

INSPECTION REPORT

SECTION 1

CARRE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Sleaford

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120699

Headteacher: Mr Peter Wheeldon

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 4th – 15th March 2002

Inspection number: 243230

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

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The full inspections of Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School were carried out at the same time so that a full inspection of their joint sixth form with St George's College of Technology could also take place. This report is published in two sections: the first for Carre's Main School and the second for the joint sixth form.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Selective grammar

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Male

School address: Northgate
Sleaford
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J D P Duckett

Date of previous inspection: October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2918	ML Glynne-Jones	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20192	T McDermott	Sixth form co-ordinator		
30911	J Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
25743	P Butler	Team inspector	Science	
22695	R Cardinal	Team inspector	History	
27954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	Physical education	
12475	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music	
6620	B Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30978	E White	Team inspector	Geography	

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SECTION 1

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a selective school for boys in Sleaford, a rapidly expanding town in Lincolnshire. With 664 on roll, 142 in the sixth form, the school is smaller than most secondary schools. The roll has grown by about a sixth since the last inspection, while the number staying on into the sixth form is much the same. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds in the town and surrounding villages, overall from broadly average circumstances. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average for selective schools. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority families; a very small number speaks English as an additional language, all of whom are fluent English speakers. The proportion of pupils with special needs is below average; with five pupils at the highest level; the special needs relate to differing physical impairment. Pupils' attainment on entry is well above average overall, although the range of attainment on entry is wider than in many selective schools.

The school participates in a joint sixth form arrangement with two local schools, Kesteven and Sleaford High School, a selective school for girls and St George's College of Technology, a mixed non-selective school. The report on the joint sixth form is Section 2 of this document.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Carre's is a good school which at GCSE maintains the high standards expected by pupils' attainment on entry. Teaching is good and pupils aged 11-16 benefit from the school's good leadership and management and from sound governance overall. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- High standards on entry are maintained at GCSE
- Teaching is good
- Pupils have very good attitudes to the school
- Outstanding ethos of care
- Very good provision for pupils with special physical needs.

What could be improved

- Pupils' achievement is not as good as it could be by Year 11
- Lack of rigorous management systems to ensure that agreed procedures are put into practice equally well in all areas of the school's work
- Lack of sufficiently clear information for parents in pupils' reports
- Governors' understanding of the school's strength and weaknesses not systematically built up through visits and observations of the school at work.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996. Improvement since then is good overall. At GCSE high standards have been maintained. Results in art and design, history, modern languages and music, reported as weak in 1996, are now significantly above average at GCSE. Teaching has improved significantly. Good attention is now given to spiritual development in science art and design and music. Arrangements for child protection are now satisfactory. Systematic monitoring is being established but is not sufficiently improved.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	D

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

- The A* comparison means that results were in the highest 5 per cent nationally.
- The similar schools comparison refers to schools whose Year 9 test points were in the same band as Carre's results – the highest band; when compared for Year 11, Carre's GCSE results are below average.
- High standards are being maintained at GCSE and in Year 9 and keeping pace with the trend nationally.
- Year 9 test results were in the highest 5 per cent nationally in 1999-2001.
- The school does not have full information about these Year 9 pupils' results in Year 6 to make a comparison of the gain from Year 6 to Year 9; other information indicates that the gain is good.
- GCSE targets for 2001 were met for 5 or more A*-C grades; the targets for five or more A*-G grades and average points scores were not met; each target is suitably challenging for 2002.
- Strengths in the standards of work seen are in English, mathematics, history, and religious education.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, while good over Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement is good in mathematics, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education; it is good in years 7 to 9 in science and in Years 10 and 11 in music; it is very good in art and design in Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory overall in modern languages in Years 10 and 11.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good overall, but on occasion some rather surly behaviour in lessons from a small minority of pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons and around the school; exemplary in assemblies and good-humoured in the cramped canteen.
Personal development and relationships	Good: pupils contribute to and benefit from the strong sense of community.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

- Teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics and science.
- The quality of both is consistently good in all other subjects, while very good in design and technology.
- This quality of teaching ensures that above average standards are at least are sustained.
- Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory.
- Overall, pupils' learning needs are met well by the teaching, with strengths in design and technology and for pupils with special needs.
- A strength in learning is the effort pupils put into their work in design and technology, geography, history, music and religious education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good quality and range; insufficient time to cover more than the minimum requirements of the syllabus for religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good: pupils are fully included in all aspects of the life and work of the school; planning is thorough and imaginative.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, and good for moral, social and cultural development; attention to spiritual development is not equally good, although provision is satisfactory. Pupils are expected and helped to act in a mature and socially responsible manner.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall with weaknesses in the lack of use of information from assessments to plan appropriately.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good: parents think highly of the school and readily give their support; their children's annual reports are not always clear about subject strengths and areas for improvement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: strong lead from the headteacher on school values; mostly good management in subjects and good staff commitment to improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory; thorough attention to matters of finance and accommodation; lack of comprehensive arrangements for governors' monitoring of provision at first hand. However, there is a lack of joint arrangements for the governing bodies of the three schools participating in the joint sixth form to carry out their responsibilities for the quality of education in Years 12 and 13.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory: effective monitoring and development of teaching quality although, generally, a lack of systems to ensure consistent standards of provision across the school.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: good staffing and learning resources, unsatisfactory accommodation restricting the curriculum; overall, satisfactory attention to achieving best value except in comparing pupils' performance with performance nationally.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Children make good progress • Teaching is good • Behaviour is good • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem • Children are expected to work hard • The school is well led and managed • Children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inconsistencies in homework arrangements • Information about their child's progress • The school working more closely with parents • The range of activities outside lessons.

Parents hold the school in high regard. The proportion completing a questionnaire, 46 per cent, is very high. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They also agree that there could be clearer information in annual reports about children's progress. However, they find that homework arrangements are always at least satisfactory, and often good, and that the range of activities is good and much appreciated by pupils. Inspectors judge the links with parents to be good, but agree that parents are not kept sufficiently well-informed about school developments and issues.

SECTION 1

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements and results

Years 7 to 9

1. The school was not able to gather a complete record of pupils' National Curriculum assessments for those joining the school in September 1998. For the two-fifths of them for whom Year 6 results were available for English, the results were well above average. The improvement in these pupils' English results from Year 6 in 1998 to Year 9 in 2001 was better than expected. For the whole Year 9 group, the 2001 results were well above average. This standard has been sustained over recent years, the school's Year 9 results keeping pace with the rising national trend.

2. Looking at the 2001 Year 9 mathematics results in the same way, which were well above average, the two-fifths of pupils for whom Year 6 assessments are available made a satisfactory gain from Year 6 to Year 9. In science, Year 9 results were also well above average, and the gain a little better than expected. Overall, taking the three subjects together, a secure judgement can be made that the achievement of this year group was at least satisfactory over Years 7 to 9. The school's testing of the whole year group in Year 7 (using a standardised test of ability) showed the ability of this year group to be above average. This makes comparison with results in grammar schools nationally misleading and shows that achievement is good.

3. The data on assessment of the current Year 9 pupils when they were in Year 6 is available for two thirds of the year group. For these pupils, standards on entry were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. These standards are reflected in the work seen in Year 9. The work seen of the whole year group shows that over Years 7 to 9, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in English and good in mathematics and science.

4. In other subjects ('non-core'), standards are above average, and well above in history and religious education. From their standards when they join the school in Year 7, pupils' achievement is good in the majority of these 'non-core' subjects. Achievement is satisfactory in history, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern languages and very good in art and design. In history, pupils maintain well above average standards over Years 7 to 9, a satisfactory situation. In ICT, however, their achievement is restricted by only having a fortnightly lesson in Years 7 and 8, and none in Year 9. In modern languages, it is the low time allocations for the second language which restrict the overall achievement in languages. The very good achievement in art and design is stimulated effectively by the teachers' very good expertise, building above average standards from a low base of skills.

5. This is a good picture over Years 7 to 9 - with scope for improvement. The reasons for good achievement are very clear in the day-to-day life of the school. Good teaching from committed staff, in an atmosphere in which a family ethos is sustained, both interests and motivates pupils, who work industriously. The scope for improvement is in planning work in lessons which is equally demanding for all pupils across the full range of attainment in the group; and in the use of data from assessments to check that pupils are progressing over time as well as they can. The data referred to in the previous paragraphs had not been interrogated rigorously by the school to chart exactly how well pupils were doing from entry. In

subject departments, data is mostly used satisfactorily for this purpose, used well in mathematics and modern languages, but its use is unsatisfactory in religious education.

Years 10 and 11

6. Achievement is satisfactory over Years 10 and 11. This judgement balances the evidence from the work seen in the inspection with the school's most recent GCSE results. While high standards are being maintained in the results at GCSE, and the average points are rising faster than nationally, nonetheless, national indicators show that pupils could be doing better in relation to their prior attainment. The gain at GCSE is below the average for similar schools (as defined in the summary). The school closely considers county indicators of the standards reached in similar schools but does not do so for national indicators. Consequently, the picture of pupils' achievement has been incomplete.

7. In the work seen, achievement is good in mathematics, design and technology, geography, music and physical education. In these subjects, pupils strengthen their skills and knowledge well over the two years so that the standards are sustained from Year 9. In other subjects, pupils achieve as expected, except in modern languages where overall achievement is unsatisfactory. The weakness lies in the achievement of higher attainers, and in Spanish and German, in the achievement of lower attainers.

8. In the work seen by Year 11, standards are always at least above average and maintained from Year 9, except in ICT where they improve. They improve in ICT because the time allocation is sufficient at this stage. The small number of subjects where standards are well above average in the current Year 11, reflects the school's overall results at GCSE in 2001. These are English, mathematics, history and ICT. In 2001, Spanish was the only subject where results at the higher grades were not significantly above (the national) average. The differences between subject results in 2001 usually reflect the national difference. The exceptions are English literature, geography and history where the difference is more positive than the national difference; and business studies and Spanish where it is less positive.

9. The scope for improvement identified for Years 7 to 9 (above paragraph) applies to Years 10 and 11 more strongly. This relates to the level of challenge in the work planned and using data from assessments to check on progress. Necessary, additional growth points are strengthening further the good pace and rigour of most lessons and further strengthening pupils' opportunities to take responsibility for their own independent working and research. The newly established individual pupil review meetings provide an excellent opportunity for developing pupils' responsibility for their own progress as well as for checking on the school's effectiveness in ensuring that progress is sufficient. These reviews provide a good basis from which to make improvements to pupils' annual reports, with the same objective, that staff, pupils and their parents are clear about where the progress being made is not enough.

Literacy

10. Standards in literacy are well above average in subjects across the curriculum in Years 7 to 11. In nearly all lessons, pupils listen very well to their teachers and to each other and in science and design and technology, they follow instructions very well. They express themselves clearly in the spoken and written word and use technical language with confidence and accuracy. In history, their essays are well-structured, sustaining a clear argument that sets the a local situation within a national context. In geography, pupils make their own notes from source materials and build them up into comprehensive reports.

Individual needs

11. Pupils with special needs make progress in all subjects at the same rate as other pupils and are equally successful in public examinations. Their needs are not to do with learning difficulties. Those gifted and talented pupils in the 'top groups' are challenged very

well by the work and achieve very high GCSE grades. In the majority of subjects they make good progress, although in modern languages their progress is unsatisfactory. All the pupils for whom English is an additional language are fluent in English. Their progress in literacy skills reflects the progress of all pupils as does their progress in all subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils show very good attitudes towards learning. In lessons, they are interested in the tasks, listen and concentrate well. For example, in a Year 7 history lesson, pupils considered the problems facing King William following the Battle of Hastings in 1066. They discussed the various options available, listened intently to each other's views and referred to points raised when offering their own opinions. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, staff paying consistent attention to ensuring high standards. Pupils are friendly towards one another. They are very polite to visitors and keen to create a good impression of their school. Relationships are good. Pupils usually get on well with each other. This is true for all groups, including pupils from ethnic minorities and pupils with special needs.

13. However, on occasion, a minority of pupils show rather surly, arrogant behaviour which has an adverse effect on the progress of all pupils in the class. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, a significant minority of boys displayed an uncooperative attitude, refusing to answer questions or being deliberately brief in their response. The momentum of the lesson was difficult to maintain and as a consequence all pupils in the class were unable to make the progress expected.

14. Opportunities for pupils to organise and make decisions about their own learning are good. For example in music they are willing to help each other and take a leadership role in a group rehearsal, showing respect for the capabilities of others. Representatives from each form are beginning to play an effective part in the recently established school council, for example, through reviewing the variety of snacks available in the school canteen. The role needs to be further developed.

15. There were no permanent exclusions during the last academic year, which is better than the national picture. However, the number of fixed term exclusions has risen since the last inspection. The figure includes repeated exclusion of a small number of pupils. Exclusions procedures are properly carried in accordance with the firm stance taken in the school's policy on acceptable behaviour.

16. Attendance is very good. The rate of unauthorised absence is below average and the overall rate is well above the national figure. The steady improvement since the last inspection was not continued in 2000-2001, school records showing an increase in the number of families taking holidays during term time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching and learning are good in each year group. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons, a significant improvement from the last inspection when the figure was only 81 per cent. Good or very good teaching was seen in 79 per cent of lessons, compared to over 50 per cent at the last inspection, a similarly significant improvement. In 26 per cent of lessons, the teaching was very good. The quality is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, always at least satisfactory, mostly good, with about a third that is very good. This quality generates a similar quality in pupils' learning.

18. In all subjects, teaching and learning are good overall, with the exception of design and technology where they are very good. The good quality is true at each stage in all

subjects except mathematics where in Years 7 to 9 the quality is satisfactory. In all subjects, some very good teaching and learning was seen. The consistency in quality is a good feature of the school's provision and a notable improvement from the last inspection.

19. The quality of teaching of pupils with special needs is good. Teachers have pupils' individual education plans and are fully informed about the nature of their special needs. Where necessary, pupils have equipment appropriately adapted. The learning support assistants work closely with teachers and provide very effective help. Gifted and talented pupils receive work appropriate to their needs and examination results show they attain suitably high examination grades.

