

## INSPECTION REPORT

**Cramlington Community High School**

Highburn, Cramlington

LEA area : Northumberland

Unique Reference Number : 122357

Headteacher : Mr D M Wise

Reporting inspector : R Hedge  
T11264

Dates of inspection : 27 - 31 January 1997

Under OFSTED contract number: 929/S5/002786

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

## Information about the school

Type of school : Comprehensive

Type of control : County

Age range of students : 13 - 18

Gender of students : Mixed

School address :  
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Cramlington  
Northumberland  
NE23 6BN

Telephone number : 01670 712311

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors : Mr John Carlin  
(where appropriate)

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## **Main findings**

1 Cramlington Community High School is a very good school, with many strengths and no serious weaknesses. The standards which students reach at the end of each key stage are above those expected nationally. The results of national tests for students at the end of Key Stage 3 last year were above average in mathematics and English, and well above in science.

2 The proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades in five or more GCSE examinations in 1996 was well above the national average and GCSE results have improved in recent years at a faster rate than nationally. In these examinations, girls do better than boys, which is in line with the national picture.

3 The results of post 16 students are also good. The average points score of students attempting two or more A level GCE examinations was above average in 1996 and the results of those students who followed GNVQ courses were also better than the national average.

4 Standards in English are good, and in all subjects students demonstrate standards of reading and writing which are above average, speak well and listen carefully and accurately. Mathematics standards are good and students have a firm base in number which is evident in their work in other subjects. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are reaching very good standards in science. Standards are sound in modern foreign languages at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, in post 16 geography and in art at Key Stage 4. Standards in other subjects are consistently above those expected nationally at the end of each Key Stage and post 16, except in post 16 information technology (IT), art and music, where they are very good.

5 Students at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress in lessons and over time. Test results indicate that standards are close to the national average overall when students enter the school, but have risen consistently by the end of Key Stage 4. Students make good progress in their post 16 work.

6 In classes and around the school students demonstrate good attitudes and behave well. They listen carefully, concentrate and respond well to their teachers, generally work hard, are courteous one to another and with visitors. Students treat the school's facilities and equipment well.

7 Attendance levels are satisfactory and in line with national averages. On an average day, just over nine out of ten students are in school. Punctuality is good.

8 Much of the school's success can be attributed to the good quality of teaching which is the norm across the curriculum. During the week of the inspection, almost no unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and in eight lessons out of ten teaching was good. The overall quality of teaching in design and technology (DT) and IT, and in Key Stage 4 science is particularly good. Teachers' planning and preparation are very good and students are managed well so there is little poor behaviour. Teachers know their subjects and their students well and work hard to meet students' needs. Most lessons are interesting and lively and high standards are expected. Purposeful homework is regularly set and marking and assessment are accurate.

9 The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs (SEN). Although the requirements of the National Curriculum are met, time devoted to RE for post 16 students falls well below that necessary to satisfy requirements and the school should review and improve this provision. Key Stage 4 students study a broad and balanced curriculum with a good range of GCSE and GNVQ options. Provision for RE at Key Stage 4, while it meets requirements, has shortcomings. Many students have no RE after Year 10 and some teaching groups are very large. The school should seek to improve this provision in such a way as to provide better continuity and depth to students' experience of the subject, within the present GCSE short course arrangements. Post 16 students are presented with a very good range of courses at GCE A level and GNVQ, from which to choose. There is good provision for health and sex education and careers guidance. Arrangements for grouping students by ability for their lessons work well, and serve students' needs. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities, including many opportunities for students to participate in sports.

10 Students' work is carefully assessed, and the results are well used to place students in appropriate groups and to cater for individual needs. The school monitors their progress very carefully and the arrangements for the academic monitoring and counselling of students are outstanding. There is very good

whole school monitoring of results and analysis to calculate value added. Departments make good use of assessment data, including examination results, to analyse and improve their own provision.

11 The ethos of the school indicates that the spiritual, social, moral and cultural dimension is taken seriously. Provision is good. Coherent statements of aims make clear what is expected to all members of the school community. Staff set a good example, treating students with courtesy, and there is evident mutual respect and consideration in relationships between staff and students. The school takes a firm stance on issues of right and wrong. Ethical and moral dilemmas are explored within the curriculum so students have experience of working together in an atmosphere of respect for the views of others. Collective worship is organised through a variety of assembly types, and although the strict letter of the legal requirement for each student to attend a daily act of collective worship may not always be met in form assemblies, the overall programme is clearly thought through, of high quality, and meets the spirit of the regulations well. The school's curriculum and extra-curricular activities offer a rich variety of cultural experience for students. There are school drama and music productions, artists and poets in residence from time to time, visits to museums, galleries and theatres and opportunities for foreign visits.

12 The school makes excellent arrangements for the educational support and guidance of its students, through a comprehensive system of monitoring progress and counselling students in response to their needs. Students are well known to staff, who show considerable care for their well-being. There are very effective arrangements for child protection and health and safety.

13 Every effort is made by the school to work in partnership with parents and the community. Information for parents is comprehensive and well written, and reports on individual students are informative and carefully prepared. There is a good relationship with a number of local business and other organisations, which provides opportunities for work experience.

14 The overall leadership and management of the school by the Headteacher and governors are outstanding. There has been great success in effectively establishing an ethos devoted to high aspirations by students and high expectations by staff, in which learning flourishes. High quality planning of provision, careful monitoring of effectiveness and constant striving for improvement characterise management at whole school and departmental levels.

15 The School Development Plan successfully brings together the school's priorities with departmental responsibilities and financial projections. Planning has successfully been focused on raising standards in recent years. The funding which the school receives for each student is below the national average for schools of this type, but nevertheless, provision is good. The school offers good value for money.

16 The teaching staff is well qualified and deployed to meet the needs of the students. Support staff make a good contribution to the quality of provision, especially for students with SEN. There are good procedures for staff development and the system for staff appraisal is very good. Accommodation is satisfactory for most needs, though there is inadequate accommodation, including changing rooms and toilets, for physical education (PE). Learning resources are adequate to support students' needs in lessons and the school has set up an outstanding resource centre for individual student and whole class use which provides good guidance on the use of all sources of information, including books, CD-ROM and the Internet.

### **Key issues for action**

17 To raise further the standards of students' attainment and the quality of the school's provision, the governors and senior managers should:-

- introduce a programme of religious education which meets requirements for post 16 students;
- strengthen religious education provision in Key Stage 4.

## Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

18 The school has 1,567 boys and girls aged 13 to 18 on roll, and serves the town of Cramlington. The social and economic characteristics of the area are mixed, but overall represent a picture close to the national average. The number of students under the age of 16 who are eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. Students enter the school from local middle schools at the beginning of Year 9 and at that stage their attainments are also broadly average. Sixteen students are subject to statements of SEN. Almost all students are white and come from homes in which English is the first language.

19 The school aims to play an integral role in the local community and to work in close partnership with parents and middle schools. It seeks to enable students to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, to enable them to reach their full academic potential and gain the confidence and skills necessary to achieve their goals. The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities, positive social and personal values and an atmosphere in which spiritual, moreal and cultural development can be fostered within a safe and secure environment which is conducive to learning.

## 20 Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3

for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1996 (1995)	188 (198)	166 (190)	354 (388)

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	112 (80)	131 (118)	143 (122)
	Girls	117 (140)	104 (115)	113 (118)
	Total	229 (220)	235 (233)	256 (240)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	67 (57)	66 (60)	72 (62)
	National	57	56 (57)	56 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	43 (16)	45 (34)	28 (27)
	National	25	33 (33)	21 (25)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students	Boys	134 (94)	138 (134)	148 (138)

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

at NC Level 5 or above	Girls	124 (153)	116 (126)	123 (158)
	Total	258 (247)	254 (260)	271 (296)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	71 (64)	71.8 (67)	77 (76)
	National	61	63 (61)	60 (65)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	48 (36)	48 (34)	45 (47)
	National	31	36 (34)	28 (35)

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1996 (1995)	211 (191)	194 (201)	405 (392)

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of students achieving standard specified	Boys	100 (96)	197 (181)	204 (185)
	Girls	125 (116)	182 (191)	190 (195)
	Total	225 (212)	379 (372)	394 (380)
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	55.6 (54)	93.8 (95)	97.3 (97)
	National	42.4 (41.1)	87.4 (87.4)	94 (93.6)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units, and percentage of such students who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success Rate
School	30 (21)	100
National		79.2

## Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>3</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for

GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1996 (1995)	54 (42)	43 (56)	97 (98)

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		
	M	F	All	M	F	All
School	22.8 (19.3)	18.5 (16.5)	20.8 (17.8)	3.0 (8.7)	0.5 (4.0)	2.2 (5.2)
National	-	-	16.8 (15.9)	-	-	2.7 (2.7)

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year



Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications,  
and  
percentage of such students who achieved these  
qualifications:

Intermediate

	Number	% Success Rate
School	47	51.1
National		69

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications, and

percentage of such students who achieved these qualifications:

Advanced

	Number	% Success Rate
School	42 (16)	90.5 (81.3)
National		79

### Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed

through absence for the latest complete reporting year :

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8
	National comparative data	8.6
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.4
	National comparative data	1.1

### Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age)

during the previous year :

	Number
Fixed period	17
Permanent	5

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	20
Satisfactory or better	97
Less than satisfactory	3



## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Educational standards achieved by students at the school**

#### **Attainment and progress**

21 In National Curriculum Standard Attainment Tests in 1996 the proportions of students reaching the expected standard were above the national average in mathematics and English and well above in science. The proportions of students attaining higher levels in the tests were above average in science and well above in English and mathematics.

