The quality of teaching and the learning that such teaching promotes is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Year 12 and 13 students receive no religious education, their knowledge and skills are not developed and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Due to staff illness, relatively little teaching was seen during the inspection week. No Year 12 and 13 teaching was observed. There was no significant difference between the learning experiences of students of different ages. Students are taught by well-qualified specialists and benefit from their informed subject knowledge. For example, a teacher of a Year 8 class ensured that students linked their findings about life in Palestine with the essence of Judaism through well-chosen references to the Sabbath and Jewish dietary requirements. Students learnt well in lessons that began with clear definitions and good formal teaching of new ideas, as when a Year 11 class quickly gained an understanding of the various theories about the function of punishment. Teachers' ability to lead focused discussions that involve students of varying ability, results in a good increase in knowledge and understanding. All are involved. Ideas are succinctly summarised and become the key points for learning, strongly reinforced during the plenary session. Emphasis on discussion work and tasks that relate to real life engage students and those with special needs make satisfactory progress. Marking does not always require a student response and fails to challenge. Homework is inconsistently given and not always effectively monitored. Student motivation suffers.
213. Overall, the leadership and management of religious education is unsatisfactory. This satisfactory teaching is not supported by schemes of work, which cover all aspects of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. There are inconsistent reference to specific learning outcomes and time targets. Assessment opportunities are not routinely identified and there are few examples of work being carefully planned to meet the needs of students with different learning needs, including the more gifted. The use of ICT as a tool to aid learning is inadequately addressed. There are no subject IEPs for students with special needs. Resources are mentioned but the department does not have a record of all its resources, thereby making it difficult to plan new lessons and for Year 12 and 13 students to do research. This is especially important, as there is not a departmental library that these students can easily access. The main library has few books and ICT is not used frequently. It is hard for students to develop good research skills.
214. Other management decisions have also reduced the effectiveness of the subject in promoting high academic standards. The department has too few resources and although additional money has been made available for some new books there is still not a set of textbooks for all year groups. Significantly, the students taking public examinations at the end of Year 11 do not have a textbook to study in school and at home. Staff have worked hard to alleviate these resource deficiencies and over the years at least a hundred work sheets have been written. The department is aware that many need updating and this is in the development plan. At times, the students need to be more interactive. There is a range of videos although there are too few artefacts.
215. Since the last inspection the subject has made unsatisfactory progress. There is still no provision for religious education in Years 12 and 13, apart from GCE A-level religious studies. Moreover, statutory requirements are now not met in the lower part of the school. The requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus continue not to be embodied within the schemes of work. Too few higher grades are obtained at GCSE and GCE A-level. Assessment remains underdeveloped and the subject under resourced.

## **Drama**

216. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was above the national average. The proportion of students achieving grades A\* to G was in line with the national average. Girls did significantly better than the boys. Students' results in drama were significantly better than those they achieved in most other subjects. All six students taking GCE A-level theatre studies achieved an A to E grade pass. However these numbers are too small to make a statistical comparison to the national average.
217. Students have only a limited access and experience of drama in Year 8 and none in Years 7 and 9. However, students speak enthusiastically of this experience. This means that students start the GCSE drama course in Year 10 with a limited range of experiences and little awareness of performance skills and techniques. In spite of this, at age 16, attainment is above the course expectations. Students create

high emotion characterisations within structured improvisations and listen and support each other in their performances very effectively.