20. Where teaching was at its most effective, the following features were observed in lessons:

- Good pace from the outset by having a short timed activity to begin with.
- A good level of challenge, the teacher never providing answers for pupils but getting them to think points through; all made good progress.
- Clear instructions and time lines so that no time was wasted in organising activities.
- Many pupils offered responses because no answers were rejected; if they were off the point this was explored.
- Skilful questioning helped pupils to clarify their ideas, challenging all levels of ability.
- Teachers' expertise stimulated pupils' interest and attention from the introduction so that they set a good pace for their own learning.
- The display of pupils' previous work and the resources for the lesson used effectively to set pupils thinking.
- Self-evaluation and group-evaluation encouraged by the teacher with challenging observations to make pupils think deeply.

21. Where teaching was satisfactory, rather than good, some of the lesson time was wasted while pupils waited for the teacher's help; the planning had not taken account of this. The teacher did not handle some disruptive behaviour effectively - so it continued. The lesson time was used for different activities, but each went on for far too long so that concentration and interest waned. Points made in discussion were not consolidated in a follow-up activity. The teacher did not plan for pupils' participation in the lesson so that the pupils remained rather passive throughout. These shortcomings are ones which need eradicating in order that pupils gain the maximum benefit from their lessons. While basic skills are overall taught well, there are too many subjects in which they are given only satisfactory attention.

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

22. The school's curriculum is satisfactory. An increase in the length of lessons means that a weakness identified at the last inspection, of too little time for physical education, has been overcome. The mathematics curriculum is good in all years and benefits from being organised in ability groups so that all pupils are taught at the appropriate level. Design and technology is taught in groups that are small enough for all pupils to receive appropriate attention from teachers. Although the curriculum in this subject is good, pupils do not have an opportunity to study food technology or textiles. A personal and social education programme is now followed in all years, an improvement since the last inspection, when some pupils were not receiving lessons. While the school fulfils National Curriculum requirements for ICT, it is aware of the need to strengthen the contribution from some subjects, particularly English. Helpful links are being established with local primary schools through work with pupils in Years 6 and 7 to improve writing skills.

23. In Years 7 to 9, the range of opportunities is good. Pupils in Year 7 study classical

civilisations. All pupils study French in Year 7 to which they add Spanish or German in Year 8. Although, overall, the time allowance for modern languages is generous, the allocations for the two languages differ in Year 8 and 9. In the work seen, attainment was above average in French but only average in Spanish and German. Pupils take combined science in Years 7 and 8, and in Year 9 they study the three disciplines separately. This has a positive effect on the standard of their subject knowledge. All pupils take a time-tabled ICT course in Years 7 and 8. The positive effect of this is however reduced as only one lesson a fortnight is provided, with none in Year 9. There has been improvement in the time allocated for design and technology in Year 7, reported as too low at the last inspection.

24. The range of studies in Years 10 to 11 is good overall, although no vocational course opportunities are provided. Most pupils take ten GCSE subjects, a core group of subjects, including the three separate sciences to GCSE double award, and two further options which may include business studies. In English, all pupils take both language and literature at GCSE, a good feature. An improvement in the current academic year is provision of a specialist GCSE course in ICT. The time allocated for religious education, while sufficient to cover the minimum requirements of the syllabus, results in a lack of breadth in the curriculum.

25. In all years pupils have good opportunities to develop their numeracy skills through effective subject planning. Their opportunities for developing literacy skills are soundly provided for.

Personal, social and health education, careers education

26. The satisfactory guidance programme includes sex education, drugs awareness, and in Year 7, citizenship. A helpful set of guidelines and suggested activities is now available for staff and there is good planning to link the programme with registration periods. Pupils experience an interesting range of activities and visiting speakers which increases their understanding of current issues facing society. However, the programme is reliant on the confidence and ability of staff to deliver the sessions, and these sessions vary in quality. The school has rightly identified this as an area for improvement. Good advice is available for pupils about the options available to them in higher education and their prospective careers. Year 11 pupils participate in a two-week work experience placement where they begin to appreciate the demands of the workplace. Their placements are supported well by the good links established with local business and industry.

Individual needs

27. Overall, the school gives good attention to ensuring that pupils have equal access to what it provides. While the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very small indeed and all are fluent in English, careful thought is given by the deputy head to checking their progress. Very good provision is made for pupils with special needs to which the contribution of learning support assistants is strong. Subject teachers are kept very well-informed about individuals' needs. Pupils are fully included in the life of the school and none are excluded from any part of the curriculum. Where it is necessary, equipment and materials are adapted to suit their needs to ensure that they can participate fully. There is no register of gifted and talented pupils but high ability is recognised in subjects. Sound provision, sometimes good, is made for these pupils, but they do not always have work which is sufficiently challenging. Pupils who are talented in physical education benefit from extra-curricular activities at a suitably high level.

Extra-curricular activities

28. A good range of activities is provided outside lessons which is much appreciated by pupils in all year groups and by those parents who gave a view on the parents' questionnaire. Provision for sports and history is a strength and there are good study 'clubs' in many

subjects. There is a lack of opportunity for activities in art and design. Good music links with partner secondary schools include joint productions.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

29. The provision for these aspects of pupils' personal development is good overall. There is one whole-school assembly each week supported by year-group assemblies or form-period sessions on other days. However, these occasions do not always comply with requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Pupils are offered opportunities to reflect on themes which emphasise spiritual and moral messages, for example in an assembly for Years 7, 8 and 9 which focused on the issue of teamwork.

30. Contributions from subject departments to spiritual development vary in quality. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory. In history, a significant proportion of religious and spiritual elements are included in the curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9, including, for example, the medieval church and religion in the sixteenth century. In music, pupils listen to European music for the liturgy and to gospel music in Years 7, 8 and 9. In English, texts are identified that encourage Year 10 and 11 pupils to explore issues such as isolation in 'Talking Heads' and redemption in 'Brighton Rock'. Reference is made in other subjects to 'the spiritual' in schemes of work but this is not always reflected in teaching programmes.

31. Arrangements for promoting the moral development of pupils are good. In personal and social education, pupils sensibly and maturely discuss issues such as drugs and aggressive behaviour. Pupils are expected to behave well, and generally do, acting responsibly and showing respect for their peers and for adults. In science, pupils are expected to work collaboratively and support each other in practical sessions. In ICT, high expectations for moral and sensible use of the Internet are clearly conveyed to pupils and are backed up by a home-school agreement. Music offers opportunities to discuss issues involved in slavery and its influence on Black American music.

32. The school promotes pupils' social development well. There are opportunities in lessons to work in groups which have a positive effect on relationships and personal development. There is a focus on teamwork in the range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in the extensive sports provision. Regular meetings of the school council consider issues raised by pupils, resulting recently in changes to the canteen menu. Links within the local community provide opportunities to raise funds for charities and for activities such as filling boxes with articles for distribution to children in deprived countries. Recently, there was major support for activities which raised a large amount of money for a cancer charity.

33. Opportunities for developing cultural awareness are good. Subject departments organise trips and visits, both home and abroad, which widen pupils' cultural experience. In religious education, pupils visit places of worship of different world religions. A programme of visits abroad by the modern languages department contributes to pupils' understanding of different cultures. In music, pupils study a range of works from western cultures as well as Chinese and Indian music. Most subject areas attempt to raise pupils' awareness of life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The ethos of care and encouragement of pupils is a strong feature of the school. It is demonstrated in the supportive, mutually respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Younger pupils speak highly of the care office staff show them when they are feeling ill. Individually, pastoral staff carry out their responsibilities with exceptional thoroughness. However, a systematic approach to ensuring consistent quality and to monitoring the effectiveness of provision is not in place. As a consequence, while all aspects of provision

are at least satisfactory, good provision is not always achieved.

35. Overall, arrangements for pupils' safety and well-being are good. Health and safety policy is good and carried out effectively. Regular safety checks are undertaken and any issues identified are dealt with suitably within financial constraints. The school is appropriately mindful of the current state of repair of the building and of the risks resulting from increased numbers of pupils needing to move through restricted corridor spaces. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for child protection, an improvement from the last inspection, and for providing up-to-date guidance for staff.

36. The pastoral team monitors pupils' progress informally, both pupils' academic progress and their development as individuals. The arrangements are satisfactory overall. Within subjects, monitoring of pupils' progress is of variable quality. For example, in English, this is done well so that pupils are clear about how well they are attaining. In science, pupils are helpfully involved in evaluating their own work and setting their own targets for improvement. However, in history, the monitoring of pupils' progress is at an early stage of development. In ICT, the new subject leader is dealing with the previously overestimated assessments at Year 9.

37. Pupils receive good personal guidance and support. Systems are being implemented whereby all pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive an individual interview with their tutor for reviewing progress and setting personal targets. Individual support is given to pupils returning from exclusion or whose attendance is irregular to ensure they do not fall behind in their studies. However, there is no agreed approach for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, nor for the central collection of data on their assessments and results. As a consequence, full use cannot be made of the information available; in particular, to set individual targets for raising attainment.

38. Good procedures are established for ensuring appropriate standards of behaviour and reducing the incidence of bullying. Younger pupils enjoy the system of merits and rewards; the reward of a place at the front of the dinner queue is highly valued. However the school has rightly identified the need for a suitable system of reward for older pupils, appropriate to their specific age and interests. Staff consistently follow the school guidance on discipline which makes a strong contribution to the good behaviour of pupils.

39. Regular attendance at school is expected and achieved. Monitoring of absence is the responsibility of heads of year and administration staff. However, procedures for this are not sufficiently rigorous, parents only being contacted by letter for an explanation after a number of days unexplained absence.

40. Assessment procedures for pupils with special needs are very good. Annual reviews are carried out properly, at the correct time; parents and carers are invited and all attend. There is a good system for collecting information from teachers before the review. All the requirements on pupils' statements are fully met. The co-ordinator draws up individual education plans in accordance with the recently revised requirements and organises termly reviews. Individual targets on the individual education plans are of good quality and ensure that subject teachers can make good provision for individual needs. All teachers are fully aware of the details on the individual education plans. Matters relating to special needs are included in the meetings of pastoral staff.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Links with parents are good. Parents' response to the inspection questionnaire, as well as their comments at the pre-inspection meeting, show that they are very supportive of

the school and all that it stands for. Over 55 parents wrote additional comments for the inspection team. They are appreciative of the good teaching, the approachability of the staff and the way the high standards the school achieves. However, almost 20 per cent of parents perceive problems over communication. They would like the school to improve contact with home and keep them better informed about their children's progress. The governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus are provided as required. Both are thorough documents. The information available to parents when their child joins Year 7 is of very good quality.

42. The parents of pupils with special needs speak highly of the care that the school provides. They are all fully aware of the details on their child's individual education plan and are fully consulted at all stages. They are invited to the annual reviews and all attend.

43. Parental support is readily given to the school, with good attendance at open evenings. Parents have recently taken responsibility for co-ordinating the Duke of Edinburgh Award provision. The Parents Association has its own page on the school web-site and are responsible for the improvements to the music room. Both tutors and parents regularly sign pupils' homework diaries. They provide a useful means of communication that enables parents to support their child's work, and are highly valued as such.

44. A concern of parents and students is the inconsistency of the information available about progress, which the inspection team finds justified. This was a concern reported at the last inspection. Information provided for parents about their children's progress is unsatisfactory. Although a report is sent each term showing a grade for effort, annual reports are too narrowly focused on effort and behaviour. For example, not all subject reports clearly tell parents where their children's subject strengths and weaknesses lie or whether their progress is sufficient. There are differences in practice between departments. Some reports, for example for English and science, show what progress has been made and give targets for improvement that help parents understand exactly how they can get involved and support their child's work.

45. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire, and the comments at the pre-inspection meeting, show that they are very supportive of the school. They are appreciative of the level of care and support given by staff and the friendliness of the school. Parents feel the school brings out the best in each child.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The headteacher's lead in sustaining the family ethos of the school is strong and supported well by the deputy head. Valuing of and respect for individuals are central to the running of the school and a very clear thread in its day-to-day life. With the headteacher's appointment in 1998, and the deputy's in 1999, the main focus for development has been the improvement of teaching to reflect these values as they relate to pupils' achievement. The pace of change has not been startling but the change in quality is significant. It has been achieved through lesson observations and professional development sessions which have been effective, although not managed in a systematic way or with a formal record of evaluations. Nonetheless, there is some regular monitoring of subject managers by senior staff, for example, of the head of music, who in turn monitors the team of instrumental teachers.

47. A similar lack of systems affects all areas of the school's work. At best, the shared commitment of staff helps to ensure generally positive outcomes. At worst, different departments and different teachers do things in different ways so that pupils do not receive an equally good deal in all that is provided for them. This weakness is recognised by the school. It affects the teaching of basic skills, for example. However, in almost all subjects,

leadership and management are good, with very good quality in ICT and design and technology. The potential for developing consistent approaches across all areas of the school's work is good.

48. The management of special needs provision is very good. The co-ordinator keeps full and accurate records. There is an effective system for transferring information between the co-ordinator and other staff. Individual education plans are effective in ensuring that teachers meet pupils' individual needs. All statutory requirements are met.

49. There is sound governance overall. Persistent and thorough attention is given to issues of accommodation and budget. Scrupulous care is taken over matters of pupil discipline and exclusion. Financial resources are soundly managed and specific grant used for its intended purpose. Care is taken to apply best value considerations. For example, this has attended to refuse collection, the arrangements changing twice and now running at a third of the original cost. Governors have asked the bursar to check for the best deals, even with tried and tested organisations. The kitchen staff are directly employed by the school and included in performance management arrangements. The school makes every effort to compare its costs and achievements against those in schools in the local education authority and finds the financial benchmarking useful. However, not enough attention is given to comparing pupils' results with national results to look beyond the high standards achieved at Carre's to check whether they are high enough.

50. The governors give generously of their time to the school, particularly through the work of committees. The chair of governors is frequently in school. However, the governing body has no arrangements for all governors to visit the school to see the day-to-day work of staff and pupils. This prevents them from appreciating at first hand where there are strengths and weaknesses in provision.

51. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and staff deployment to meet the needs of the curriculum. The support provided for newly qualified teachers is good and valued by participants, as are the induction arrangements for all new members of staff. Staff training activities are planned well and have a focus that relates to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. In buildings not intended for the number of pupils now on roll, and which have grown rather like topsy, there are deleterious effects on pupils' learning activities and achievements. Two of the modern languages rooms have unsuitable acoustics for language teaching and storage is inadequate. The rooms are at some distance from each other and so impede collaborative working, an essential for departmental improvement. There is insufficient accommodation for ICT and consequently not enough opportunity for pupils to use ICT across all their curriculum subjects as required. Drama teaching and learning are restricted by the lack of a suitable space; the music curriculum has to be suspended for some pupils during the examination period because of sound disturbance. The library is totally inadequate in size. Some corridors are too narrow to allow easy movement at lesson change-over.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. In order to raise pupils' achievement, the headteacher and the governing body should give priority to the following key issues for action.