22 In the GCSE examinations in 1996 the proportions of students with grades A\*-C and A\*-G in five or more subjects were well above the national averages. GCSE results have improved in recent years at a faster rate than the national average. Girls do better than boys in GCSE examinations, broadly in line with the national picture.

23 The average points score of students entered for two or more GCSE A levels is above the national average. The results of students who completed GNVQ courses in 1996 were better than national averages with a 88% success rate in the advanced courses which are the equivalent of A level subjects.

24 The standards which students reach at the end of each key stage generally exceed those expected nationally. There is a remarkable consistency in standards across subjects, with no weak departments. Standards meet those expected nationally in modern foreign languages at Key Stages 3 and 4, in geography post 16 and in art at Key Stage 4. Standards in other subjects and key stages are above the national expectation, except for science at Key Stage 4, and IT, art and music post 16 where they are well above.

25 Standards of English across the curriculum are good overall. Standards of reading and writing are above average and speaking and listening skills are well above. Standards of numeracy are also good, giving students a firm skill base with which to approach other subjects.

26 The results of tests administered to Year 8 students before they enter the school suggest that standards of attainment at that stage are broadly average. Students make good progress in Year 9 and again during Key Stage 4, so standards at the end of both key stages are generally above those expected nationally. Particularly good progress is made in science at Key Stage 4, in DT and art post 16 and in business education throughout. Students with SEN, including hearing impaired students, make good progress. Evidence from calculations of value added administered by the school also suggests that students make generally good progress.

#### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

27 Good teaching ensures that most students are interested in their work. In class, they listen carefully, concentrate and respond well to their teachers. Almost all students can work effectively on their own or collaboratively as required. They demonstrate a good capacity to persevere with challenging tasks and mostly take considerable pride in the presentation of their written work.

28 Behaviour in class and around the site generally is good. During the inspection, almost no inappropriate behaviour was observed. Students and parents report that bullying is not a major problem and that most incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with by the school. The school encourages a culture of caring for others in its moral and social education policies and students respond well, relating easily one to another, without undue friction or aggression. Students frequently support one another in class and show considerable respect for the school's property, so expensive resources such as the computer hardware in the sixth form centre and the learning resource centre and valuable instruments in the music department can be used by students under minimal supervision. In RE and other lessons, students show proper respect for the views and feelings of others.

29 The school offers its students good opportunities to take responsibility for their own work and to participate in the general life of the school and the community. The programme of individual review of

progress is successful in encouraging students to take personal responsibility for their own progress. In house and school councils and charity work, students participate in wider concerns. Generally, students are courteous and helpful.

### **Attendance**

30 Attendance levels are satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. On an average day, just over nine students out of every ten are in school. Punctuality to school is good and students appear promptly for lessons in spite of the extensive school site.

### **Quality of education provided**

#### **Teaching**

31 The good progress which students make in this successful school can be attributed in large measure to the consistently high quality of teaching. During the week of the inspection, hardly any unsatisfactory teaching was observed. There are no weak areas or departments. Overall the quality of teaching is good, and in DT, IT and Key Stage 4 science it is very good.

32 Across the curriculum, teachers know and understand their subjects well, which allows them to discuss topics with authority. Students are expected to work hard and reach good standards, and largely respond well to the ethos of high achievement which teachers establish. A particularly strong feature of teaching quality is the skill and attention to detail which characterises teachers' planning and preparation. Schemes of work and individual lesson plans are carefully designed to promote good progress with students at all levels of attainment. Purposeful homework is integrated into planning and contributes well to students' standards of work. Lessons are rigorous and stimulating, have clear objectives and contain a variety of methods chosen for their appropriateness to the demands of the topic and the needs of students.

33 In almost all lessons, teachers manage students well and are able to establish productive relationships which ensure that little time is wasted on behavioural problems. Teachers know their students well and use assessment information skilfully to promote the learning of individuals or groups. Students' work is accurately and regularly marked. In many lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to stimulate interest and pace. Good quality teaching resources, often designed by teachers, enhance the quality of students' learning.

#### **The curriculum and assessment**

34 The curriculum properly reflects the aims of the school, which include the belief that all students should receive equality of opportunity to develop their maximum potential through a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum provides for vocational, practical, physical, creative and intellectual qualities to be equally regarded for all students.

35 In Key Stage 3, all statutory National Curriculum subjects and RE are provided. In addition, the curriculum includes a healthy living course designed to meet the requirements for health, sex and drug education, and business information technology. Students may also study a second foreign language, or keyboarding skills and drama as half-year modules. The time allocation for both art and music is short, although National Curriculum requirements are fully met.

36 At Key Stage 4 students follow courses which fully meet statutory requirements. The curriculum provides equal access and opportunity for students to learn and make progress. The option system provides students with the choice to study a broad range of subjects, whilst directing them to a balanced curriculum. It includes English, mathematics, double modular science, an option within design and technology, an arts subject, humanities, a modern foreign language and physical education. It also includes GNVQ part 1 in

Year 10, which ensures that all students experience RE, health and social care and aspects of citizenship. Although these arrangements meet the requirements for RE, students' experience of the subject is impoverished by lack of time, the compression of the RE element of the course into Year 10 for some students, and some large teaching groups. These arrangements should be reviewed. Options also include provision for a second foreign language, a second arts subject, GNVQ health and social care and GNVQ business, or extra humanities, GCSE PE, keyboarding and business studies.

37 For post 16 students there is very wide choice of eighteen different A level subjects offered, together with four advanced and four intermediate GNVQ courses. This provision extends well beyond National Curriculum subjects, and a well planned and taught sociology A level option is available, in which students achieve good results.

38 Careers education and advice are of a high quality and provide clear guidance and direction. Documentation and information are relevant, up-to-date and appropriate. The careers co-ordinator is responsible for the organisation of careers education content included in the form tutorial programme for Years 9 - 11. Separate modules are provided for each year; and include information sources and option choices, work experience, compilation of work and study applications and the composition of a curriculum vitae. There is also a transferable skills programme operated through form tutorials during Years 9 - 11.

39 In Years 12 and 13 the tutorial input is the responsibility of the sixth form team. Additional studies are included in the Year 12 curriculum which involve eight one lesson units, which are careers orientated. This course includes enhancement of application skills, extensions to students' personal curriculum vitae compilations, information on university choices and instruction in the use of careers information programmes. During Year 13 there is an input by the careers co-ordinator on a one period per week basis for career advice. Further careers advice is provided in association with the Northumberland Guidance Company throughout Years 9 - 13. The library contains a comprehensive collection of careers information, including up-to-date publications, video cassettes and computer information programmes.

40 The code of practice for students with SEN is established and the curriculum support department provides support for individuals, including those from the hearing impaired unit. Individual education programmes are in place for those students who require them. Appropriate resource materials are developed jointly with subject teachers. An art support teacher for example, has developed differentiated materials in support of student learning for Attainment Target 2, Knowledge and Information. The materials developed by support teachers have a positive impact on the education students receive, and on the standards they achieve in many areas of the curriculum.

41 The school includes a special unit for hearing impaired students. At present six students use this facility and provision for them is good. They are highly integrated into the mainstream school for their lessons and receive good teaching and support. Hearing impaired students make good progress.

42 The school makes good provision for continuity in learning. The quality of overall planning by departments is very good and schemes of work are thorough and appropriate at all age levels. The transfer of students from middle schools is handled well and there are twice termly meetings between heads of departments from the feeder middle schools and those from the high school to ensure continuity and progression.