218. By the end of Year 12, attainment in the GCE AS-level theatre studies is above course expectations, and for the GCE A-level students, in Year 13 it is in-line, even though levels of prior attainment in drama are very variable, with some of the students who start the course never having studied drama before. They display a good use of imagination and in their group work, they co-operate very effectively, negotiating and listening to the views and ideas of others, so that they create structured and extended works. Their characters are created with sensitivity, a good use of gesture and wide range of emotive dialogue, combined with good inter-play between the students whilst 'in role'.
219. Throughout, the teaching provision is outstanding which enables students at all abilities and ages to make excellent achievement. There is an excellent subject knowledge, which allows very clear explanations and demonstrations leading to highly confident teaching and very high levels of respect for the students. This allows them, as was seen in a Year 10 and 12 lesson to feel very confident and secure in the handling of high emotion situations. Excellent class management leads to high standards as in a Year 8 lesson where students were experiencing emotional interaction for the first time yet still created polished performances within the space of a single lesson. The teacher moves very effectively between groups, using praise and encouragement combined with question and answer, to clarify teaching points and to really challenge the students, who in a Year 13 lesson achieved at an extremely high level. Excellent whole-class discussions and performances set challenging targets and are combined, as in a Year 11 lesson, with very effective end of lesson reviews which focus students for future lessons. This high calibre teaching results in all students observed being very enthusiastic with high levels of concentration and motivation. Their behaviour is excellent and they have high levels of both independence and collaborative skills.
220. There is excellent leadership and management of the subject, which provides a clear direction for drama. This is seen through a development plan which has clear and monitored targets which supports an excellent commitment to improve and to enable all students, irrespective of their background or abilities, to achieve as well as they can. All this is achieved using accommodation, which is only satisfactory and with no access to specialist rooms and only limited resources to support the teaching.
221. Since the time of the last inspection, teaching and learning has improved to a consistently high standard and this shows very good improvement.

### **Vocational**

222. In the results of students following General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) engineering programmes of study, students by the age of 16 produce standards of attainment well above national standards. By the age of 18 students following GNVQ courses in business and leisure and tourism also produce standards of attainment well above national standards; those following health and social care courses produced standards of attainment slightly below national standards. Particular examples worthy of mention are the eighty-nine per cent of engineering students in Year 11 who achieved at the higher levels of merit and distinction; and the sixty-five per cent of advanced business students who also achieved at these significantly high levels. This represents very good levels of achievement and the constant drive towards higher level accreditation is to the credit of the school. There were no differences in achievement between boys and girls.
223. In work seen during the inspection, students are attaining standards that are above the level expected of both 16 and 18 year-old students nationally in engineering, leisure and tourism and ICT for students in Years 10 and 11 and in business, leisure and tourism and travel and tourism for students in Years 12 and 13. Students have a good knowledge of the topics that they are studying and they all have a better understanding than is expected for their age. This applies to students following foundation, intermediate, advanced and advanced vocational certificate courses (AVCE). Students following the 'Motivated By Choice' vocational course in Years 10 and 11 enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below the level expected. They achieve far better than might be expected in relation to their prior attainment, both in terms of motivation and quality of learning. Students not only improve in terms of behaviour, attendance and punctuality but progress onto viable career routes, including university. These

standards are not being replicated on the AQA Unit Award Scheme, which also takes place in Years 10 and 11. Standards on this course are well below the level expected.

224. Students acquire very good knowledge and understanding in each of the GNVQ programmes of study. They develop skills of enquiry, analysis and presentation to a good level; and because of the student-centred approach adopted by most of the teachers, become increasingly self-reliant in the organisation of their own work. They show initiative in the acquisition of evidence and they take appropriate responsibility for their own evidence. Vocational students behave well in lessons. They have positive attitudes, and are courteous and respectful of other students and staff. They form constructive working relationships with each other and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. Students are well motivated; they enjoy their work, and have a clear awareness of their performance and potential.
225. The quality of teaching in Year 10 to 13 is very good and there are examples of outstanding practice. Students benefit from well-informed, experienced and well-organised teaching. The warm relationship that exists between teachers and their students was well illustrated in a Year 10 'Motivated by Choice' class where there was mutual respect and where each student was encouraged to give of their best and contribute fully throughout the lesson. The assessment of their work by teachers is thorough and accurate. Assessors provide feedback to students about grading criteria, and they carry out assessment of grades in accordance with the grading criteria specifications and requirements of the awarding body. Internal verification systems are secure and consistent and meet all GNVQ specifications.
226. There was no report on vocational courses at the time of the last inspection: but since this time there has been a growth in GNVQ courses for students in Years 10 to 13. Courses are proving to be very popular with students and vocational courses are now a very important feature of school provision and they provide a very good standard of education.