- (1) Raise pupils' achievement, particularly the achievement of the most able through:
 - Increasing the amount of very good teaching across the school
 - Extending opportunities for staff to observe good practice within the school and outside

- Using the information from assessments to ensure well-targeted lesson planning.
(Paragraphs: 6, 7, 13, 21, 49, 53, 56, 69, 72, 75, 96, 97, 102, 103, 110, 116, 131)
- (2) Implement systems to achieve a consistent quality of provision in all aspects of the school's work through:
- Establishing a monitoring programme for checking the strengths and weaknesses in the way procedures are put into practice
 - Providing training for subject leaders on strategies for monitoring
 - Reporting to all staff and the governing body on the findings of monitoring.
(Paragraphs: 21, 39, 46, 47, 49, 80, 93, 100, 107, 109, 135)
- (3) Provide annual reports to parents which make clear their child's strengths and areas for improvement through:
- Establishing a common approach for all subjects
 - Ensuring that clear school guidance is available for departments
 - Implementing procedures for checking quality.
(Paragraph: 44)
- (4) Implement arrangements for all governors to gain first hand knowledge of the school at work in lessons and other activities through:
- Including a schedule for governors' visits in the school calendar
 - Agreeing the focus for visits and how they will be reported
 - Providing guidance for governors on their role and the purpose of visits.
(Paragraph: 50)

SECTION 1

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	97
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	0	25	52	18	2	0	0
Percentage	0	26	54	19	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	522
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	7

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	21

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	112	0	112

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	111	112	112
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	111	112	112
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (100)	100 (99)	100 (98)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	66 (84)	96 (99)	96 (59)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	112	112	112
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	112	112	112
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (99)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	79 (87)	94 (94)	94 (81)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	89	0	89

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	87	88	89
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	87	88	89
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	98 (96)	99 (99)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	59.3 (59.6)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	639
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	37.09
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	273

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1 998 600
Total expenditure	1 939 707
Expenditure per pupil	2 917
Balance brought forward from previous year	20 330
Balance carried forward to next year	79 223

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.43
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.75

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.48
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	664
Number of questionnaires returned	305

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	41	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	37	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	52	3	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	49	14	2	1
The teaching is good.	45	48	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	42	16	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	32	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	22	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	43	15	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	54	36	3	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	41	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	33	13	2	12

SECTION 1

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- High standards at GCSE, particularly in literature
- Good teaching
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge
- Effective monitoring of individual pupils' progress, with action taken to counter under-achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 7 to 9
- Opportunities for practical drama limited by lack of accommodation
- Not enough use of ICT in the teaching and learning of English
- Careless presentation of some work from Year 7 to Year 11
- Display not consistently used to encourage high standards.

53. By Year 11, standards of work are well above average. No formal oral work was observed, but there is clear evidence that students in Years 10 and 11 can devise lively and entertaining presentations such as a radio show, 'The Literature Hour'. When given a detailed brief for the trial of a Luddite, their notes show well above average understanding of persuasive language and the use of evidence. Most pupils are articulate and can develop their ideas in extended sentences, although some are reluctant to contribute to class discussions. Their written responses to literature are often detailed and perceptive, using apt quotations and managing comparison and contrast very well. A minority of pupils in Year 11 write essays that are thin on references to the text; they do not fully develop their arguments, commenting on facts and meanings rather than the impact of the language. There are many enjoyable pieces of original writing, for example an excellent pastiche of a crime-thriller that had been considerably improved through re-drafting. For a minority of pupils, poor handwriting and careless presentation reduces the standard of their work. Overall, achievement over Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Pupils with special needs make sound progress and they all have full access to the curriculum in language and literature.

54. GCSE results in 2001 in both English and literature were well above average. Over time, this standard has been consistently achieved. Literature results have been more variable. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils gaining the highest two grades in literature has doubled from 1997 to 2001, so that now, more than half the pupils in the year group do so. At the end of Year 10 in 2001, six pupils took GCSE English and literature a year early, all gaining the highest grades in both subjects. This confirms that gifted and talented pupils are identified and taught well by the English department.

55. Standards are well above average by Year 9. In a Year 7 drama lesson, pupils showed above average understanding of non-verbal communication and were very well able to say what is effective in the work of other pupils. Although no formal spoken presentations were observed, there is written evidence of well above average performances in dramatised episodes from books being studied in Year 8. In Year 9, pupils give articulate explanations of

the behaviour of Henry V in Shakespeare's play, using suitable quotations from the text to support their points. When asked to produce a tourist guide, pupils in Year 7 showed a highly imaginative response to their reading of 'Alice in Wonderland'. The written commentary of a Year 8 pupil on 'The Tyger' showed mature appreciation of Blake's language and imagery. Most pupils in Year 9 are able to read at sight with clarity and good expression. Lively and imaginative writing abounds in the personal writing of many pupils in Years 7 to 9. Particularly memorable are a perfect pastiche of Dickens (Year 7) and a persuasive pamphlet, 'Come to Rotherham', (Year 9). Pupils with special needs are included well in all lesson activities; their records of achievement show they make good progress. Pupils with visual impairment are able to take lead parts in class performances, for example of 'Henry V', with the aid of an enlarged text and support from the teacher and learning support assistant.

56. On entry to the school pupils' standards are well above average overall. In the Year 9 tests in 2001 results were well above average. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained in Year 9 tests, although there was a smaller proportion of the highest levels in 2001 than in previous years.

57. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall in all year groups. In Years 10 and 11, pupils respond well to their teachers' comments and suggestions and improve their work through re-drafting. In nearly all lessons they are willing to contribute ideas, but a minority in Year 11 maintained a supercilious attitude towards a discussion of poetry, refusing to answer questions or being deliberately brief. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are quick to settle to tasks. There was great enthusiasm for the project of preparing a tourist pack for Wonderland in a Year 7 lesson. Pupils organise themselves and co-operate well, for example when Year 7 prepared tableaux in drama and when groups were reading a scene from 'Henry V' in a Year 9 lesson. Most pupils listen well to the teacher and to each other. They are ready to volunteer answers and to read aloud in class. Homework is completed on time and many do more than the minimum required.

58. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout Years 7 to 11, sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned, so that pupils build appropriately on their previous knowledge and skills. Teachers use skilful questioning techniques to draw out more detailed ideas and explanations. Good-humoured but purposeful management of classes creates a good working atmosphere in most lessons. Pupils have confidence in their teachers because of their very good subject knowledge. A good variety of activities usually maintains interest and involvement throughout the lesson. Teachers have good knowledge of individual needs; appropriate tasks and support are given to groups who find aspects of the work difficult. Good teamwork with learning support assistants enables pupils with special needs to participate fully in lessons. Marking is regular, detailed and helpful. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, but when the teaching and learning were less than good it was because teachers moved the lesson on without checking that tasks had been understood and completed by all. In a few lessons, the pupils' first answers were accepted and were not extended through follow-up questions. Although opportunities for using ICT in teaching and learning have been identified in the scheme of work, there is little evidence of it being used in projects such as the production of a theatre programme. The quality of display in two of the three English rooms does not reflect the high quality of work achieved by the pupils, although there is an attractive display of work on 'The Hobbit' in the library.

59. The English department is led and managed well. There is a well-structured programme of study that incorporates the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 and 8. It provides a good balance between literature and non-fiction texts and writing for many different purposes and audiences. The department's commitment to the success of all pupils is shown by their frequent discussions of individual progress and their effective interventions when pupils are under-achieving. Teachers are well-qualified and they

keep up to date with relevant training. The curriculum is enriched with visits and visitors, for example by the author Nigel Hinton and the poet Ian Macmillan. Learning is extended through activities such as 'The Student Voice' and out-of-hours classes. The department's priorities are appropriate, and include further raising standards in Years 7 to 9 and developing the use of ICT. Resources for learning are adequate but will need strengthening to acknowledge changes in the English curriculum. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because the department has very limited access to a suitable space for drama. The storage of books and coursework in the smallish classrooms further limits the space available for teaching and learning.

60. From a strong position at the last inspection, further improvement has been satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 9 have generally been maintained. Standards at GCSE have been sustained and those in literature have improved. Pupils' attitudes have remained good overall. The quality of teaching has been maintained in Years 7 to 9 and improved in Years 10 and 11. Development planning and schemes of work are all better than they were in 1996. Drama and ICT remain under-developed, but in both cases there are issues of accommodation and access that are only solvable at a school level.

Literacy

61. The contribution of curriculum subjects to the development of literacy skills is satisfactory overall. Although not all departments have their own policy statement, there is a whole-school policy that makes specific and helpful suggestions. Good emphasis on specialist vocabulary was seen in design and technology, ICT and music. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to discuss their work in most subjects; in geography, the range of situations in which speaking and listening are practised includes debates, group discussion and reporting back. In history during Years 7 to 9, pupils are encouraged to study and use the speech of other times, such as a speech to the people of Sleaford on the merits of enclosure. Research skills and note-taking are actively encouraged in design and technology, history and geography. Extended writing is central to studies in history and geography. Pupils are expected to be accurate in their use of grammar in modern foreign languages and many subjects correct and comment on spelling and expression. In science, there is a strong focus on literacy skills; creative writing is encouraged as well as reporting on practical work.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Very high results in Year 9 tests and at GCSE
- Good teaching contributing to good learning
- Pupils' good attitudes and diligent work
- Effective leadership, with all staff committed to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Management strategies not always effective for dealing with pupils' behavioural difficulties
- Class teaching and independent learning not balanced well in some lessons.

62. The standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' folders is well above average at the end of Year 11 and reflects the results in GCSE examinations. GCSE results in 2001 are very high when compared to the national average. In 2001, there was an increase in the number of A* grades as a consequence of an appropriate decision not to enter higher attainers for GCSE at the end of Year 10. In other respects, the standard has been sustained since the last inspection. The results indicate good achievement over Years 10 and 11.

Evidence from earlier work shows that pupils are making good progress over time across all aspects of the subject. This is assisted by good arrangements for teaching in ability groups in Years 9 to 11. A particular strength is the clear and logical manner in which pupils present their solutions to problems. This assists their understanding and provides a good basis for revision purposes.

63. The standards of work seen are well above average at the end of Year 9. The very high standards in the Year 9 test results in 2001 have been sustained since the last inspection. These results are similar to those in science and above those in English. They represent good achievement when compared to pupils' results in their Year 6 tests.

64. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are interested in their work and want to do well. They respond keenly to questioning and this helps them to clarify their ideas and learn more effectively. They are attentive while teachers are explaining a point from the board, and work diligently when given individual assignments. This response assists their progress and ensures that they use their time well. By contrast, in one lesson, a small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties made little effort themselves and had a negative effect on the learning of others. Relationships with teachers are good and contribute to the pleasant working ethos in almost all lessons.

65. Teaching and learning are good overall; one unsatisfactory lesson was observed in Years 7 to 9. On occasion, in Years 7 to 9, the teacher's expertise and skills in class management were not sufficient to handle the disruptive actions of some pupils adequately. The teaching by permanent staff is good; they understand the subject well and know how to present work in a manner suited to the ability of their pupils. By asking appropriate questions and giving an appropriate selection of examples, teachers help pupils to understand new topics and learn new methods well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were shown a variety of linear and quadratic sequences. Through careful questioning they learnt to identify consecutive terms and find an expression for the general term. Good learning took place and by the end of the lesson all pupils could find the general term; higher attainers were challenged by more difficult problems. In the majority of lessons, a good balance of class teaching and pupils' independent work assists learning and lessons proceed at a lively pace. In a small number of lessons, when this balance is not achieved, pupils lose concentration and their learning is reduced. All teachers understand the requirements of pupils with physical impairment and make good arrangements to ensure that they are fully included in lesson activities. For example, pupils with visual impairment are supported by materials in large print and by classroom assistants who take notes for them. This enables very good progress to be made. Good target-setting ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. It is backed up by frequent tests and assessments, helping pupils to correct errors and move on to new work. Homework is used effectively by most teachers.

66. The department has effective leadership and is managed well. Good relationships exist between staff, all of whom are committed to raising standards. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the monitoring of teaching and the curriculum. The department makes good use of target-setting to assist pupils in improving their grades. Accommodation and resources are good and support learning effectively.

67. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. National Curriculum and GCSE results have sustained their high level and reflect the high standards in lessons. The quality of teaching and learning remain good overall, despite difficulties in recruiting new staff. Achievement remains good. There are now more opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills following the introduction of a new course text together with additional opportunities for investigation. Assessment arrangements have improved with

pupils' self-assessment now established.

Numeracy

68. Pupils enter the school with numeracy skills that are well above average. They improve and further develop these skills as they move through the school, not only in mathematics lessons, but also by using mathematics in some other subjects. For example in science they use decimals, fractions and percentages confidently; they substitute in formulae and evaluate results; in coursework they handle data and use graphs to demonstrate outcomes. In geography, they interpret statistics measuring development and use graphs to interpret climate and population pyramids; they establish correlation using the Spearman Rank Test. In design and technology, they measure in construction projects and when designing shapes. In ICT, pupils use spreadsheets to calculate costs and analyse data. In history, they calculate proportions killed in battle and plot bar graphs to illustrate the number of Acts of Parliament in different years. In these and other subjects, pupils' numeracy skills assist their learning and advance their progress.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management
- Good emphasis on pupils' investigations
- Above average standards and good achievement by Year 9
- Good assessment procedures, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils not always sufficiently challenged to achieve as well as they could, especially in Years 10 and 11
- The use of ICT not incorporated into lesson activities in all years
- Patchy opportunities for the professional development of staff.

69. Standards in the work seen are above average by the end of Year 11. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils show good subject knowledge and understanding, for example, involving critical angles and total internal reflection in a Year 10 lesson, and an informed appreciation of the impact of science on society in a Year 11 lesson on the nitrogen cycle. In 2001, the very high GCSE results for double science were similar to those in previous years, although there was a reduction in the number of pupils gaining double A* grades. Standards in science are similar to those in mathematics but slightly below those in English.

70. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. In the work seen pupils show good knowledge and understanding. This was evident in a lesson on forces in Year 7. In Year 8, pupils talk confidently about the importance of re-cycling materials and in Year 9 were impressive in devising an investigation for the action of amylase on starch. The standards seen overall were not as high as those indicated by Year 9 test results. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, not all pupils were sufficiently challenged by the work set in class, by the homework, or by the marking of previous work, to achieve the standards of which they were capable. In 2001, the Year 9 results were very high compared with all schools. These results show good achievement from pupils' standards when they join the school. Pupils' results in science were better than in mathematics and English.

71. Pupils show good attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good in lessons and in the

science corridors. Across all years, when working in small groups for practical tasks, pupils show respect and support for each other. The good working atmosphere in laboratories is marked. Pupils clearly enjoy science; they generally stay on task and work collaboratively with good concentration. Good and constructive relationships are formed between pupils and between staff and pupils. Pupils with special needs are fully included in lesson activities and receive a high quality of support from other pupils as well as from designated assistants.

72. Teaching and learning are good overall. The quality is always at least satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. There is no significant variation in the quality across year groups. Teachers have a good command of their subject and plan lessons carefully, with clear learning targets. The emphasis on an experimental approach to learning ensures that pupils' interest is sustained and is a strength of the department. Along with other teaching and learning strategies, this approach enables all pupils to learn effectively. Pupils with special needs make particularly good progress; their needs are identified on lesson plans and appropriate resources provided. There is good work in the teaching of basic skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The 'Thinking Science' project in Years 7 and 8 develops numeracy and literacy skills well, and pupils are encouraged to express themselves through writing poems or newspaper articles on scientific topics. Good methods of assessment are used in lessons, including skilful questioning and helpful worksheets; these help pupils to know how well they are doing, as do end-of-topic tests during Years 7 and 8. However, pupils' books show that the quality and frequency of marking varies. At times, there are examples of praise, supportive and informative comment; at other times, there is little more than an acknowledgement of work completed. Homework, although monitored well in pupils' journals, is not always effectively planned and clearly fails to extend pupils' learning. These shortcomings result in failure to challenge pupils to reach the standards they could and are the major reason for lessons to be judged less than good. Variation of activity, high staff expectations and full involvement of pupils are present in the better teaching.

73. Leadership and management are good, with a clearly defined sense of direction in terms of improving the provision for pupils. The teaching staff are well-qualified, and from Year 9 all pupils are taught in the separate sciences by subject specialists. In Years 7 and 8, teachers effectively teach all aspects of the science curriculum to mixed ability form groups. Professional development opportunities for staff mainly occur through the school's programme. Specialist science courses are supported where they support development plans, but the take-up is patchy. Technical support is of high quality and plays an extremely important part in ensuring that good standards are maintained in the high proportion of practical lessons. All science teaching takes place in laboratories and in general, the accommodation supports the learning process adequately. The need for one physics laboratory to be refurbished has been appropriately identified as a school priority. All laboratories have attractive and informative charts, posters and displays of pupils' work as have the corridors adjacent to the science rooms. The level and standard of resources, including equipment, are satisfactory. The department co-operates well with the library over the purchase of new books to support curriculum changes or new developments; a books loan system is in place to support project work. The use of ICT and its applications is still at a developmental stage in the department. There is one computer in each laboratory for datalogging purposes, but the use made of this facility is minimal. Increased use of ICT has been identified as a priority and is incorporated in new schemes of work. It is difficult, however, to book spaces in the computer rooms for science classes because of the high pressure on limited accommodation. The subject leader is moving the department forward effectively and is well-supported by subject staff in working to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Improvement is good.

74. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in controlling the quality of the department's work. Greater responsibility is now given to the head of department for the

monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the development of the subject. Effective systems are now in place for lesson observation followed by evaluation and identification of action points. The limitations of previous schemes of work have been rectified. In place now are impressive working documents, reviewed regularly and revised according to changes in curriculum requirements.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge and expertise
- The good quality of individual guidance given to pupils
- Improved standards at GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- Over-generous assessments at Year 9
- Teachers' specialisms not being made the most of in developing the department's work
- Not enough appropriate opportunities for professional development.

75. Standards of work seen by Year 11 are above average. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in maintaining the overall good standards. Within this picture, there are pupils who achieve very well, notably in photography, where their growing technical skills are matched by their ability to evaluate critically their own and others' photographs. There has been no clear trend in GCSE results recently although these have been well above average for the last three years. In 2001, results were well above the national average with over 8 out of 10 pupils gaining the higher grades compared to just over 5 out of 10 boys nationally. In general, pupils taking art and design at GCSE gained similar grades to their grades in other subjects.

76. By Year 9, standards are above average. This represents very good achievement from pupils' low level of practical skills at the beginning of Year 7. From Year 7 to Year 9, pupils develop good observational drawing skills with a clear awareness of the subtleties of line and tone. Year 9 pupils can transform these drawings into well-designed and well-executed printed designs, for example in the style of William Morris.

77. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall and often very good. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good. The large majority of younger pupils are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy their lessons. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are mature and responsible in their approach to their work. They co-operate well and are largely self-sufficient when working in the darkroom.

78. The quality of teaching and learning is good from Years 7 to 11. In the first three years, this quality helps pupils to make enough progress to reach the standards they are capable of. In GCSE work, the quality of teaching and learning ensures that pupils sustain appropriate standards. Lessons are well-prepared in Years 7 to 9, with good, brisk introductions that engage pupils' attention. Clear and concise explanations show how the lesson fits into the broader topic. Teachers know their pupils very well, so that they can give very well-targeted individual support during lessons which helps pupils of all abilities to make progress. The influence of teachers' personal knowledge and expertise as practising artists is clearly evident in the confident, painterly style that is beginning to appear in still-life pictures by Year 8 pupils, as well as in the attention to detail and quality in the GCSE photography group. There is satisfactory teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers make frequent

use of appropriate technical and descriptive vocabulary when talking to pupils. Pupils on the GCSE course regularly produce research essays about the work of artists and photographers and annotate their sketchbook work as a way of recording their developing ideas. There is scope for more written information to be used in displays in the art and design room to reinforce pupils' learning. In Year 7, diagrams such as the segments of the colour wheel are accurately measured and drawn with compass and ruler; pictures are enlarged using grids and ratio calculations; the photography course involves pupils in the measurement of time, volumes and dimensions. Literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactorily taught.

79. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory. It is currently in transition, largely due to a change of operating systems. The very successful computer graphics GCSE course has been temporarily withdrawn until suitable software can be found. Meanwhile, basic computer-aided design processes are being successfully introduced in Year 8, and the GCSE pupils use the department's computers to explore digital photography as well as for word-processing and research.

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The separation, at some distance, of the two art and design rooms hinders the regularity of communication between the two teachers and opportunities for creative professional dialogue are lost. This has led to some polarisation of the aspects of art and design in the school, with painting and photography becoming increasingly separate. The teachers' care and concern for their pupils are a common strength in the department as is the detailed and regular monitoring of pupils' performance. The individual guidance given to pupils is effective in highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, but the assessment of National Curriculum levels in Year 9 is insecure. The department does not yet have a folio of assessed and levelled work for reference. Both members of staff are knowledgeable and skilled in aspects of the subject, but have rightly expressed a need for further professional development in ICT skills and in the assessment and moderation of pupils' work.

81. Accommodation for art and design is unsatisfactory. Although the two rooms are of reasonable size they have little natural light and the main working areas cannot accommodate large groups working on a large scale. There is insufficient space to display the pupils' very good work to a wider audience. The rooms are too far away from each other.

82. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards by Year 9 and by Year 11 have been raised significantly, based on the sound development of practical skills. Three-dimensional work is being successfully developed in Years 7 to 9, although limited working and storage space continue to hinder this.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Above average standards in the work seen by Year 11
- Very good teaching and learning throughout the department
- Very good leadership, management and teamwork
- Good development of specialist ICT packages for computer-aided design
- Very good accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- Basic ICT skills such as word-processing, spreadsheet and charts not used to maximum effect
- Pupils not always clear about how the standard of their own work relates to National Curriculum levels.

83. By Year 11, standards of work are above average and achievement is good. Pupils' work is well-presented and sequenced. Their research is of a high standard. Higher attainers produce very good design work and manufacture products to a very high standard. Some very distinctive individual work is of outstanding quality. In all lessons, good progress is being made. In a Year 10 resistant materials lesson on joints, for example, pupils were using a range of techniques with care, accuracy and skill to develop their ability in making box joints. These pupils handled the tools, machinery and materials with care and precision. They showed good awareness of safe working practices. Their subject knowledge and the technical vocabulary underpinning it were above average for almost all pupils. GCSE results in 2001 were above average taking all design and technology subjects together, and well above average for the higher grades, all pupils taking graphics gaining a higher grade. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection although the 2001 results at the higher grades were slightly below those for 2000. The department has set challenging targets for 2002. Pupils' results in design and technology were below those they gained in their other subjects but the difference was much the same as the national difference.

84. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average. This represents good achievement as many pupils enter the school with limited experience of designing and making activities and with levels of attainment that are at best average. Graphical communication skills improve over Years 7 to 9 as pupils use a range of drawing and projection methods to model and communicate their design ideas. By Year 9, these skills are above average. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson on 'packaging', with pupils planning and modelling an effective 'net' design with clear labelling and evaluation. Pupils have good listening and speaking skills that teachers draw on well to encourage high attainment. Pupils with special needs are reaching good standards, reflecting the quality of support provided by their teachers and their peers. In the last two years, teachers' Year 9 assessments have shown standards that are well above average,.

85. Throughout the school, pupils have very positive attitudes to their work in design and technology. They listen attentively to their teachers' explanations and demonstrations and respond readily to their questions. Levels of concentration are good and pupils are interested in the tasks presented to them. They respect the equipment and resources provided for their use. Routines are very well established and pupils' behaviour is very good, which ensure a good working atmosphere in lessons. Relationships are very good and pupils collaborate effectively when working in pairs and groups.

86. Teaching is very good across the Years 7 to 11. Teachers use a similar range of methods so that pupils become accustomed to good routines. Pupils learn to use information from a variety of sources. In all lessons, the teachers share the learning targets with the pupils so that they are aware of what they should achieve by the end. Very good classroom organisation, coupled with very high expectations, means that pupils work hard, pay close attention and show interest in the topics studied. Subject knowledge of a high level is used to plan work in detail, provide explanations and ask questions so that pupils can recall information accurately. Teaching ensures that all pupils are included in lesson activities. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on 'product analysis', the teacher gave a very clear introduction, combining questioning with explanation to explore the pupils' understanding of chair design. The pupils responded with interest and commitment. When they started their own analysis, they were well-supported individually by the teacher. The resources provided were appropriate and of good quality, including the use of the computer to access information on injection moulding. Throughout the lesson, the teacher's own subject knowledge and understanding contributed significantly to pupils' learning. Good support and individual assessment are given in lessons, although pupils are not always clear at what level they are working and how it relates to standards in examinations. On all occasions, the teachers reviewed the progress made at the end of the lesson with the pupils. They set time targets for the completion of intermediate tasks, and this contributed to the pace and progress of learning. Pupils learn to work in a safe environment; health and safety systems are very firmly established. The teaching of basic skills is good across the subjects, with particular attention to literacy and numeracy opportunities. The use of ICT is satisfactory; CAD-CAM developments are appropriately continuing as there is a need for further improvement.

87. Leadership and management are very good. There is very strong teamwork throughout the department. Monitoring of the curriculum and teaching is well in place. The curriculum is well-balanced and National Curriculum requirements are met. The school library has up-to-date technology books available.

88. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is now very good overall as opposed to good. New computer hardware and software are in use, although overall ICT provision is insufficient. Very good specialist accommodation has been built. It is used well, is very well cared for, and is contributing to the improvement in standards.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good achievement
- Teaching and learning of good quality
- Good leadership and commitment to high standards
- Very good assessment procedures.

Areas for improvement

- Information from assessments not used sufficiently to evaluate pupils' progress
- Not enough variety in teaching methods to meet the needs of all pupils.

89. The overall standard of work seen by Year 11 is above average. Pupils' work for assessments at the end of each main unit of work shows higher standards, for example, written answers on the Bangladesh floods, the effects of the pressures of tourism on the National Parks, volcanoes, British weather and climate, and contrasting living conditions in Brazil. At GCSE in 2001, results were significantly above average and the proportion gaining the two highest grades was well above average. One of the main reasons for the disparity in

standards between the work seen and the results in 2001 is the close attention given to test and examination techniques in the department. Another, is pupils' very good motivation to do well in formal assessments.

90. By Year 9, standards in the work seen are above average. All pupils, including those with special needs make good progress in lessons in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have a good understanding of geographical terms and concepts. They have the confidence to apply their previous knowledge to new tasks, for example, when identifying examples of primary industry in a silent video introduction to the study of Equatorial Rain Forests. Pupils can describe and explain coastal formations and can appreciate the problems facing people who live near fast eroding coasts. They can interpret climate graphs for the major European climates and can give explanations for the differences between them. In the context of the developing world, pupils showed a sensitive understanding of the difficulties presented by earthquakes in both less and more economically developed countries. Year 9 teacher assessments indicate that most pupils are attaining well above average standards. Achievement is good.

91. Over Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to achieve well. Work seen in lessons, in exercise books and in the common assessment units is of a high standard and pupils can analyse causal relationships in depth for example, the effect of human and physical factors on farming and the reasons for increased traffic congestion in towns and cities. Pupils interpret data and graphs competently, including population pyramids and transient demographic models, and offer well-reasoned explanations for the patterns they observe. Their research skills are well-developed. Pupils acquire information from a range of sources, including the Internet, and present their results very well using graphs, maps and diagrams.

92. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils respond well to their teachers; they are keen to learn and to extend their knowledge and understanding. When working in groups, they share information, listen to the views of others and collaborate successfully on joint projects. They present their findings with confidence and enjoyment, in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect. They take pride in their written work. Homework and assessment tasks provide excellent examples of pupils using their artistic talent to produce well-crafted diagrams and maps. They use their well-developed Internet and ICT skills to complete attractively presented written assignments of a high academic standard.