43 A good range of sporting activities exist, both in school and as extra-curricular activities. Seventeen members of staff assist with voluntary extra-curricular sporting activities and about 500 students take part. There are regular visits to museums, galleries and other places of interest, as well as trips abroad. Extra-curricular activities linked with community education provide students with a broad range of opportunities in the arts, including drama and music.

44 The school's assessment policy is very well constructed; it is comprehensive and based on sound principles. It provides clear guidance and direction for all departments. Assessment is thorough and an effective tool for supporting students' progress. It includes provision for students' self-assessment as well as teacher assessment. Students are guided in the setting of targets and goals through regular termly reviews. The review system predicts students' potential grades and compares these with actual performance. This differential is used as a means of target setting for both high, and low attaining students. Assessment is very well used as a feature of student counselling and as part of curriculum planning.

45 NFER testing is conducted by high school staff in the middle schools during Year 8. YELLIS testing is conducted during the autumn term in Year 10. Results from these tests are effectively applied by the school in the monitoring of students' performance and progress. The school's record of achievement scheme is an important process within the school and provides students, parents and future employers with valuable information on student achievements and progress up to the end of Year 11.

46 The quality of marking is informative and consistent across all departments. Students fully understand the marking policy which includes both effort marks and examination related grade predictions.

### **Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

47 The ethos of the school indicates that the spiritual, social, moral and cultural dimension is taken very seriously. There are coherent statements of aims and accompanying policies which clarify expectations for staff and students. These values are given practical expression in the attitude and behaviour of staff and students. Staff actions are supported by reasons and explanations. Lessons are delivered making use of paired and group work which encourage respect for the views of others and sensitivity when presenting an opposing argument. There are well established classroom routines which reinforce the expected patterns of behaviour and facilitate discussion and group work. The atmosphere of care, courtesy and mutual respect is a marked feature of many lessons.

48 The school takes a clear stand on the difference between right and wrong. Consequences and intentions of actions are explored in assemblies, form tutor time and many parts of the school curriculum. Most of all this aspect is reinforced by the way in which staff apply school rules and encourage students to live up to their high expectations.

49 Ethical and moral dilemmas are also confronted, particularly in the work of the religious education department and in the social and community studies programme in Year 11. In history, issues of racism, anti-Semitism and the consequences of violence are examined and the past is sometimes used to help students formulate their response to modern circumstance. English literature and art also provide a means of appreciating individual response to prejudice and inequality. Human geography brings home some of the consequences of the issues of unequal trade and distribution upon the lives of individuals and groups in many parts of the world.

50 The spiritual dimension is also developed through the planned core programmes in RE, social and community studies, assemblies and form tutor time. In these programmes, students are challenged to consider their own responses to ethical questions. Work on Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism in the pre-16 RE programmes helps students to appreciate the world wide nature of religious belief and how it can guide the response of individuals to a range of moral and social issues. In art, spiritual aspects are promoted by detailed critical studies in art history.

51 Collective worship is organised through house assemblies, video assemblies delivered in form tutor time and the "Thought for the Day" using the public address system. On these occasions the legal requirement regarding collective worship is met, though it is not a daily experience for all students and the school cites valid, logistical reasons for this. There is a substantial, planned and integrated programme for these activities, built around five themes which cover the whole year. This provision goes a long way towards meeting the spirit of the collective worship legislation and provides valuable opportunities for reflection and the development of individual response. The programme schemes are strong, the objectives are clear and reinforce the school's aims. Effectiveness varies with the commitment and skill of individual tutors who are asked to provide follow up work in form tutor time.

52 Cultural development is well delivered through the rich and varied curriculum experience provided by the school. There are further opportunities for development in the many extra activities and support given by the teachers outside of school time. Awareness of the students' own culture finds expression in many subject disciplines and in the strong partnership with the local community. Students learn from and contribute to the wider local community through work experience links with industry and commerce, community service programmes, charitable fund raising events and entertainment for senior citizens. Staff seek opportunities to promote understanding of other cultures within the curriculum. Contributions to this

aspect are made through RE, sporting events, study of the achievement of black athletes, dance and drama workshops and visits. The music curriculum contains programmes of study involving Asian and Middle Eastern music and the folk music of Europe.

53 Aesthetic appreciation is promoted strongly and is stimulated by school productions, collaborative ventures between music, drama and dance, participation in music performances, artist and poets in residence schemes and through the general display of first class student art work. Visits to museums, art galleries and the theatre are also arranged and are valued by students. Foreign exchange visits broaden cultural horizons and greatly benefit those who take part.

### **Support, guidance and students' welfare**

54 The school makes excellent arrangements for the educational support and guidance of its students. Each is assigned to one of the four houses. The house head has overall responsibility for the care and discipline of students in the house, working with a team of tutors, each of whom has a mixed ability tutor group of about 26 students. Tutors generally stay with their group throughout Years 9, 10 and 11, and new post 16 groups are formed. The tutor meets the group daily and has first responsibility for students' progress and welfare, monitoring of the progress of every student in the group and holding individual interviews to help students set realistic targets for future progress. The information provided for tutors concerning the progress of students is comprehensive and up-to-date, the paperwork is very well organised, students are fully involved in discussion of their work and are expected to take their share of responsibility for it. Tutors provide effective help for students in dealing with any difficulties or issues that may arise.

55 The tutor is also responsible for the delivery of the tutorial programme. This is very well planned and documented and helps students entering Year 9 to meet the challenges of this new stage of their education. Students are introduced to the careers staff and given extensive help with their choice of course for the next two years. In Years 10 and 11 the tutorial programme has a substantial content of careers education, including many related areas of study, such as self presentation and interview skills, included in the general programme of transferable skills. Post 16 students also have a good induction programme which helps them to settle in, to manage their time and to develop more sophisticated study skills before proceeding to their own extensive programme of careers education. All students have the opportunity of two weeks' work experience in Year 10. This takes place at the end of June when public examinations are over and coincides with the activities week for students in Years 9 and 12. All students on work experience are visited by a teacher in the second week.

56 The school encourages, recognises and rewards good attendance, good progress and good behaviour through a system of rewards. Commendation certificates are awarded by subject teachers and the Headteacher. They are given for effort, improvement in a subject, and good work, and by heads of house for service to the school or to the house. Every student is involved in compiling a personal record of achievement. These are presented at the end of Year 11 in a special assembly. There are celebration evenings to celebrate academic achievement with the presentation of GCSE and A level certificates, sporting, music and dramatic achievement, effort, good attendance and service to the school and the community.

57 The school manages students' behaviour well. Expectations are made very clear to students in a leaflet including a statement of behaviour policy, classroom expectations, the code of conduct, the dress code and exclusion policy. The school's measures for the prevention of bullying are comprehensive and well known to students. Policies for sex education, drugs education and child protection were all approved by governors some time ago and are regularly reviewed. Procedures for managing attendance are good.

58 The school makes very effective arrangements for child protection. Copies of the LEA's child protection procedures are held by senior members of staff and are meticulously followed. In-service training for teachers was undertaken two years ago, and now forms part of induction work for all teachers new to the school. Formal liaison with social services is effective, and there is good informal contact through the visiting school nurse. A counsellor is available to students for 25 hours each week to discuss any matters of concern.



59 The school has good arrangements for promoting the health, safety and general well-being of its students. There is a policy group for health and safety matters led by a senior teacher. The second revision of the health and safety policy has been accepted by the governors as a working document and is kept under review. All staff are expected to be alert to health and safety matters, and to contribute to collective responsibility in this area. Those who work in areas of particular risk have attended appropriate training. Risk assessment has been undertaken and has been written up using the standard LEA pro forma. Departments follow appropriate procedures for safe-guarding the health and safety of students in lessons. The fire bell is tested weekly, and practices in evacuating the building are held once per term. There are good arrangements for the conduct of visits out of school and good records are kept in relation to all health and safety matters.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

60 At their meeting with the Registered Inspector and through the questionnaires which they returned, parents affirmed their support of school policies and expressed general satisfaction with the relationship between home and school. Information to parents and that for the wider community is helpful, well written and comprehensive. Open evenings are well attended and the Parents in Partnership scheme offers an opportunity for parents to become involved in issues which are relevant to their children's development.

61 The work of the school's community education department enhances opportunities available to students and give them an opportunity to see learning as a lifelong process. The school's involvement with local businesses and organisations provides opportunities for work experience of various kinds. There are particularly good links between some of the GNVQ courses and local organisations which provide a very good context for learning. Several schemes, such as the Trident Skills for Life scheme provide ample opportunity for community service and involvement.