93. Good achievement is a consequence of good teaching and learning. Some teaching is very good. Lessons are well-planned, making effective use of teachers' wide knowledge of the subject. High expectations and clearly stated learning targets for the lesson provide a good framework for learning. Resources, including textbooks, are chosen well to stimulate pupils' interest and to aid their understanding. In most lessons, pupils' learning is strengthened by the use of videos, both professional and 'home produced', although some editing is required of longer videos to sustain pupils' full concentration. In almost all lessons, tasks and strategies meet the needs of all pupils. However, the variety of approaches and active tasks are limited for those pupils with a shorter concentration span. Oral work is used well to assist the development of reasoning skills and to evaluate evidence and hypotheses. The teaching in geography makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy. Homework tasks require pupils to write at length for different purposes and in lessons, particular emphasis is placed on the teaching of geographical terminology and the development of note-taking skills. The use of statistics, graphs and formulae, including standard deviation, develops pupils' use of number. Pupils' weekly progress is monitored through regular marking of classwork and homework. The quality of the formal assessment arrangements is a strength of the department. Assessment tasks are well-designed and allow pupils of all abilities to demonstrate what they know and can do. Pupils know what they have to do to gain high grades because the marking and grading criteria are clearly specified on the assessment task sheet. Teachers' analytical comments

at the end of the assessment are well-focused and give good guidance for improvement. Pupils make use of these comments in their self-assessments. These self-assessments are thoughtfully completed and show that pupils have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as well as of what they need to do to improve. The results of assessments are recorded, but a system for the analysis of performance through using these results across the department has yet to be developed.

94. Leadership and management of the department are good. Departmental policies give sound guidance to all staff and schemes of work are planned and documented well. Monitoring of teaching ensures that all teachers use similar approaches, so that the curriculum is taught equally well across the department. Priorities for development have been identified well and there is very good commitment to continued improvement.

95. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The department has continued to perform very well in GCSE examinations and the number of pupils achieving the highest grades has increased significantly. New textbooks have been purchased to support the new schemes of work and the department is beginning to develop a greater variety of teaching strategies.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good, often very good teaching
- Growing popularity of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Planning lacks focus
- Assessment not co-ordinated effectively
- ICT opportunities not consistently incorporated into schemes of work.

96. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils achieve very high standards in extended writing, for example in reaching a reasoned conclusion on whether Roman justice was fair and in assessing the significance of Magna Carta. They are confident in using data to construct graphs showing the growth of canals in England. In coursework on Northern Ireland, their writing has very good structure and they link past and present very well, although some weaker work omits some key events. Work on sources is more variable, with interpretation of sources better than the skill of setting them accurately within their historical context. In spite of their strong literacy skills, pupils sometimes miss key points. For example, they interpreted different sources on crime and punishment in the nineteenth century without assessing the sources' usefulness for the historian. Pupils' coursework on a local study is impressive, with many pupils displaying good ICT skills and very strong literacy skills. Pupils evaluate a variety of sources and use them to sustain convincing explanations for the growth and decline of local canal systems. Higher attainers, in particular, set their arguments clearly within both a local and national context as well as thoroughly evaluating sources. Some lower attainers write in a narrative style with insufficient emphasis on evaluation. Results in recent years have been well above average for the higher grades and above average for a pass grade. Results overall were better in 2001 than in the previous three years. A much greater proportion of pupils gained higher grades in 2001 than in the previous year.

97. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9 and reflect the Year 9 teacher-assessment in 2001. Achievement is satisfactory. Literacy skills are a notable strength. Pupils write in a variety of forms to recreate past times, including an imaginary speech to local people on the merits of enclosure and interviews with factory apprentices about working conditions. Lower attainers display good research skills in writing about the life of a Roman soldier. Pupils use appropriate terminology in writing about the Roman army and government. Individual pupils with special needs participate fully in lesson activities, for example to interpret propaganda in war posters. Pupils display good note-taking skills for example in creating "mind maps" to show the links between information in different sources. Higher attainers can identify the apparent contradiction of a Catholic church built when Catholicism was in decline and then find evidence to explain the contradiction. Pupils display good ICT skills in coursework, including research, and produce wide-ranging studies of World War One. Pupils combine literacy and evaluation skills well to explain why two accounts of General Haig are different; a minority of pupils gives weaker responses with an over-emphasis on how they differ, rather than why. Pupils' range and depth of understanding are impressive; they link and contrast the perspectives of different countries at the time of the Treaty of Versailles.

98. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils respond very well to the clear focus in most teaching. When recalling previous work, teachers' questions are challenging and pupils are keen to participate. They listen well to each other and refer to each other's comments. They reflect on issues raised in discussion and pose their own questions; one pupil asked 'why not build better roads?' during a discussion on the growth of canal building. Pupils collaborate very well in paired activities. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils worked in pairs to find solutions to building canals across different types of terrain; they argued the point, discussed and listened to each other very well. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils worked in pairs to analyse the effectiveness of military strategy during the Battle of the Somme. They displayed very good initiative during paired and group discussion; they are willing and able to explore issues in depth.

99. Teaching and learning are good so that pupils' high standards are sustained from the beginning of Year 7 and they achieve as well as they should. Where the teaching is very good, pupils are better challenged by the work and achieve well. Secure knowledge is a feature of all of the teaching. Pupils' learning is stimulated during class discussion because the level of challenge in the questioning is consistently high. The questions are formulated to ensure that pupils' handle concepts and ideas in their learning. In a very good lesson, pupils were asked to recall and classify causes of the Reformation. Their learning was taken further by questions asking them to identify other topics they had studied where religion was significant. Such methodology is very effective in enabling pupils to make links between different areas of study. In the most effective teaching, a variety of strategies is used to consolidate learning. In Year 7, the teacher demonstrated the hierarchy created by William the Conqueror by 'giving' land to different pupils. This method helped them to grasp quickly the 'hold' that William exerted on the landowners. On another occasion, pupils read from a document detailing the charges against Charles I and were asked to write a six-word summary identifying the most serious charge. However, teaching is less effective when there is an over-reliance on class discussion with insufficient emphasis on using a variety of methods, including individual tasks. Pupils work very productively when tasks and activities have a clear focus; for example, Year 10 pupils worked in pairs to find solutions to problems faced by canal builders; but Year 8 group-work was less successful because the range of sources provided was too wide for pupils to research effectively the evidence for and against Guy Fawkes' guilt. Pupils' strong literacy skills support writing activities well. In Year 9, pupils were given a GCSE source question under timed conditions and responded very well. For some writing activities however, pupils are not given sufficient guidance and as a result, although they write at length they sometimes overlook a key point. For example in Year 11,

they analysed sources very well but sometimes missed the key judgement needed on the value of the sources. Overall, there is satisfactory marking of pupils' work. This is very effective in giving pupils knowledge of how well they are learning, for example through asking pupils to apply the examination board mark-scheme to their own work. The marking is thorough in terms of giving an overall analysis and points for improvement. It is variable, however, in the level of detailed comment made about the stages of the work produced. Resources, including short video extracts, are used well to support class discussion and both individual and group activities.

100. Leadership and management are good. The strong team of teachers is having a positive effect, and the subject is growing in popularity. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances the subject's increasingly positive image. Planning is not sufficiently focused on identifying priorities and strategies for action. Procedures for assessment are developing well, but are not yet applied with equal rigour across the department. The curriculum provides some good opportunities for ICT, although these are not sufficiently linked to schemes of work.

101. Improvement from the last inspection is good, with improvements in teaching, progress and resources.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good progress in ICT lessons, often very good
- Good achievement in the new GCSE course
- Good specialist ICT teaching, often very good
- Very good leadership and management
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour always very good, often excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Too few lessons in Years 7 to 9 for pupils' good progress to develop into good long-term achievement
- Insufficient ICT opportunities in other subjects
- Lack of access to ICT accommodation and resources for other subjects.
- Year 9 teachers' assessments not accurate enough.

102. In the current year, the school has improved its curriculum by introducing a GCSE ICT course in Year 10. No examinations have previously been taken. Standards in the work seen in Year 10 are well above average and achievement is satisfactory. Many pupils chose the course because they were already enthusiastic about computers and able to use them skilfully and confidently. The great majority are already achieving well, quickly improving upon the standards with which they started the course. In individual coursework, for example, when creating publications such as publicity brochures for the school's sports day, pupils show considerable independence in choosing and using a wide range of ICT tools, including digital cameras and scanners. The pupils who do not take the GCSE course have a satisfactory, although limited range of opportunities to cover all the ICT aspects in their other subjects. These pupils maintain above average standards in Years 10 and 11 and their achievement is satisfactory.

103. In 2001, teachers' Year 9 assessments judged pupils' standards to be very high. However, the assessments overestimated pupils' actual standards because they covered only a limited range of ICT activities. The new subject leader had been appointed too recently to be able to co-ordinate the process. Pupils join the school with standards that are generally above average. Most have already had the opportunity to become familiar and confident with computers at their primary schools, or at home. During lessons, pupils succeed in reaching well above average standards. For example, Year 8 pupils are highly proficient in using the keyboard, mouse and on-screen tools, quickly learning how to set up a personal link with the local authority network, so that they will be able to gain access to this and communicate with the school from home. Pupils learn quickly and make good progress in individual lessons. However, they are only able to benefit from one lesson every two weeks in Years 7 and 8 and none in Year 9. Consequently, they are dependent upon opportunities to use computers in other subjects. As these opportunities are limited, although adequate, pupils' overall achievement by Year 7 to 9 is only satisfactory, with standards remaining above average.

104. Attitudes and behaviour are very good during ICT lessons and in many lessons they are excellent. Behaviour was never less than excellent in the lessons inspected. At the beginning of all lessons, the high expectations of teachers are immediately fulfilled as pupils log on to computers and start using self-tuition or revision programs, without needing to be told to do so. This ensures that all are working productively, leaving the teacher free to deal with the register, distribute working materials and help any pupils with individual queries or technical problems. Pupils respond eagerly to the many opportunities provided to make independent choices in their work, which is an important element in the good progress that takes place. They listen attentively to explanations and instructions and work with high effort and pace at individual tasks. Teachers' expectations that pupils try to solve problems for themselves, or help each other whenever possible, are met. The response of pupils has a very positive effect on their participation in all the opportunities provided in ICT lessons.

105. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years in which ICT is taught as a separate subject. It is often very good. At the start of lessons, instructions for tasks are given very clearly and this is backed up by good written guidance. Teachers explain well the purpose of tasks and how they relate to other work, which helps pupils to understand the relevance of what they are doing. They use highly effective strategies to ensure all pupils pay attention, even when sitting close to potentially distracting equipment. In a Year 10 lesson, very good feedback was given about the marking of work, which ensured that all pupils were alerted to weaknesses that might reduce the standard of their work. The high expectations of teachers have a considerable positive effect on the attitudes and efforts of pupils and the high degree of independence that they show. On a very small number of occasions, pupils' independence is reduced when teachers take over the control of the computer when giving individual help. Much more often, teachers give good prompts to help pupils to identify their own solutions. This enables teachers to concentrate upon providing for those pupils in genuine need of assistance, as for example in a Year 10 lesson, where the teacher ensured that a pupil who had missed a previous lesson had compensating individual tuition so that he caught up quickly.

106. Since the appointment of the present subject leader, less than a year ago, there has been very good leadership and management. There is a very clear awareness of the areas in need of improvement and a clear vision of how this should take place. Much has been achieved in a short time, even though the full effect has yet to be felt. Already, the scheme of work for Years 7 and 8 has been considerably improved and Year 10 pupils are now able to choose a GCSE course in the subject. A comprehensive development plan sets out how better opportunities will be provided for all pupils in other subjects and how teachers will be trained to make good use of these. To enable this to be implemented successfully, it is important that the school finds a way to improve the availability of ICT accommodation and

resources to those subjects that currently find it difficult to gain sufficient access. The school library is not currently making a significant contribution to ICT as it contains few computers and few books related to ICT. Most pupils have access to computers at home. Teachers take good advantage of this by providing opportunities for their use which are currently being enhanced by setting up a personal Internet link for all pupils. Nonetheless, the needs of the small number of pupils without home computers are fully understood. The department provides good involvement for all by providing access to school computers for individual work, usually at lunchtimes. The quality of accommodation and resources contributes to the standards achieved in lessons that take place in the ICT suite. The teaching is strengthened by efficient technical support. Because only a small number of periods are available to other subjects however, the benefit across the curriculum is limited.

107. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. However, it has accelerated significantly during the last year. The weaknesses identified in the last report were mainly related to assessment in Year 9 and inadequate monitoring, developing and supporting of teaching across the curriculum. These issues have only recently begun to receive systematic attention. Therefore, while the capacity for future improvement is very good, much of the work still remains to be carried out.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching overall
- Assessment used well to raise attainment
- Staff team committed to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' GCSE results lower than in their other subjects
- High attainers not always making the progress they should
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricting the quality of the curriculum.

108. By the end of Year 11, standards in French are above average and in German and Spanish they are average. In French, many pupils talk and write at length about their personal experiences. Some can express and discuss opinions at a basic level. Higher attainers, however, do not have the depth of understanding of grammar or the variety of expression which would enable them to speak and write at the highest level. In Spanish and German the most able pupils have a sound grasp of the main tenses and respond effectively when talking and writing about themselves and their experiences. However, a significant number of pupils are not confident or competent in the use of active language and can only respond at a basic level. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Pupils have developed a good understanding of the structure of language. Their ICT skills are satisfactory; they use word-processing skills to draft and re-draft their work, producing items of good quality for display. However, the department has not developed a structured approach to teaching either literacy or ICT skills.

109. The 2001 GCSE results were above average in French and the proportion gaining higher grades was well above average. There has been a steady improvement in results in French since the last inspection. In Spanish, the 2001 results were average in comparison with all pupils nationally, while above average in comparison with boys' results. The proportion gaining higher grades in Spanish was below average in comparison with all pupils nationally, while above average in comparison with boys' results. The number of pupils entered for German was too small to make secure statistical comparisons; most achieved

average results. However, results overall in modern languages were significantly below those in pupils' other subjects. Compared with pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9, these results show that pupils did not make the expected progress in Years 10 and 11. In Spanish and German, initial improvements have not been sustained. However, the standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 suggest that results will improve in the current year.

110. Pupils' achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory and those with special needs make satisfactory progress. By Year 11, achievement overall is unsatisfactory. While for many pupils it is satisfactory, it is unsatisfactory for higher attainers in all languages, and in Spanish and German it is unsatisfactory for lower attainers..