### **The management and efficiency of the school**

#### **Leadership and management**

62 The high quality of leadership and management makes a major contribution to the very good overall standard of provision in this successful school. The governors, Headteacher and senior staff, working together, have been very effective in establishing an ethos in the school which is dedicated to establishing and maintaining high standards. Governors take their role seriously, are knowledgeable about the school and are fully involved in strategic planning which, over the long term, has resulted in the provision of some excellent facilities such as the learning resource centre and the post 16 accommodation. Through their sub-committees, governors monitor the effectiveness of provision and work with the senior management team to ensure accountability. Other than the lack of a programme of RE which meets requirements for post 16 students, statutory responsibilities are fully met.

63 Under the clear direction of the Headteacher, a very efficient senior management team ensure that the planning and monitoring of provision are very effective. The work of departments is monitored closely through regular meetings between heads of department and senior staff. In addition there is a regular programme of departmental reviews, sometimes with the assistance of outside consultants. The generally good quality of teaching is supported by these means and through very good procedures for staff appraisal and developmental training. Assessments of students' work and progress, including National Curriculum Tests, GCSE and GCE A level results are systematically analysed to highlight strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate and improve provision. Curriculum planning at departmental level is very good. The school development plan effectively brings together the school's priorities with departmental responsibilities and financial projections. Long term priorities and short term goals are clearly identified in the planning process and financial considerations are clearly thought through. There is good support for students' welfare and guidance through the work of heads of house.

64 The work of heads of department in managing their own subjects is good. Departmental planning is comprehensive, the quality of teaching is monitored within departments and throughout there is a clear

emphasis on the use of planning and management to secure high standards.

65 Overall, leadership and management in the school are very good. Staff are confident in their work, morale is high and throughout the school there is a commitment to high standards and dedication to continuous improvement.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

66 The school has a sufficient number of well qualified and experienced staff whose expertise matches the requirements of the curriculum. They are effectively deployed, though there are significantly fewer women than men in positions of responsibility. Non-teaching staff are appropriately qualified and provide good support. The system of staff appraisal is very good and focuses on work in the classroom. This is supported by an excellent staff development programme which includes all non-teaching staff. These procedures are viewed positively by staff and make a sound contribution to the effectiveness of their work and have led to the successful achievement of Investors in People status. The induction of new staff, which includes a two day programme before the start of term, and the support provided for newly qualified teachers, are both comprehensive and of high quality.

67 Accommodation is spread over a large site in a range of buildings which are well maintained and respected by students. The new sixth form centre, extension to the learning resources centre, and recent cladding have enhanced the provision although four mobile classrooms of deteriorating quality remain. Overall provision and deployment of rooms is good although there are a number of staff who do not have a teaching base and there is no designated area for media studies. The provision for physical education, including toilet facilities and changing rooms, is inadequate. In other respects provision is good. Areas have been improved with carpeting, the science laboratories have been refurbished, and there are good communal areas for students to use. There is widespread congestion on corridors at the end of lessons, particularly at the head of some staircases, though these areas are supervised when congestion is greatest. Good quality display work enhances the environment and celebrates positive achievement.

68 Procedures for departmental expenditure on educational resources are good and result in provision which enhances the classroom experience of students. IT equipment for use by departments across the curriculum is excellent and of good quality. Equipment is appropriately based in several areas of the school providing good access and availability and is widely used. The facilities and organisation for reprographics to support teaching are good.

69 The learning resource centre is outstanding. The management and organisation of this facility are of the highest quality. It provides a wide range of resources including books, videos, magazines and CD-ROM facilities and has a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere. Its use is impressive, with large numbers of students purposefully engaged in reading and research at all times of the day. A pupil newsletter, flyers and book trails, revision support and regular meetings with representatives from subject departments all encourage its effective use. This well equipped and lively resource is much appreciated by the school community and provides good support for teaching and learning across the school.

### **The efficiency of the school**

70 The income which the school receives for each pupil is below average when compared with similar schools nationally. Nevertheless, careful planning, prudent monitoring of expenditure and good overall efficiency results in good standards of provision.

71 The governors and senior managers of the school have operated far-sighted policies in recent years to ensure that expensive developments such as the learning resource centre and the new post 16 accommodation have been well funded. Clear long and short term priorities are set out in the school

development plan, and funding considerations are fully integrated into the planning process.

72 Budgets are carefully prepared. Departmental income is fixed through use of a sound formula, in addition to bids for development funding. This system works well in ensuring that both routine and developmental expenditure is targeted effectively so there are no damaging shortages of educational resources. All expenditure is carefully monitored by the senior management team and by governors. There are very effective financial monitoring and control mechanisms which are efficiently applied to ensure that funds are spent wisely. Funds made available for students with SEN are deployed appropriately.

73 Both teaching and non-teaching staff are well deployed and those non-teaching staff who support students with SEN are effectively deployed and managed. Accommodation is well managed and used.

74 Although the school receives a lower than average income per pupil, standards of attainment and pupil progress are good and provision, especially the quality of teaching, is also good, so the school clearly provides good value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **English, mathematics and science**

#### **English**

75 Overall standards in English are above those expected nationally. NFER tests suggest that the profile of students' standards on entry is close to the national average. Progress is good during Year 9 so that by the end of Key Stage 3 standards are above those expected nationally. In the most recent National Curriculum Tests results in English the proportion of students reaching Level 5 was slightly better than the national figure and significantly better at the higher levels. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1996 students did well in the GCSE English examination where results were some 10% above the national average for the higher grades. The department enters nearly all Year 11 students for GCSE English Literature and results in 1996 were slightly below the national average. Achievement at A level was good - all students passed and nearly 40% gained the highest grades. The drama department has recently changed to a different examining board. Results in GCSE drama in 1996 are below the national average.

76 Standards and progress in all stages are good. Most students have reasonably developed speaking and listening skills. They are able to express ideas fairly fluently though vocabulary is modest. In lessons across the curriculum, students are generally able to describe accurately, though they are not very confident speakers and are unlikely to develop their ideas in sustained speech without prompting. Group discussions are often more fully developed than formal presentation, though in science, history and geography students listen carefully to each other and presentations are delivered confidently. Boys are often less fluent than girls. Reading and writing skills are generally well developed and most students can cope with the demands of the curriculum. They often have good knowledge of specialised terminology, particularly in art and music, and are able to use terms appropriately. In science they write purposefully and in their own words. In English lessons students can cope with reading a wide range of texts without difficulty and most are able to write accurately across a range of forms and to develop and sustain their ideas well. Some higher attaining students and those studying for A level reach a high standard in writing. Some very powerful and courageous poetry about prejudice written by Year 12 students was on display and some Year 10 students produced excellent writing including a piece in the style of Jane Austen. Drafting and note taking skills are well established and standards of presentation are often good.

77 Students make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 4 language skills have improved and students have good knowledge, understanding and appreciation of poetry, prose and plays. In the sixth form students have developed appropriate knowledge of literary terminology, can engage in close analysis of text and by Year 13 have made evident progress in their ability to write creatively as well as in appropriate essay style. Lower attaining students and those with statements of SEN make good progress in English. Tests administered by the school whilst students are still in their middle schools help to identify students with literacy problems so that these can be addressed in Year 9. They work on and make significant progress with spelling, reading and comprehension using an integrated learning system on computer as well as covering the programme of work for their year group. At both Key Stage 3 and 4 students make good progress in drama. Students have gained confidence, are able to develop their ideas and are increasingly aware of and able to employ a range of dramatic techniques and conventions. Lower attaining students and those with statements of SEN make good progress in English.

78 Students at all stages are very positive about their work. Classroom relationships between students and between students and teachers are good. Higher attaining students are generally very thoughtful and well motivated. They show enthusiasm for their work. Concentration is good and although some lower attaining students have difficulty in sustaining concentration, many try hard and do well in this respect. Students are able to work independently or in groups. Group working skills are well established and collaboration is productive. They support each other and those weaker than themselves. Most are well organised and have a responsible and mature attitude generally. They listen well and even though some are quite reserved they participate in discussion. Many students are proud of their work and take much care with presentation. Boys and girls co-operate well together. Students respond well in drama lessons. Many show a high level of commitment and take their work seriously. They are careful listeners and are developing good personal discipline and control.

79 Teaching is good in all key stages. Some very strong teaching was seen and none that was unsatisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and are confident and at ease with the material. In the best lessons teachers impart their enthusiasm for literature to the students. Relationships with students are positive and there is good rapport with students. Teachers generally know students well. Lessons are often challenging and teachers lead discussion and focus questions so as to extend understanding. Some particularly effective teaching on 'The Lady of Shalott' was seen with students in Year 9. In Year 12 carefully organised group tasks enabled the whole class to consider a range of ideas and issues through close textual analysis. Work is sensitively marked and provides very useful feedback to students. Very good use is made of assessment in the classroom to promote higher standards. High standards of behaviour are expected and achieved. Literature is presented in creative and stimulating ways particularly in the sixth form where, for example, a Year 13 class watched video extracts of early film comedy to set a context for their study of 'Waiting for Godot'. Some very effective teaching of lower attaining students was also seen. Although all teaching is at least satisfactory there are some weaknesses. In some instances instructions were not clearly given, discussion was not well focused and whole class work failed to include more reticent students.

80 Drama is well taught. Clear and challenging targets are set and tasks present a range of issues such as 'Bullying' and the culturally diverse work on 'Masks'. Lessons have pace, varied activities and good use is made of assessment which provides useful feedback to students and involves them regularly and directly in critical self and peer evaluation. Students with SEN are very well integrated in drama.

81 The department is well managed with a real emphasis on continuous review and improvement. There is good coverage of the National Curriculum. Drama is taught as a separate subject to all students in Key Stage 3 and as an examination option in Key Stage 4. In addition, drama is taught as part of English lessons as, for example, in support of work on 'The Lady of Shalott'. Liaison with the middle schools is effective in ensuring that continuity and progression of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 are maintained. Planning of work is thorough and IT is integrated into schemes of work. Students often word process their work. The department makes good use of assessment data for monitoring and counselling students especially in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There are systems in place for students to assess their own performance but these skills need to be further developed. The department is well resourced with books and with video tapes. The learning resource centre plays an important part in enhancing English studies. The centre librarian prepares an excellent range of resources to support units of work in English. Students in Year 9 were researching King Arthur using books, leaflets, photocopied materials, video, CD ROM and the Internet. This is an outstanding facility which already makes a good contribution to standards and the department needs to consider further how to maximise its potential.

82 Both English and drama provide a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. There are trips to the theatre and cinema and visits by writers and poets who have included Edwin Morgan. In Year 12 students can participate in a residential poetry workshop at High Borrans in the Lake District. Visiting theatre companies run workshops in which students have considered important issues such as drug abuse. Together with staff from other curriculum areas the drama department stages an annual production which last year was 'Under Milk Wood'.

## **Mathematics**

83 Overall standards of attainment and progress are good. When students enter the school at the beginning of Year 9 their attainment is a little above average. They make good progress during the remainder of Key Stage 3, so that in National Curriculum testing at the end of Year 9 the results attained by students of the school are above the national average. Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 4, so that in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 the percentage of students gaining grades A\*-C is above the national average, and much better than could have been predicted on the basis of earlier testing. Good progress by post 16 students leads to GCE A level examination results which are well above the national average.

84 Standards of numeracy are good throughout the school. Key Stage 3 students are fluent in the use of the four rules of number and can carry out calculations involving fractions, decimals and percentages. Their work in algebra is well advanced so that by the end of Key Stage 4 students can solve equations

using a variety of different techniques. Spatial perception is also well developed. At Key Stage 3 all students have a good understanding of symmetry. Higher attaining students can use Pythagoras' theorem to solve a variety of problems in two and three dimensions. Data handling is good throughout. In Year 12 students can use computers to analyse and represent a variety of data, and by Year 13 they can use very sophisticated statistical techniques in calculations involving probability.

85 Students' attitudes to their learning are generally good. They listen to their teachers with attention and reply appropriately when questioned. They approach practical tasks with thought and care, and co-operate well in pairs and groups. They apply themselves to written tasks and sustain concentration well. Behaviour is usually very good. Many students take a pride in the presentation of written work.

86 The quality of teaching mathematics is good throughout the school. During the week of the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers' knowledge of mathematics is at least adequate to the material they are required to teach, and is very good in relation to the advanced study of the subject required for A level. Teachers use IT with confidence. They know their students well. Their expectations of them are high and they plan work carefully to meet their needs. Homework is conscientiously set and marked and regular assessments are made of students' work and progress.

87 The accommodation for mathematics in the main building is good; that in the temporary classrooms is less so. The supply of books and materials is satisfactory. There are few computers in the department and access to them in other places is strictly limited. More access to IT is needed to support the day-to-day work of the department and to make optimum use of the skills of teachers and the interest of students.

88 The leadership and management of the department are very good. Teachers have worked hard to implement the National Curriculum through materials which provide well for students, maintaining interest and variety in the work.

## **Science**

89 At Key Stage 3, standards as measured by teacher assessment and National Curriculum Tests are well above those expected nationally. At Key Stage 4 the number of students gaining grades A\* to C grades is well above the national average. The numbers of students gaining grades A to E at A level are above the national average in all science subjects. Many students obtain the highest grades, especially in physics and chemistry. The results of those following the GNVQ course exceed the national expectation. For the last three years all examination results have improved consistently and significantly. At Key Stage 3 students' knowledge and understanding of science was good in all of the lessons observed, and was very good in a significant minority. At Key Stage 4, and post 16, it was good or very good in most lessons and satisfactory in all others. Throughout the school students' practical skills are good, in many cases they are very good.

90 In all lessons at Key Stage 3 progress made by students is good and very good in a substantial minority. At Key Stage 4 progress is good or better in a large majority of lessons. The schools' measure of value added shows that students' progress is very good at Key Stage 4. Progress of post 16 students is good. They successfully learn the facts and concepts of science and make good progress in practical science, especially in investigative work. Written work is done carefully and students have many opportunities to write at length about science. They do this well. Good progress in developing numerical skills including graphing, analysis of data and calculation is made at both key stages and post 16. Students with SEN make good progress.

91 Students' behaviour and attitudes to science are good in all lessons throughout the school. They are very well motivated and work consistently. They adopt a responsible attitude to learning, readily plan investigations, evaluate data and present it carefully and in a suitable form. They confidently and effectively discuss their work, making predictions and using their theoretical knowledge to explain their discoveries. A very large majority of students enjoy their work and consequently achieve a great deal. Students co-operate and support each other extremely well. They follow instructions very carefully and adopt a critical approach to their work.

92 Teaching is good or very good in a very large majority of lessons especially at Key Stage 4.

Lesson planning is excellent, lessons are well resourced and their purpose is made clear to the students. Expectations of students are high and teaching methods are very well matched to the purpose of the lessons and the attainment levels of students. A wide range of purposeful teaching methods is used and a very large majority of lessons are interesting and challenging. Investigative work is well developed and provides opportunities for students to achieve at high levels in the GCSE and at A level. Relationships between teachers and students and between students are excellent. The high standards achieved are clearly enhanced by the hard and very effective work of their teachers.

93 The department is very well managed and curriculum development and planning are of a high standard. There is an adequate supply of laboratory apparatus which is effectively used but there is a shortage of some books. Information gained from assessment of students' progress is used effectively and plays an important part in raising standards. Good progress has been made in introducing IT into science lessons, where it is used very effectively. Students clearly benefit from the high standards of management and organisation of their science teachers.

## **Other subjects or courses**

### **Art**

94 Overall standards in art exceed those expected nationally. At Key Stage 3, standards are good. Students draw, paint and print effectively. In a project entitled 'Metamorphosis', where groups of students were working together on large panels, they could carefully discuss possible outcomes in the positioning of shapes, pattern and texture before making group decisions on the final composition. Key Stage 4 students achieve sound standards and GCSE results are close to the national average. The attainments of Year 10 students are good, particularly so in observational portrait drawing. They produce a good range of practical project work, as in the Year 11 where a study of architecture is used to produce imaginative and individualistic interpretations by students. Post 16 students reach a high standard. A level examination grades for the small number of students entered are satisfactory. They produce high quality work in three dimensional structures, drawing and painting. Their portfolios of work show substantial individual work of good quality and their knowledge and use of art history are also good.

95 Throughout the department, students make good progress in lessons and over time. Folders and sketchbooks of Key Stage 3 students show clear progress over the year. At Key Stage 4, students' folders demonstrate clear progress in thinking, in the process of developing a project and in technical skills ability. Students with SEN make sound progress. Post 16 students make very good progress. Most students make full use of extra-curricular opportunities such as visits to galleries and museums, which establish good knowledge of the role of the artist in society and support progress in intellectual, as well as practical skill development.

96 Students at all stages have a positive attitude and enjoy the subject. They are attentive and well behaved. They use the four computers available in the department, collaborate well when required and persevere with individual tasks.

97 Teaching is of good quality, especially in the sixth form. Teachers know and understand their subject well and plan lessons carefully. There are high expectations of students which result in an appropriate focus on high standards. Students are managed well in the art rooms, so there is no poor behaviour. Purposeful homework is set and assessment is accurate and helpful to students.

98 Departmental management is strong and effective. Schemes of work are well planned and suggest stimulating tasks for students. The department uses its resources well to provide stimulus material such as the collection of art reference books, but there are some shortages of facilities for fabric printing, and reference materials.