111. Standards are above average in French by Year 9. The work seen indicates that standards are improving because the high quality of teaching is beginning to have a positive effect. Achievement is higher in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, where the poor attitude of a small minority of pupils is having a negative effect on their learning. In French, pupils in Years 7 and 8 develop good oral skills. They speak with confidence and good pronunciation. In one Year 7 class, pupils used the French language for all their communication with the teacher. In Year 9, most pupils speak and write at length in French, using a good range of vocabulary and a variety of tenses, including the imperfect. In Spanish and German, achievement is limited by the low time allocation for the second language. Pupils begin a second language in Year 8; in Years 8 and 9 they have less time for their second language than they do for French. As a result, attainment in the two second languages is no better than average by the end of Year 9. Generally, pupils write accurately and demonstrate good understanding of grammar in Spanish and German, but do not have the secure grasp of tenses which would enable them to reach the higher National Curriculum levels. Pupils' presentation of their work in all three languages is often below the standard that would be expected.

112. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good overall, better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Most older pupils are polite and considerate towards others, have a positive attitude to their work and can be relied on to work well independently. However, a small number show little interest in their work and, while their behaviour is acceptable, have a negative effect on the working atmosphere. Younger pupils are enthusiastic and contribute well in lessons. They work well in groups and have a high level of self-motivation. Most pupils with special needs have positive attitudes to their work.

113. Teaching and learning are good in each of the languages studied, throughout the school. Teachers are all competent linguists and confident in the use of the languages they teach. They use the language effectively in Years 7 to 9, which helps pupils develop good listening skills, but less well in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan lessons effectively so that pupils acquire a secure and extensive knowledge of vocabulary and develop the skills of speaking and writing effectively. Support materials of high quality help learning. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, a variety of response sheets ensured that the listening comprehension exercise was suitably challenging for pupils of all abilities. Pupils have a good knowledge of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work because teachers assess work thoroughly and effectively. This is particularly evident in the marking of pupils' work, where all teachers follow the departmental guidelines and frequently point out to pupils what they need to do to gain higher levels and grades

114. Teachers' good understanding of National Curriculum and GCSE standards and assessment criteria is reflected by the high expectations in lessons. The degree of challenge is usually high, although the pace of work is sometimes slow, reducing pupils' level of concentration when this happens. Teachers are beginning to use information about pupils' prior attainment to set targets for individual groups of pupils. However, they do not always

make the lessons targets clear so that pupils can gain a clear picture themselves of how well they are progressing. Most teachers plan appropriately for individuals' learning needs, but the lack of clear learning targets for all pupils is still leading to underachievement, particularly by high attaining pupils.

115. The department is led and managed well. The fact that most teachers, including the head of department, are new to the school means that much of the departmental documentation is at an early stage of development, for example, schemes of work, policies and development planning. All members of the department share a determination to raise standards. This is a cohesive team with a common desire to move forward, although the monitoring of teaching is not yet systematic enough to support this. Staffing is good: well-qualified teachers are supported by effective foreign language assistants in French and Spanish. Resources are good: all pupils have text books and in-house support material is very good. The department provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. Accommodation is, however, unsatisfactory. Teaching rooms are spread over the building. There are not enough rooms for each teacher to have a base. Two rooms are unsuitable for languages teaching because of the poor acoustics for listening. There is no departmental office and a lack of storage space.

116. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and the quality of assessment has greatly improved. However attainment at GCSE and the progress made by higher attainers has not improved although the work seen indicates that improvement is now happening. It is too early for the developments being set in place by new staff to show in improved results.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Good teaching
- Good learning through a variety of activities
- Good range of extra-curricular activities
- Strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment
- Low take-up for GCSE
- Quality of singing in tone and accuracy
- Work not always matched to pupils' previous attainment.

117. There is currently no GCSE group in Year 11. The number of pupils taking music at GCSE in recent years is too small for secure comparisons with national statistics. The standards of work in Year 10 are above average. In relation to pupils' standards on entry to the course, despite a period of considerable staffing difficulties, the level of achievement is good. Pupils play well, showing good instrumental standards. For example, after one rehearsal the group was able to perform part of a work by Bach very effectively, with individuals holding independent parts. When listening to music, pupils distinguish between various rhythmic dance styles. In their notation work they have a good understanding of note values, key signatures, scales and chord construction. Composition course-work is at an early stage but all have started their compositions and these show imaginative ideas and knowledge of how to structure an accompaniment.

118. By Year 9, the standard of work is above average, and pupils' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7, is good. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good, and this combined with the pupils' good attitudes and behaviour, causes the quality of learning in music to be good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 respond well when listening to music and can effectively identify features of instrumentation, style and structure. When composing variations, they show knowledge of technical devices such as inversion and retrograde movement. Their melodies show a good sense of phrase and structure. Tone colour is used effectively and pupils control keyboards and instruments well to create interesting textures. Pupils receiving instrumental tuition achieve good standards; they perform effectively in ensembles, keeping well in time. Notation standards are good, with pupils showing familiarity with both staff and graphic notations. Although the pupils sing with enthusiasm, the tone quality is rough and lacking in pitch definition. The subject's contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy development is satisfactory; for example, there is a good emphasis on technical vocabulary and spellings are corrected in the pupils' written work. All groups of pupils are achieving similarly.

119. Pupils have a good attitude to music and behave well in lessons. They are lively, but courteous. Their relationships are good and this results in good collaboration when sharing keyboards, for example. They help each other willingly and some take on leadership roles in group rehearsals. When performing to each other, they listen sympathetically and are courteous when making critical evaluations.

120. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good in both Years 7 to 9 and in Year 10. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively in their teaching. The instrumental teachers have good specialist skills and demonstrate well on their instruments. Lessons are planned well, with a good variety of activities. Expectations are high and the pupils respond well to the challenge. Clear explanations enable them to focus on the tasks set; however all pupils tackle the same tasks and learning would be improved if tasks were varied to take account of their different levels of previous attainment. The singing repertoire is well-chosen to appeal to boys, but the teaching does not focus sufficiently on tone quality and pitch definition. There is good use of a variety of resources including audio, video and ICT as well as instruments, but not enough use of computers in Years 7 to 9. The marking of pupils' work is conscientious, giving helpful comments on ways pupils can improve it. Pupils work productively, usually complete assignments and deliver finished performances. There are good examples of problem-solving when they are refining their compositions, and of independent working, singly, in pairs and in groups. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated into all the activities and make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils have good opportunities for extra work, both in class and extra-curricular activities, as well as through instrumental lessons.

121. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The newly appointed head of department has worked hard and successfully to make significant improvements to what was an unsatisfactory situation. Appropriate priorities for development have been acted upon, resulting, for example, in improved schemes of work and increased take-up for GCSE and instrumental lessons. The department makes a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its emphasis on performance and listening to a wide range of music from Western Europe and other parts of the world. However, there is scope for further development in this area. Accommodation for the department, although satisfactory for most of the year, is severely affected when examinations take place in the adjacent hall. Not only does this restrict lesson activities because of the sound level, but it also makes communication with and the use of the practice rooms difficult. The subject is resourced well as a result of improvements in the last 12 months, including better ICT provision, which is used well. The books in the library are old and many are out-of-date; a range of new books has been ordered.

122. The improvement since the last inspection is good, although it has taken a long time to be implemented. The quality of teaching has significantly improved; at the last inspection two thirds of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. Similarly the quality of learning and level of achievement have also improved. Resources have been improved and better assessment and monitoring procedures set in place.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good standards and achievement
- Good teaching and learning
- Very good range of extra-curricular opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum dominated by games to the detriment of other areas of experience.

123. Standards by Year 11 are above average. Pupils at all levels of attainment build upon the foundations established earlier. They increase their understanding of techniques so that their performance improves. In badminton, they demonstrate a good range of shots and serves and show good awareness of tactics such as threatening the serve. Lower attainers have developed skills of passing, dribbling and shooting in basketball so successfully that their performances are close to the national average. Pupils taking GCSE courses have good levels of practical skill. They establish in Year 10 a detailed understanding of the required elements of anatomy and physiology. In Year 11, pupils use this understanding to devise a three-month training programme for participants in particular sporting events. Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups with sustained concentration. Written work is clearly expressed with appropriate use of technical language and is logically organised. However, the spellings of words such as 'to' and 'too' or 'practice' and 'practise' are often confused.

124. Results at GCSE have been consistently above national averages and the averages for similar schools. In 2001, almost two thirds of the entry gained A* or A grades. All gained higher grades. Further evidence of good standards is provided by the successes of teams and individuals at district, county and national levels in a wide range of games and other sporting activities.

125. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average. Pupils have gained good understanding of the rules of games and of basic techniques. Higher attainers have good technical skills and make appropriate decisions in games such as badminton and basketball. Most pupils can identify strengths and weaknesses in their own performances and those of others. The quality of hand and eye co-ordination is much improved from the generally below average standards evident early in Year 7. In cricket, pupils have good understanding of techniques of stopping and retrieval when fielding and of the basic strokes of batting. In a Year 8 class, however, despite above average general athleticism and technical skills, a significant minority could not roll a ball in a straight line.

126. The achievement of pupils at all levels of attainment and in all year groups is good. Pupils with physical impairments or difficulties achieve as highly as others because teachers understand their needs and provide the necessary help and encouragement. The most able develop their talents not only in lessons but also by participating in extra-curricular activities and membership of clubs in the wider community. All pupils make good progress, particularly in games, because they are confident in their relationships with teachers and each other and because they enjoy their work and are well-motivated. Achievement in activities other than

games is restricted by the insufficiency of time given to these areas of physical activity, particularly to gymnastics. The unusually high level of contribution of non-specialist teachers to the teaching of games and to extra-curricular provision increases pupils' opportunities and widens their experiences, especially of games. However, it also contributes to the lack of balance in the opportunities for learning in other areas of the subject.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is good; it is never less than good and in a quarter of the lessons seen it was very good. Teachers explain how lessons are linked to previous and future work so that pupils understand their relevance. Lessons comprise a series of linked tasks providing a variety of activities that help to sustain pupils' interest and concentration. The pace is brisk so that learning is efficient. Pupils make good progress in performance because they accept the priority that teachers give to developing appropriate techniques. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and achievement, consistent with individual potential. They give praise and encouragement. Mostly they use questions both to confirm levels of understanding and also to extend its quality. In classroom lessons with examination groups, teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to take an active part in their learning through discussion in pairs or small groups.

128. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is just completing his first year in post. He has the support of colleagues and is working energetically to achieve the school's planned future developments for the subject. The range and quality of extra-curricular provision and the numbers of pupils and teachers involved are a strength of the school. The activities provide opportunities for pupils at all levels of attainment, for squads of team players and for club members. More than half the pupils and almost a third of teachers are involved. Both these proportions are well above average.

129. Since the last inspection, good improvement has been made. Levels of attainment have continued to rise. Teaching styles now more consistently encourage pupils to be active in their learning, rather than depending upon teachers' explanations.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Above average standards by Year 9 and good achievement
- Well above average standards at GCSE
- Good teaching and learning
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough specialist staff
- Not enough curriculum time for all pupils in Years 10 and 11
- Unsatisfactory assessment procedures
- Not enough use of ICT.

130. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 take a non-examination course. This course is taught by discussion through which pupils examine contemporary social and moral issues. It was not possible to observe a lesson; the small amount of written work available is of an above average standard. However, as pupils have only one 60-minute lesson a fortnight, they are not able to cover the syllabus in depth, although legal requirements are met. In 2001, the number of pupils taking GCSE was too small for secure statistical comparisons of their

results to be made with national results. Most pupils gained high grades. However, pupils did less well in this subject than they did in all their others. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

131. Standards of work on the GCSE course are well above the expectations of the syllabus. The work seen on the GCSE course is well above average and this represents satisfactory achievement during Years 10 and 11. Pupils on the GCSE course have a very good understanding of Christian teaching, including differing arguments for the existence of God. They understand the importance to Christians of revelation. They use correct technical terminology and retain information very well. They are skilful at assembling evidence, selecting apt material and arguing logically, both orally and on paper. They use what they learn to examine their own beliefs about religion.

132. In Years 7 to 9 standards are well above the expectations of the syllabus. This represents good achievement since, although the school has a selective intake, pupils join Year 7 with a wide range of religious knowledge. For example, in Year 7 some pupils can explain perfectly why a fish is a symbol of Christianity while others did not know that Catholics were Christians. Pupils know the main facts about the world's main religions. However, these are sometimes taught entirely in isolation so that pupils are not made aware of the strands that are common to all religions. In Year 9, they study in good depth the morality of people's treatment of animals and the attitudes of different religions to them. They make links with their own lives, as in a study of temptation.

133. The subject contributes well to raising pupils' standards of literacy. In all lessons, teachers encourage pupils to speak. Good teaching techniques ensure that all pupils participate in discussions or are asked to answer questions. Teachers take note of spelling and punctuation when marking written work, correcting these where necessary. Pupils with special needs make good progress. Teachers know the pupils well and know the targets in their individual education plans. However, the group of non-examination pupils in Years 10 and 11 does less well than others because of the low time allocation for the subject.

134. Pupils' very good attitudes help their learning. Their behaviour in lessons is very good and they concentrate very well. Pupils take good advantage of the many opportunities for discussion and for asking or answering questions. For example, Year 7 pupils were very interested in a lesson on Christian symbols, inspired by the humour and gusto of the teacher. They were anxious to volunteer answers and made very good progress. However, pupils often do not take enough care with the standard of presentation of their written work and many exercise books are untidy.

135. The quality of teaching and learning is good, sometimes very good. Teachers use effective methods. They help pupils to sustain their interest by setting a number of different tasks during lessons. For example, in a lesson on Ramadan the pupils watched a video, made notes about it, took part in a question and answer session with the teacher and then discussed in pairs what they had learned; finally they began a piece of written work. Teachers have good class management skills. These are based on good relationships, a good pace to lessons and plenty of humour. In the best lessons, teachers show high interest in the subject and the enjoyment is apparent. For example, Year 9 pupils responded by relishing the intellectual challenge when exploring the Buddha's teaching on happiness. Teachers generally take a great deal of time and care over marking books, writing comments that show pupils clearly how they can improve their understanding of the subject. However, one set of books had not been marked for some weeks and some comments give no indication of the standard of work. Consequently pupils cannot see how well they are doing and do not have any precise indication of the progress they are making. Plans are well under way to introduce a system of assessment levels in order to rectify this weakness.