### **Business Education**

99 The overall standards reached by students pursuing business education courses meet those expected nationally. All Key Stage 3 students follow a business information technology course and reach generally sound standards in word processing, use of spreadsheets, CD ROMs and databases, and desktop publishing. Key Stage 4 students reach good standards in GCSE Business Studies and the GNVQ foundation course in business. GCSE examination results are well above average. Students reach sound levels of expertise in drafting word processed material including extended writing, and in numerical techniques such as linear graphs, block graphs, pie charts and statistical analysis. Post 16 students also reach sound standards, including effective use of the Internet.

100 The growing number of students of all levels of attainment who opt for business education courses illustrates the enthusiasm with which they approach this subject. They respond well to the range of classroom activities, collaborate well when required, behave appropriately and make sound progress throughout. Many students appreciate the practical value of the subject and see it as good career preparation.



101 The quality of teaching in the subject is good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject, plan and prepare lessons well and have high expectations of students at all levels of attainment. They use appropriate teaching methods which serve students well. Relationships between staff and students are good.

102 The organisation and management of the department are good. Schemes of work are comprehensive and form a sound basis for planning. Good links have been established with local businesses, some of which provide mentors who work with students. The department has grown considerably in recent years because of its success in attracting students, and now offers ten courses at GCSE, A level and GNVQ.

## **Design & Technology**

103 Students at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 make good progress in DT, and their attainments generally exceed the national expectations for students of similar age. Post 16 students make very good progress and their attainments often exceed national expectations. The progress of students with SEN is mostly good throughout the school and attainment on occasions is higher than expected, especially when there is good peer support and where students are encouraged to use materials specific to their needs.

104 At the end of Key Stage 3, students can demonstrate their skills in handling a wide variety of tools and materials when working on focused practical tasks. They understand the process of design and the value of research and development before progressing to tasks involving designing and making. They plan well, draw carefully and show pride in presenting their design work. Students in Year 9 worked well in lessons during the inspection on making gift boxes and electronic circuits and designing novel foods on the healthy living course. Many students showed good progress during lessons involving controlling traffic lights by computer, and when investigating movement and linkages for toys. Year 9 work displayed in the design workshops, food technology rooms and circulation areas shows good attention to detail and a high standard of finish. Acrylics items show good use of the vacuum-former.

105 At the end of Key Stage 4, students are competent users of most of the equipment available. They make considerable progress over the two years. The general standards of presentation of design portfolios and finished practical work are high, as shown by the displays of lights and counting devices. Results in examinations show an upward trend and students' A\*-C grades in recent GCSE examinations are significantly better in DT than the national average and in home economics they are slightly better. Graphic work is particularly strong, with good use of colour. Students manipulate the media effectively and show skill in using IT for both text and graphs.

106 After two years post 16, most students have developed a high degree of maturity in their work. They have powers of critical analysis, are accurate in drawing and creative in designing, undertake sophisticated research and present portfolios which are worthy of good grades in external examinations. Recent results at A level DT show a proportion of A-B grades above the national average.

107 Students in both Key Stage 4 and post 16 were observed working on the GCSE catering and GNVQ Health and Social care courses at a range of levels. For the significant majority, attainment and progress is sound and is in line with the course requirements. Most students produce a good volume of work in files. Practical work in food is particularly good. Students work with attention to cleanliness and safety, producing interesting dishes from a wide variety of ingredients.

108 Throughout the school, the majority of students show a positive attitude to DT. At Key Stage 3, students enjoy learning how to use the tools and equipment and are proud of their work. At Key Stage 4, the challenges offered are accepted eagerly. Students are good listeners, watch attentively and show a genuine desire to do well. They try hard to design creatively, use ingenuity and enjoy group work. Most students are co-operative, well motivated and keen to finish their work on time. Most respond appropriately to design briefs and further practical work in after school sessions to practise skills and improve their

grades. Post 16 students are articulate and hard working.

109 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers enjoy the company of students and work hard to provide safe and attractive working environments. Particular strengths lie in detailed planning, where imaginatively created schemes of work follow the requirements of the National Curriculum and motivate students. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make considerable demands of students while demonstrating high levels of understanding of their needs and abilities. Assessment practice is good. The department's initiative to give examination candidates access to workshops after school has been successful in raising standards. Heads of department lead with vision and the faculty functions effectively.

110 Considerable work has gone into creating the display cabinets and shelves in the design areas where students' work is shown to good effect. The department is well resourced with the exception of textiles and metal work. Rooms are safe and all potentially dangerous equipment is isolated and guarded. However, as some potentially hazardous equipment is sited in work rooms, no-go areas should be indicated. Although there are dust extractors on some machines, there is no whole-room dust extraction.

## **Geography**

111 Overall standards are good and exceed those expected nationally. At Key Stage 4 all students take GCSE humanities of which geography is one element and results are above the national average. Students who also opt to take GCSE geography achieve results significantly above the national average. A level results are in line with the national average. Throughout students have a good knowledge and understanding of physical and human geography and of case study exemplars. Key Stage 4 students were observed applying knowledge of the movement of material along a coast successfully and were able to offer explanations for a coastal feature shown on an aerial photograph. They develop good skills in using graphs and maps to analyse statistical data which at Key Stage 4 and post 16 are put to good use in their course work assignments and individual study.

112 At Key Stage 3 and 4 students make good progress and in the sixth form progress is satisfactory. Students make good progress in extending their knowledge of geographical processes such as erosion and deposition in physical geography, the reasons for migration in human geography and the processes by which human activity affects the natural world. They make good gains in understanding geographical terminology. Students with SEN make good progress in this subject. The attitudes and behaviour of students are good and at Key Stage 3 they are very good. They are attentive, interested, and are willing to make a positive contribution to lessons. Students are confident and collaborate effectively in pairs or small groups. Good concentration and perseverance supports the development of sound study skills.

113 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 is good and in the sixth form it is sound. A strength of the teaching is good planning. The best lessons are well sequenced and contain a variety of well chosen activities, thoughtful use of good quality resources and students work individually, and in pairs or groups. The management and organisation of lessons is good and lessons are well matched to the needs of students. Marking is up to date and in line with departmental policy.

114 There is a well considered teaching syllabus although there is no fieldwork in Year 9 and the use of IT is limited. The department is developing a good scheme of assessment which when a central recording system is in place will provide opportunities for the department to evaluate its teaching strategy. The leadership and management of the department are good, although monitoring of teaching and learning is limited. Departmental planning is sound. The subject has good accommodation which is given an identity by lively displays of students' work.

## **History**

115 Overall progress and attainment in history are good. Progress is strongest in Key Stage 4 where teaching focuses strongly on the objectives of the GCSE syllabus. This has produced sound results in the history modules of the GCSE humanities programme, which up to 1996 was a core study for all students,

and in the optional full GCSE history course taken last summer by 21 students. In both courses examination results were above the national average, significantly so in humanities, but only marginally so in GCSE history. Students make good progress at Key Stage 4, as is evidenced by lesson observations during the inspection and the school's calculation of value added. This provides a good foundation for the post 16 programme where recruitment to GCE A level history is strong. Students continue to make sound progress and in 1996 the A level GCE results were well above the national average.

116 In Year 9 good progress in knowledge and skills lead to standards which are at least equal to those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 3. Students have a reasonable appreciation of chronology and are able to select and use information from more than one source. Higher attaining students can comment on the reliability of evidence and give cogent oral explanations. With some exceptions, they are less confident when asked to transfer findings into written work.

117 Standards in Key Stage 4 are above those expected nationally. There is a growing understanding of cause and effect. Work on the reasons for American withdrawal from Vietnam produced good discussion in a number of classes, with students able to select priorities, appreciate the links between causes and argue the case for their decisions. They have a growing confidence when using a range of source material. Higher attaining students show understanding of long term causes and lower attaining students grasp key facts and appreciate the significance of the events which they study.

118 Post 16 students make effective progress. They show growing confidence in making connections between disparate events and in selecting and extracting relevant information from a range of reference material. They cope reasonably well when analysing documentary sources.

119 Behaviour in lessons is very good. Students are attentive and settle down quickly, following well established classroom routines. Students work well both independently and collaboratively. Concentration is good, stimulated by the pace and variety of classroom tasks. They cope well with group work and paired discussions and are tolerant of each other's views. There is a strong rapport between staff and students in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

120 Teaching by this well qualified and experienced team, in all history programmes, is almost always good or very good. Staff have good command of the subject and help students to explore interesting avenues of enquiry. Staff have high but appropriate expectations based on good knowledge of individual needs. Students are encouraged not only to gather information from a range of sources but to interpret and draw conclusions. Lessons are well planned and are generally well paced. Occasionally time constraints within the modular humanities programme prevent fuller exploration of issues.

121 Work is regularly marked with constructive comment and some target setting. Student self evaluation sheets encourage review of personal achievement and provide potentially useful information for monitoring the curriculum. The department is well managed and reasonably resourced. There is a clear vision allied to good developmental planning which reflects a commitment to high standards and the provision of a challenging experience across the age and ability range. Teachers clearly work well together with a common purpose.

### **Information Technology**

122 The majority of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress in IT and their attainments exceed expectations for students of similar age nationally. The significant majority of students in the sixth form make very good progress and their attainment consistently exceeds national expectations. Students with SEN make very good progress in IT, often producing work which compares favourably with national expectations for students of similar age, particularly on graphics programs and when using the CD-ROMs.

123 On entry to the school, students' experience in using IT is variable. Students have used different systems and software and some have knowledge of IT from home computers. IT is presented to Year 9 in a business context and the majority make rapid progress in learning how to work on a network PC system. By the end of Key Stage 3, students understand the logging on and calling-up procedures. They quickly become proficient in word processing, using paint programs and creating computer art. They use

CD-ROMs and databases to do simple searches for information, use the computer for controlling sequences and have a basic knowledge of spreadsheets.

124 By the end of Key Stage 4, students' folders and files in most subjects show good progress in IT skills. During the inspection, particularly good practice was seen in mathematics, science, DT and languages. In word processing, students can edit and present text, add graphics and change formats for different audiences. They use desk-top publishing programs with skill and most are able to alter the paths of text and create borders and boxes. Database work shows progression to complex searches and many students successfully present data in graph forms. Internet searching is undertaken sensibly. There is no examination work in IT. Skills are developed across the curriculum. As there is good co-ordination of IT and many teachers are keen to use it in their teaching programmes, students' attainment is good.

125 By the end of the optional post 16 courses, students show that they are able to assess the value of differing programs, they can establish the systems from components, load software on to the hard discs and explain clearly how the use of information systems affects wider social and economic issues. Some students can design a computer model to satisfy a specific need. A group of four students has created an interactive program, including music and moving forms, to help others to understand and use the learning resources centre, with great success. The students studying the GNVQ Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced level examinations courses at both part 1 and post 16 progress satisfactorily through their courses and produce work of good quality.

126 The majority of students throughout the school respond to IT positively. Students enjoy finding out what the programs will do. They experiment with confidence and many work independently on the computers before and after school hours and in lunchtime sessions. They help each other willingly and are keen to learn and ask pertinent questions. They show respect for the equipment and appreciate the open access to the facilities.

127 Overall the quality of teaching is very good. In the best lessons teachers communicate enthusiastically, show patience in explaining, give good instructions and allow students discovery time. Planning is good. Teachers are aware of the requirements of the National Curriculum and all departments use IT in their schemes of work. Work in IT is marked on a regular basis for year 9 and for post 16 students undertaking external examinations. A new system of assessing IT competence across the curriculum, especially in Key Stage 4, is currently being developed in order to ensure that all students receive their entitlement. Information about students' attainment and progress will be added to the student database. The resources for teaching and using IT are very good. In-service training of staff and sensible purchasing have ensured that all students are given instruction and adequate opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills.

## **Media Studies**

128 Standards of attainment are good. Students have an awareness of the world around them and often express carefully considered views as a result of these experiences. Such views are always practical and realistic. Lateral thinking is of a high order. Written accounts display a depth of thinking, and class discussions are usually characterised by a high level of debate. Students' attitudes are good, largely because they enjoy the work they are doing. There is excellent concentration in lessons, students are very mature in their responses and can discuss sensitive topics with ease. Many students display lively imaginations and good use of relevant vocabulary. Most are sufficiently confident to express their views in class discussion. Progress is always good and often very good, due largely to the carefully planned, developmental lessons which often follow the format of moving from individual to group work, through to clear outcomes at the end of each lesson. Progress is enhanced by very clear goals being set at the start of lessons. The quality of teaching is uniformly good and cohesive across the department. Brisk, focused introductions start lessons. Very precise time limits are stated and adhered to. The pace of development is always fast and there is a successful balance between whole-class, group and individual work.

129 This Key Stage 4 course has proved itself as an attractive and popular option, and a very successful one in terms of examination results. The course focuses upon topics which are directly related to the lives and experiences of the students and it contributes positively to their spiritual, moral and social education.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

130 Overall standards in modern languages meet those expected nationally. Students enter Year 9 with three years' experience of French so that they are confident in speaking and listening. Some vocabulary, for example that relating to food and drink, is re-introduced and extended. The highest attainers encounter the past tense. Students with SEN make good progress in response to very good teaching. Satisfactory progress is made in German and students are expected to reach Level 4 in listening and speaking, by the end of the key stage, though they have relatively little experience with reading and writing. Most high attaining students in both Years 10 and 11 are confident in spoken French and have experience of both vocabulary and structures appropriate to higher level GCSE. Lower attaining students for the most part reach a satisfactory level of attainment, but there are some students in Year 11 whose attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. These include a number given support because of their special needs. In German very good progress is made to reach Higher Level GCSE by the end of this key stage. GCSE results in 1996 were better than for 1995 and came close to the national average for French. German results were well above the national average, though from a smaller group.

131 In the sixth form standards are appropriate to A level work. For example, Year 13 students in German could sustain conversation on literary issues arising from a set text for twenty minutes. There are, however, no language courses other than A level. Some students attain good or very good standards at A level. In 1996 all candidates in each language gained at least grade E and most achieved C or B. A small number of students display very high attainment in both their languages.

132 Attitudes are generally positive and students enjoy their learning. Many are serious about their work and respond well to higher expectations. Relationships are good and students work well in pairs or groups. No examples of poor behaviour were seen. Some students in Year 11 and above have real commitment to their studies, taking part for example in the school's exchange with Solingen. Other students have had work experience in Flensburg. These young people have, however, no contact in school with a native speaker of their language. Sixth form reading is substantially concerned with major social issues of our time, and students have access to abundant up to date reading materials, including those available on the Internet.

133 Almost all teaching seen was at least satisfactory and most was good or very good. Lessons are securely based on a thorough and detailed set of departmental policies and schemes of work. Target language teaching is well established and effective in creating a good atmosphere for language learning. Lessons are well planned, making good use of everyday resources such as overhead projectors and cassette players. Objectives are clearly spelled out and carefully related to the National Curriculum. Classes are well managed with good use of praise and rewards and students are encouraged to work in pairs or groups, which they do successfully. The pace of lessons is well judged, and there is usually sufficient variety to make lessons lively. Setting and banding arrangements make a positive contribution to learning. SEN students in Years 9 and 10 are very well taught and supported. The department is soundly managed by a new head of department. Course materials in use are suitable and available in sufficient quantity for students to have their own books. In addition, a valuable contribution is made by the learning resources centre, and a recent innovation has been the introduction of computer terminals linked to the Internet, which gives a further real world dimension to language learning. Specialist teaching to A level is of a good standard, dealing with major contemporary concerns in sophisticated language.

### **Music**

134 Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations, though a significant

number of students exceed it: at Key Stage 4, standards are good, and with post 16 students, they are frequently very good. By the end of Key Stage 3, performance skills are well developed and most students are able to play melodic lines, add simple chordal accompaniments and rhythmic percussion backing on keyboards and pitched instruments. Correct fingering is generally used which enables fluent performances. Most students have a working knowledge of musical vocabulary and simple formal conventions such as the modes and ostinati are used most effectively in composition work. Higher attaining students extend themselves by successfully composing and improvising with the use of computers. By the end of Key Stage 4, students have a sound knowledge of form, including more advanced forms such as the sonata. Aural perception is well-developed and technical language is used authoritatively in discussion and analysis. Composition work is good, with a sensitive feeling for the appropriate instruments or voices. Practical standards of musicianship range from elementary to advanced. GCSE results are normally very good, exceeding national averages. A level music students have a good understanding of compositional techniques, writing confidently in homophonic and polyphonic styles. They have a very good knowledge of music history and use this extensively in analytical work. Score reading is of a high order and students have a good perception of orchestration, form, key recognition and stylistic awareness. A level results in recent years have been good.

135 Progress in lessons is good and especially so at Key Stage 4. The careful planning and organisation of lessons ensures that students are kept tightly on target and have to achieve the goals set for them. Work is revisited very thoroughly so that students remember in detail what they have already covered and can progress from that point. Well developed learning skills enable students to pick up new concepts quickly. Students at all levels of attainment are able to make progress because teachers are aware of individual strengths and weaknesses and set appropriate work. Systematic schemes of work for the examination students allow them to progress in an individual, organised manner.