136. The head of department is the only specialist teacher. Five non-specialist staff undertake the rest of the teaching, all of whom have other major responsibilities in the school. The quality of teaching is restricted as a consequence, because the non-specialists are usually knowledgeable about one section of the syllabus but much less comfortable when dealing with other sections. This limits their ability to deal with pupils' questions and in turn limits learning. The head of department draws up very detailed lesson plans indicating appropriate resources which are very helpful to the non-specialists and ensure that the syllabus is covered. This preparation ensures that pupils acquire knowledge, although on occasion, when teachers' lack of familiarity with the subject-matter leads them to rely too much on the text book, pupils' interest decreases and learning suffers accordingly.

137. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has the difficult task of being the only specialist and 'full-time' member of the department. He succeeds very well in co-ordinating the work of other teachers and works hard producing individual lesson plans for them. He monitors the work of the department in accordance with the school policy. The development plan has appropriate priorities and the department is taking effective action to increase the number of pupils opting for examination courses. There is a satisfactory stock of reference books in the library. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use computers.

138. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved. Teaching has improved. More emphasis is now placed on pupils applying what they learn to their own lives. The development plan is more thorough. However, the improvement of assessment procedures is only just beginning to take place.

INSPECTION REPORT

SECTION 2

JOINT SIXTH FORM

CARRE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mr Peter Wheeldon

Unique reference number: 120699

KESTEVEN AND SLEAFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mrs Alison Ross

Unique reference number: 120633

ST GEORGE'S COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Headteacher: Mr Paul Watson

Unique reference number: 120700

Sleaford

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 4th – 15th March 2002

Inspection number: 189789/243230

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

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The full inspection of the joint sixth form was carried out at the same time as full inspections of two of the schools, Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School. A full inspection of St George's College of Technology was carried out in March 2001. Because of the joint arrangements for the sixth form, this report is published as Section 2 of the reports for Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School, and as a separate report for St George's College of Technology. The 16 subjects were inspected in each of the schools where they are taught.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE THREE SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE JOINT SIXTH FORM

Carre's Grammar School

Type of school:	Selective
School category:	Community
Gender of students:	Male
Number of sixth-form students	142
Address:	Northgate Street Sleaford
Postcode:	NG34 7DD
Telephone number:	01529 302181
Fax number:	01529 413488
Name of chair of governors:	Mr JP Duckett

Kesteven and Sleaford High School

Type of school:	Selective
School category:	Community
Gender of students:	Female
Number of sixth-form students	178
Address:	Jermyn Street Sleaford
Postcode:	NG34 7RS
Telephone number:	01529 414044
Fax number:	01529 414928
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Flett

St George's College of Technology

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Foundation
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number of sixth-form students	207
Address:	Westholme Sleaford
Postcode:	NG34 7PS
Telephone number:	01529 302487
Name of chair of governors:	Mr GL Arnold

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2918	ML Glynne-Jones	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Information about the joint sixth form Results in the joint sixth form and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the joint sixth form led and managed? What should the joint sixth form do to improve further?
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the joint sixth form care for its students?
20192	T McDermott	Sixth form co-ordinator		
22695	R Cardinal	Team inspector	History	
21954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
11838	D Cronin	Team inspector	French	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education	
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	Physical education	
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology Food studies	
17269	J Johnson	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
12475	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music	
8620	B Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18453	C Lower	Team inspector	Psychology	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Geography Government and politics Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Business education Health and social care	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers
Anglesey Close
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Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

SECTION 2

PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE JOINT SIXTH FORM

With 527 students on roll, the sixth form is much larger than in most schools. An above average proportion of Year 11 pupils from the three schools continues in full-time education at age 16, the large majority in the joint sixth form. There are slightly more female students than male students. Numbers have increased steadily over the past 10 years, and projections indicate continuing growth. Students are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, which overall are neither particularly advantaged or disadvantaged. They enter Year 12 with, overall, above average standards. An extensive range of advanced courses, both academic and vocational, is offered, with some intermediate courses and general studies. The majority of students work towards key skills certification. About four-fifths of the students go on to courses in higher education after completing their sixth-form courses.

The leadership and management of the joint sixth form rest with the three headteachers, although there is a jointly funded, largely administrative post of director of studies.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Good teaching and students' mature attitudes to their work enable them to sustain standards over Years 12 and 13 which overall are above average. Their achievement overall is satisfactory. The student body is a responsible group of young people who have integrated successfully into joint working in three distinct school communities. They are aware of the challenge of forging a group identity. These strong features are balanced by weaknesses resulting from the lack of strategic management of the joint provision by the three schools, the lack of vision for its future and inadequate procedures for oversight by the three governing bodies. No funding received for younger pupils is used for the sixth form, but to a small extent, the reverse is true. Overall, provision is satisfactory, but not cost-effective.

Strengths

- Very good range of sixth-form courses
- Good teaching
- Good feedback on their work giving students a clear picture of their progress
- Students' very good attitudes and personal development
- Students are served well by the commitment and subject expertise of their teachers.

What could be improved

- Lack of joint arrangements for the three governing bodies to carry out their responsibilities for the quality of education in the sixth form
- Inadequate arrangements for the leadership and management of the joint sixth form
- Poor procedures for monitoring students' attendance
- The satisfactory overall achievement
- Information about students' assessments and results not used effectively in planning for the sixth form as a whole
- Statutory requirements not met for religious education.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

HOW THE JOINT SIXTH FORM HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Previous inspections of the three schools did not report on the joint sixth form.

STANDARDS

- Results for the sixth form as a whole are not available.
- Students' achievement across the joint sixth form is satisfactory overall.
- Strengths in the standards of work seen are in French, geography, government and politics and product design.
- Students' achievement is very good in product design and good in business education, food studies, geography, French, health and social care, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, psychology and sports studies.
- The above average standards seen in English are better than the A-level results in 2001 which showed some under-achievement.

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: students show a mature, hardworking attitude towards their studies; most are highly motivated to succeed.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: students get on well with each other, and generally, with the staff in all three schools. Many develop into effective independent learners.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 12 – 13 - Joint sixth form
Quality of teaching	Good

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

- Teaching and learning are almost always good, while satisfactory in chemistry, and with strengths in food studies, product design and psychology.
- Students' learning needs are nearly always met well, and soundly met in biology and chemistry; there are strengths in French, food studies and psychology, and excellence in product design.
- Key skills are taught well.
- A strength in learning is the mature and independent approach students take toward their studies.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards, broadly reflecting prior attainment. • Good achievement. • Teachers' good knowledge.
Chemistry	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Satisfactory achievement overall, very good for higher attainers. • Teachers' good professional knowledge. • Satisfactory planning of lessons, but tied too rigidly to syllabuses. • No joint planning of work across the three schools.
Biology	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Good teaching and learning. • Insufficient co-ordination between the three schools.
Food Studies	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Very good use of students' assessments to guide curriculum development. • Very good subject knowledge.
Product Design	Provision is very good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Very good achievement. • Very good teaching and learning, with some excellent teaching. • Students' excellent attitudes.
Business Studies	Provision is very good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Consistently good teaching and learning. • Not enough liaison across the joint sixth form.
Information and communication technology	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Good teaching and learning, with some very good elements. • Clear checks to ensure that courses match students' needs.
Sports Studies	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Good teaching and learning. • Insufficient co-ordination of courses across the sixth form.
Health and Social Care	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards. • Good achievement. • Good teaching, with a wide range of strategies to engage students.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Art and Design	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Good teaching and learning. • Poor liaison across the sixth form.
Geography	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Good achievement. • Consistently good teaching and learning. • Good co-operation between staff but no joint arrangements for management.
History	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Teachers' secure professional knowledge. • Little evidence of inter-departmental liaison.
Government and politics	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Good achievement. • Good teaching. • Teaching not co-ordinated to ensure consistent quality of provision.
Psychology	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Very good teaching and learning.
English	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Unsatisfactory achievement given students' results at GCSE. • Good teaching and learning.
French	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Good achievement measured against prior attainment. • Good teaching and learning. • No cohesion in the management of learning across the sixth form.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory overall; communication between the three schools does not ensure that all students receive the support they sometimes require. Students feel that they usually receive good, but sometimes conflicting, advice when deciding upon options to take in the sixth form, although information about courses is helpful. Sixth-form induction is unsatisfactory. There is no system in use to provide a check on students' whereabouts or their safe travel between schools. Good advice and guidance is available for students planning their next step after the sixth form.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Unsatisfactory. Arrangements for running the sixth form are no longer fit for purpose given the considerable increase in student numbers, the wide range of courses provided and the new national arrangements for examinations post-16. There is no management structure for the sixth form as a whole and no procedures for the three governing bodies to carry out their responsibility jointly for the quality of education it provides. A vision for the development of the sixth form is lacking and there is no plan for improvement. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the provision to ensure that all students receive equally good opportunities on all courses are not in place. The sixth form is not cost-effective although it covers its own costs and has a current underspend.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Questionnaires were completed by students from Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School.

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extensive choice of subjects and courses. • The good quality teaching. • Teachers provide individual help and support with work when needed. • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. • They know how well they are doing. • The advice and guidance they receive about post-18 options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unsatisfactory management of the sixth form at all levels in the three schools so that students' needs are not considered well enough. • The inadequacy of the induction programme in providing essential information and building a sixth-form ethos. • The poor communication systems between the schools especially for students being taught away from their 11-16 school. • The lack of common procedures for matters such as registration, regulations, timetables, and use of the library for the joint sixth form.

The inspectors agree with students' views, which are confirmed by the evidence from the inspection.

Students are very supportive of the opportunities the joint sixth form gives them. They enjoy being members of the group of schools. However, they are almost all highly critical of the way the joint sixth form is managed. Students feel that all three schools are keen to talk of a joint sixth form but are reluctant to relinquish any control; they think that the best interests of the students are not put first.

Groups of students spoken to from all three schools were critical of the lack of induction available at the different sites; of communications, for example about the extra-curricular opportunities available to them at all three schools; of guidance about how to manage their time and the expectations of free periods; and of differing break times and expectations of behaviour, work and dress. For example protective laboratory coats are required to be worn at two sites but not the third; uniform must be worn on one site but not the other two. Students feel there are insufficient opportunities to socialise as a sixth-form group; and that, as they are always moving between sites, this leaves little time for groups wishing to continue with private study or social activities – because of restrictions on space and differing rules on the use of sixth-form common rooms. The inspection team finds these comments perceptive and justified.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

SECTION 2

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1. In the work seen standards are, overall, above average in the 16 subjects inspected. Where standards are well above average in product design, geography, French and government and politics, the style of teaching is well-matched to the individual needs of the students. In these subjects, with the exception of French, information from assessments is used to guide planning. Where standards are the highest, many students show a high level of skill in the analysis of key concepts, and a sophisticated understanding of the application of these concepts to their courses. In history and sports studies where standards are average, there is often little liaison and sharing of good practice between staff from the different schools, the students do not have sufficient opportunities to manage their own learning, and the value of ICT as a tool to improve learning is not recognised.

2. In 2001, the results in all the A-level and advanced vocational courses were above average. Results for the joint sixth form as a whole have not previously been calculated; this was done for the 2001 results during the inspection, with the director of studies and the heads of sixth form from each of the three schools. Across the three schools and in each of them, the gain from Year 11 to Year 13 was as expected. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory over Years 12 and 13, with two notable exceptions. Students with lower results at GCSE make better gains when taking AVCE courses than when taking A-level courses. The exceptionally high attaining male students do even better at A-level than at GCSE. There are no other significant variations in the quality of achievement of male and female students or between students from the three schools.

3. Overall, the work seen in the 16 subjects inspected shows good achievement; this reflects the good achievement in the majority of subjects, and very good achievement in product design. In biology, chemistry, art and design, history and sports studies achievement is satisfactory; in English achievement is unsatisfactory. Balancing the satisfactory gain from Year 11 examinations and assessments to those in Year 13 with the achievement in the work seen leads to an overall judgement that students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. With few exceptions, students come into the sixth form with above average standards, and leave with above average standards. There are limited arrangements to track their progress on courses. Students' success is often evaluated solely by their examination results. Insufficient attention is paid to measuring progress against prior attainment, both for individual students and course groups as well as sixth-form wide.

4. Students' very positive attitudes to their studies are reflected in the generally good completion rate on courses and the high proportion going on to further study when they leave school, 80 per cent. The retention rate within subjects is more than 90 per cent over an academic year. Key skills are taught both as separate lessons and through the general studies course. In all lessons, and in a key skills session, students show above average skills, with strength in communication.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Students display a mature, hardworking attitude towards their studies. Their behaviour in and around school is good and they are helpful and courteous. Most are highly motivated to succeed and have very strong views of the benefits the joint sixth-form arrangements bring to them. They do not feel inhibited in expressing their views, which they do in a responsible, courteous and mature manner. They listen carefully and respectfully to their teachers, and

their response in lessons is good. They are very well-prepared for the responsibilities of adult life, whether continuing as students or becoming employees.

6. Students get on well with each other, and generally, with the staff in all three schools. They are a friendly, outgoing group of people. There is a very good working atmosphere, which while having a different feel in each of the three schools, is clearly founded on a desire to improve on previous best. A developing sense of team-working is evident, through which many students support each other's learning. Many students develop into effective independent learners. There is a high level of social interaction, with good mixing across age, gender and race. Several sixth-form students help in classes in their 11-16 schools. This makes a significant contribution to their personal development.

7. Attendance in Years 12 and 13, where recorded, is satisfactory. Movement between the three schools is, for the majority, achieved well although there is some incidence of lateness. However, examination of registers recording sixth-form attendance shows that their completion is sporadic. Though attendance is not seen to be having a limiting effect on students' achievement, it is nonetheless an issue which should be addressed as a matter of personal discipline for the students, and as a duty of care issue for the management of the joint sixth form.

8. The students are an astute group of people, well aware of the political issues facing the three very different schools in developing the joint sixth form. In interviews, they are unanimous in desiring its fuller integration. Students are very loyal to the sixth form and appreciative of the efforts of their teachers and the good quality of teaching they receive. They think that, when given the opportunity, students from all three schools mix well together.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

9. Teaching and learning are good overall. The quality is at least satisfactory on 99 per cent of lessons, good or better in 87 per cent, and in 33 per cent, very good or better. In five lessons, teaching was excellent in food studies, history and product design. Across the three schools, students are served well by the commitment and subject expertise of their teachers. There is some very good teaching in the subjects referred to above and in art and design, chemistry, English, French, government and politics, mathematics, physical education and psychology. In teaching of this quality, teachers bring life to the most demanding concepts, with the result that students readily grasp challenging ideas. The students value the high expectations they feel are set for them and respond willingly. They make good use of the time allocated for independent study.