136 Students' attitudes to music in the school, as revealed through the ethos in lessons and by the commitment to extra-curricular activities are always good and often very good. Large numbers opt for examination courses and take part in the range of extra-curricular work and the music suite always buzzes with activity in breaks and lunch hours. Music is clearly enjoyed by very many students. At Key Stage 3, students undertake practical work with great enthusiasm. Whatever their level of attainment, they frequently work effectively together when composing and improvising, and are always well motivated. They talk comfortably and clearly about what they are doing. At Key Stage 4, students display a mature attitude to their studies. They accept criticism when advice is given and they help each other when problems arise. Concentration spans are very good, notably when extended score-reading analysis is undertaken. Post 16 students respond positively to the challenges of the A level course and are alert, eager and determined to be successful. There is a strong ethos of courteous behaviour and of respect for each other and for the instruments in the music suite, and this creates a pleasant atmosphere in the building.

137 The quality of teaching always good across the department and can be very good. The staff are fine musicians and teachers and use proven methods of delivering both the practical and theoretical aspects of courses at all key stages. Lessons are well planned, varied and contain set goals which have to be achieved. Tasks at all levels are challenging and take into account the needs of the most and least able. The accommodation and resources are used to maximum advantage, including the highly effective use of computers and appropriate software. Examination students are given a sense of urgency to develop and complete their course work. Purposeful homework is set. There are excellent teacher-student relationships which engender a happy, constructive atmosphere for learning.

138 The music department has worked very hard on reviewing its curriculum, altering the format for lessons and deleting inappropriate materials. Its programmes of study are now very good. Documentation for all aspects of music across the school is excellent. The allocation of time at Key Stage 3 leads to some difficulty, but statutory requirements are met. Music in the school contributes in a major way to the social and cultural life of students through the range of extra-curricular work. The department is exceptionally well led and every aspect of the subject has been carefully considered and evaluated.

## **Physical Education**

139 Overall, standards of attainment are good and exceed those expected nationally. At Key Stage 3 levels of attainment are consistently good. In gymnastic activities both boys and girls are able consistently to produce good quality balances and perform them in well devised sequences. At Key Stage 4, over a wider range of activity, standards are always satisfactory and often good. The highest standards are in GCSE dance where girls produce strong, inventive and creative movements in sequence and this work is supported by very good standards in course work. In mixed groups standards are high in health related fitness activities. In GCSE standards are generally satisfactory with some students achieving good standards. Most recent examination results in PE are well above the national average and in dance they are outstanding. Standards in the sixth form are good. Post 16 students demonstrate very good levels of understanding over the many and varied aspects of their course. Written answers are accurate, detailed and well considered. Students in all years reach levels above the national expectation in their understanding of both the nature and purpose of their physical activities. This is a particular strong feature of the school's PE programme.

140 Most students make good progress in PE. This is the case especially at Key Stage 3 and again it is evidenced in gymnastic activities, with well developed sequences, strong movement and demanding balances. This degree of progress is consistent in both boys and girls. Students with SEN progress well in PE. At Key Stage 4 progress is a little more variable but always at least satisfactory. Where progress is good, boys and girls develop improved skills in gymnastics. In fitness activities most have developed a good sense of awareness of their own capabilities and those of others. In examination courses most students make good progress. In Year 13 this is particularly so with significant gains in both confidence and competence in producing extensive and well considered responses to written questions.

141 Student attitudes in PE are consistently positive across all key stages with little variation between boys and girls. There is an ability and willingness to work effectively and productively together with others in an enjoyable learning environment. In almost all lessons observed, teaching was either good or very good. Teachers are well informed, well prepared and committed to high standards.

142 This well managed department delivers a broad and a balanced programme of activities meeting National Curriculum requirements and has good arrangements for assessments. It makes a good contribution to the school's extensive programme of extra-curricular activity from which students of all abilities derive pleasure and many go on to represent the school at area and county level. The specialist accommodation is inadequate. Indoor teaching space is limited and toilet facilities are very poor.

## **Religious Education**

143 Overall standards in RE are good in both Year 9 and in the Key Stage 4 modular programmes. Standards are highest in Key Stage 4 and this is confirmed by the above average results in the two GCSE humanities examinations in 1996 where RE accounted for approximately one third of the final assessment.

144 The Year 9 programme brings together the experience of the subjects which students bring from their previous schools. Good progress is made at all levels of attainment. Students are encouraged not only to acquire knowledge but to discuss and interpret the material and develop a personal response. Higher attaining students advance opinions about complex topics, showing that they have a developing view of the concept of God, and are beginning to appreciate religious belief by looking at aspects of Christianity and Buddhism. Students begin to understand that religious belief can influence individual attitudes and guide response to a range of personal and moral issues.

145 In Key Stage 4 the new GCSE short course provides good progression from the Year 9 programme and offers the opportunity of GCSE accreditation. Students consider and respond to some moral dilemmas in society. These topics produce a good level of debate. Nearly all students make pertinent observations guided by skilful prompting by teachers who help to develop understanding and focus the discussion. This valuable programme complements some of the work in form tutor periods and contributes strongly to the

spiritual, moral, social and cultural ethos in the school. Even so there are significant limitations. In Year 10 religious education is part of a modular programme which also contains vocational education. This is currently delivered through a timetable which gives students contact with religious education for only half of Key Stage 4. Although the programme is a well planned and valuable educational experience, with the positive gain of possible GCSE certification, it is compressed into half of the key stage and has significantly less time than that recommended either by the examination board or the national guidelines for the subject. Class size also varies considerably in response to the needs of some of the vocational modules in the programme. Further review and evaluation is required to ensure that these arrangements do not prejudice opportunities for individual students. Strategies to provide some experience of the subject for all students in both years of Key Stage 4 are necessary.

In the post 16 curriculum, the statutory requirement for the subject is not being met. Provision is limited to a mere 8 periods and attendance is voluntary.

146 Students usually behave well. Classroom response is generally positive and most students become involved in tasks and activities. They work well together in pairs or groups during the vigorous question and answer sessions. Relationships are good and most students respond to the care and courtesy shown by teachers.

147 In most lessons teaching is good or very good. In Years 9 and 10 all of the teaching is done by a well qualified specialist team. Students are challenged to develop personal opinions and explain what they feel about a variety of situations. They are introduced to the beliefs and ethical teaching of Christianity and other faiths. Associated tasks and activities have a clear focus, lessons are well paced, make judicious use of video, and generally maintain a good balance between teacher presentation and student task. Homework is planned either to prepare for, or arise naturally out of work done in class. Written work is marked and comment given which often includes targets for improvement.

148 The department is well managed and adequately resourced. The overview of the subject at senior management team level is very effective with a clear appreciation of the place of religious education in the context of the whole curriculum. The small departmental suite in the humanities block provides reasonable accommodation and a valuable link with the rest of the humanities team. In contrast the cramped conditions in the temporary classroom sometimes limit the style of lesson and do not provide a good working environment for large classes.



## PART C: INSPECTION DATA

### Summary of inspection evidence

149 The inspection was carried out by a team of 13 inspectors. During the week of the inspection over 260 lessons were inspected as well as registration periods, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. Planned discussions were held with the governors, the Headteacher, other members of the senior management team and other holders of positions of responsibility. Both planned and informal discussions took place with heads of department and many other members of staff. All the available written work and reports for parents of a representative sample of students from each year group were scrutinised. Planned discussions were held with these students and informal talks with many more. Before the inspection, the Registered Inspector held a meeting with parents. The inspection team considered the responses of 306 parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

### 150 Data and indicators

#### PUPIL DATA

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Year 9 - Year 13	1,567	16	172	168

#### TEACHERS AND CLASSES

##### Qualified teachers (Year 9 - Year 13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	89.28
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.5

##### Education support staff (Year 9 - Year 13)

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week	354

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 75.5

Average teaching group size:

KS3	26.6
KS4	24.6

## FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	1995/96
	£
Total Income	3,191,746
Total Expenditure	3,141,172
Expenditure per pupil	2,066.56
Balance brought forward from previous year	63,081
Balance carried forward to next year	113,655

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

1,567

Number of questionnaires returned:

306

Percentage return rate:

19.5

### Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	20	65	9	5	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	37	57	3	3	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	18	52	18	5	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20	64	9	7	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	36	57	4	3	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	35	60	4	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	32	59	6	3	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	25	58	4	11	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	23	61	13	3	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	23	59	13	3	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	31	55	7	3	1

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