10. In almost all subjects the overall standard of teaching is at least good; in product design, food studies and psychology it is very good. Chemistry teaching is satisfactory. In those lessons where teaching did not reach a good standard, students were not given clear evaluative comments about their work and where improvements were needed. Consequently, they did not have an accurate understanding of how well they were doing and what to tackle next in order to raise their standard. On occasion, students settle for their predicted grade as their individual target because they do not know how to do better. In most subjects, key skills are taught well and teaching is always at least satisfactory. A satisfactory key skills lesson was observed during the inspection.

11. Excellence in teaching shows in product design, where teachers' high expectations and highly effective methods and handling of student groups result in excellent effort by the students who set a demanding pace for their own work. There is excellent handling of student groups in French which stimulates concentrated effort from the students. These qualities in teaching were evident in electronics, where very challenging tasks engaged students fully

throughout the session and stimulated rigorous intellectual effort. Teachers' subject expertise is strong in English, mathematics, art and design, product design, food studies, geography, history, ICT and psychology. Students generally have a good idea of how well they are doing, although in biology, chemistry and psychology this is only satisfactory because the feedback they receive from their teachers is satisfactory.

12. The good teaching and learning are generally not leading to good achievement. The good quality is ensuring that students sustain their standards on entry to the sixth form. The evidence from the inspection and from the 2001 results confirms this. However, the lack of arrangements across the sixth form as a whole for tracking individual progress to check that all students are being equally well challenged to raise their game is the significant factor. A threshold of very good teaching with excellent challenge needs to be established.

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

13. The range of learning opportunities provided is very good and builds appropriately on the courses provided in students' 11 to 16 schools. The offer matches the students' ambitions and aspirations and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. It includes a very wide range of 32 advanced academic and four advanced vocational courses, with intermediate courses and two GCSE re-sit courses. There is a well-structured programme for those students needing to improve their key skills.

14. A good range of enrichment activities is provided in each of the three schools, with strengths in sports and adventure activities, in business development programmes such as Young Enterprise, in charity and fundraising activities and in supporting the personal development of younger school members. The personal, social and health education programme includes a range of activities including preparation for examinations. The statutory requirements for the study of religious education are not met because students taking four A-level subjects are not required to follow the general studies course which contains the religious education element.

HOW WELL DOES THE SIXTH FORM CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

15. Agreed procedures for monitoring students' attainment, for supporting their academic progress and for meeting individual needs are not established for the joint sixth form. While teachers know students from their own school very well, they are not always confident when dealing with students from other schools. There is some evidence of preconceptions about 'new' students being allowed to interfere with a professional approach. There is little evidence that information gained from students' assessments, both at GCSE and during Years 12 and 13, is used to ensure that curriculum planning and development are targeted appropriately to achieve the highest standards. In many subject areas, there has been no review of assessment and monitoring arrangements because this has not been a joint sixth-form requirement. The effect is to limit students' achievement. The use of the data and information gathered from students' assessments as a tool for planning is unsatisfactory.

16. Procedures for carrying out assessments are however, good, and good in the majority of courses. Students receive good progress reports. In addition to showing their predicted examination grades, the reports give clear targets showing how students can achieve the required standard.

Advice, support and guidance

17. Students in the sixth form remain on the roll of their 11 to 16 school and continue to receive the good levels of support they did in Years 7 to 11. However, lack of agreed procedures and effective communication between the three schools result in the level of care being fragmented when students attend different school sites for different subjects. When those students who are confident seek out help from teachers from any of the three schools, this help is willingly given. But, when students lack the confidence to do this, there are no systems to ensure that appropriate, well-informed support is offered when needed. Responses to the questionnaire completed by students from Carre's School and the High School show that students do not always find that there is satisfactory support when they experience personal difficulties. The overall quality of guidance is satisfactory.

18. Little information about the sixth form is given in the prospectuses of the three schools. There is no joint prospectus for the sixth form; a short sixth form booklet gives the briefest of information. The information available is insufficient for students and their parents to feel confident that their choice of courses is the most suitable. When deciding on the subjects they will take in the sixth form, students receive good advice about courses run at their 11 to 16 school, but often insufficient, and sometimes conflicting advice about the full joint sixth-form offer; for example, about differing requirements and approaches in different courses in the same subject. Students from each of the three schools found that speaking to other students was more helpful than speaking to staff when it came to making decisions about where to study a particular subject. Lack of awareness of the demands of subjects and of new ways of learning have resulted in some students feeling unprepared. They are unsure of the rules, regulations and expectations operating in the three schools, as hardly any are jointly agreed for the sixth form. The brief induction programme offered is inadequate. The students themselves feel that there should be team-building exercise when they start in Year 12, to 'sweep away' misconceptions and apprehensions and clarify minor procedural issues. For example, some students in Year 12 were still, at the time of the inspection in March, unclear about how to access the extensive library facilities in each school.

19. More than half the questionnaires returned by students were critical of aspects of sixth-form life relating to communication of information, care and support. They also think that the lack of space and unwelcoming common rooms limit their opportunities for mixing except in lessons. They are critical of the lack of toilet facilities for female students in the boys' school. In discussion, groups of students from all three schools were critical of the lack of induction at the different schools; of communications, for example about the extra-curricular opportunities available to them at each school; of the lack of guidance about how to manage their time and expectations for free periods; of differing break times; and of differing expectations of behaviour, work and dress. For example protective laboratory coats are required to be worn at two schools, but not the third; uniform must be worn at one site but not at the other two. Students feel there are insufficient opportunities to socialise as a sixth-form group. They find that moving between schools leaves little time for groups wishing to continue with private study or social activities, due to restrictions on space and differing rules on the use of sixth-form common rooms. The inspection team finds these comments perceptive and justified.

20. Good advice and guidance is available for students planning their next step after the sixth form. Two of the schools regularly join together for presentations, for example on university entrance or gap years, but these opportunities are not extended to the third school. Advice and support for those students applying to enter higher education or employment are good and a significant proportion achieves university places.

21. Each of the three schools records sixth-form attendance in different ways using different systems. Each requires students to register in person at their 11-16 school prior to attending lessons. Given the distance between sites and the time allowed for travel in the timetable, students frequently fail to comply with this procedure and go straight to the site where their first lesson will take place. Students' explanations of their friends' possible location are accepted by staff in order that the absent student gets an attendance mark. Form tutors may not see some of their students for a number of days, depending on the timetable. Signing in and out procedures for students vary between the three schools. They are not rigorously applied or effectively monitored by staff; nor consistently adhered to by students. As a consequence, the attendance data available is inaccurate. The three schools cannot be certain that the whereabouts of each student are known throughout the school day. This has major implications for the health and safety of students and is a breach of each school's duty of care towards its students.

HOW WELL IS THE SIXTH FORM LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

22. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. A vision for the development of the sixth form and a strategic view about how this will be achieved are lacking. There are no joint procedures for the three governing bodies to exercise their responsibilities for the sixth form. There is no management structure and no post for overall responsibility for what is now a large and rapidly growing organisation, the size of a small school, with over 500 students and a joint income approaching £2 million. Best value principles are not applied to decision-making for the joint sixth form. The sixth form is not cost-effective. Above average levels of funding generate a surplus of £86,000, which is not used within the sixth form to raise achievement or support other educational priorities. Staffing, resources and accommodation are good for the 16 subjects inspected. Overall, students enter the sixth form with above average attainment and leave with above average attainment. This represents only satisfactory achievement.

23. The three headteachers work together within a joint administrative group (JAG). The role of this group is not clearly defined. While holding full authority, it exercises little apparent responsibility for all decisions regarding the sixth form. This arrangement fails to achieve managed provision and does not have the capacity to do so. There are no agreed systems for managing, monitoring, evaluating and developing the work of the sixth form. The three schools do not have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision because the lack of systems disallows this. Each governing body receives a termly report for discussion at governing body meetings. However, no arrangements are in place (such as a joint sixth-form strategy committee of governors from each school) whereby the three governing bodies can exercise oversight of sixth-form provision and development.

24. As currently defined, the job description of the post of director of studies is not a leadership and management post. It is impossible to fulfil, consisting of an extensive list of tasks focused on administrative detail as opposed to strategic co-ordination. The post holds responsibility for collecting examination fees, but has little influence over budget planning. It holds responsibility for examination entries but has no influence over course provision. There are separate and largely dissimilar job descriptions for the heads of sixth form in each

school. As a consequence, the influence of these senior staff in moving the sixth form forward is constrained.

25. Students are very supportive of the opportunities the joint sixth form gives them. They enjoy being members of the group of schools. However, they are highly critical of the way the joint sixth form is managed and speak of a lack of communication between the three schools. Students feel all three schools are keen to talk of a joint sixth form but reluctant to relinquish any control. They feel that the best interests of the students are not put first.

Resources

26. In all aspects of sixth-form resourcing, the quality is good overall. Staff are well-qualified and their expertise never less than good. The level and quality of resources are mostly good, while satisfactory in biology, chemistry and history. The accommodation is good, except for English, biology, chemistry and history where it is satisfactory. In one of the three schools, library provision is inadequate, and in general, the provision for common room and study facilities is unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE THREE SCHOOLS DO TO IMPROVE THE SIXTH FORM FURTHER?

- (1) Implement joint arrangements for the three governing bodies to exercise their responsibility for sixth-form provision through, for example, determining the remit and membership of a joint group or committee.
(Paragraphs: 21-24)
- (2) Implement systematic procedures for the leadership and management of the joint sixth form through:
 - Implementing an appropriate staffing structure, including administrative support for the joint sixth form
 - Determining the responsibilities of all staff working for the joint sixth form
 - Establishing procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality and cost-effectiveness of provision.(Paragraphs: 21, 22, 24, 31, 39, 57, 61, 66, 74, 79, 88, 103)
- (3) Implement procedures for monitoring students' attendance.
(Paragraphs: 8, 21)
- (4) Use information from assessments and results to identify strengths and rectify weaknesses in provision, through:
 - Analysing students' results in a range of ways: by subject, by course, by staff, by site, by gender, and by individuals' prior attainment at GCSE.
 - Using the analysis as a factor in monitoring teaching and learning.(Paragraphs: 2, 3, 10, 12, 15)
- (5) Implement arrangements to meet the statutory requirements for religious education.
(Paragraph: 14)

SECTION 2

PART C: JOINT SIXTH FORM DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

89

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students

45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Sixth form

Number	5	24	48	11	0	1	0
Percentage	6	27	54	12	0	1	0

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

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

These figures are not available for the sixth form as a whole.

SECTION 2

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

In the inspection, 16 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	49	94	87	51	43	6.4	5.8
Further mathematics	2	100	N/A	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Biology	46	96	88	41	34	6.0	5.2
Chemistry	26	96	85	50	43	6.7	5.9
Physics	25	88	88	40	40	5.7	5.7
Food studies	6	100	N/A	0	N/A	4.3	N/A
Graphic products	11	100	N/A	27	N/A	6.2	N/A
Product design	7	100	N/A	86	N/A	8.7	N/A
Business	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.0	N/A
Business studies	24	100	92	50	25	7.2	5.5
Economics and business	18	100	89	50	36	7.2	5.5
Information technology	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.6	N/A
Information and communication technology	6	100	N/A	17	N/A	5.0	N/A
Leisure and tourism	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14.4	10.1
Sports studies	36	100	93	25	25	5.4	5.1
Health and social care	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	8.2	10.8
Art	8	100	N/A	0	N/A	3.2	N/A
Art and design	12	100	96	33	46	6.5	6.6
Music	1	100	93	100	35	8.0	5.7
Theatre studies	9	56	N/A	11	N/A	2.7	N/A
Geography	35	100	92	51	38	7.0	5.7
History	36	89	89	56	37	6.6	5.5
Law	8	100	N/A	38	N/A	6.0	N/A
Psychology	13	100	87	15	34	4.8	5.3

Sociology	8	75	88	38	35	4.8	5.3
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GCE A level and AVCE courses

	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
English	36	94	91	N/A	31	N/A	5.3
English language	6	100	92	0	30	5.4	5.3
English literature	16	100	95	37.5	37	6.3	5.9
French	15	93	89	27	38	5.6	5.6
German	6	100	91	17	40	4.0	5.8
Spanish	10	40	90	0	39	1.4	5.7

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. No lessons in other subjects were observed.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Good achievement
- Good teaching and effective learning
- Students work diligently and are keen to do well.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' planning not always effective for the wide range of ability in some classes
- Lack of subject co-ordination between the three schools.

27. The inspection covered mathematics and further mathematics at AS- and A-level. These courses are divided into four areas: pure, mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics. Each area is divided into modules, some of which are compulsory and others optional. Overall, the curriculum is wide and varied and gives most students the opportunity to follow the courses of their choice.

28. Standards in the work seen are average and reflect the 2001 examinations results. Students are working at a variety of levels. This variation is largely the result of the differences in prior attainment of students when they started the course, some of whom had not taken the higher level GCSE course. These students find that they are handicapped by their lack of algebraic skills when learning new work. For example, in a large Year 12 class, students were asked to solve quadratic inequalities; this proved difficult for a small number of students who were still unable to solve quadratic equations. In the further mathematics group, standards are high. Students solve second order differential equations and use hyperbolic substitutions to evaluate integrals. At all levels, students develop their knowledge and understanding well and evidence from earlier work indicates that achievement is good. Overall A-level results in 2001 are average and have remained fairly consistent over the past few years. This represents good achievement for the majority of students. However there is a wide variation in the results attained by individual students.

29. Students' attitudes and response are good in all groups. They have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. They answer questions and engage fully in discussion. This helps them to clarify their ideas and make good progress. Higher attainers persevere well with difficult problems. This helps to develop their understanding and insight. A particular strength is the logical way in which students organise and present their work. This helps them with revision in preparation for examinations. Students are pleased with the way in which the joint sixth form works and the additional choices it gives them when selecting their courses. Mathematics is a popular subject; almost all students complete their course and sit the examination.

30. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned at an appropriate level. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject and how to teach it effectively. This helps them to motivate students who are determined to understand what they are doing. In

some large classes, however, teachers have difficulty in ensuring that lower attainers understand the work. This results in some students wasting time until help is available. By discussing appropriate examples, teachers help students to understand the principles and methods used to solve problems. For example in a Year 12 mechanics lesson on moments, students were encouraged to consider the turning effect of forces in a variety of situations. By discussing these situations, they learnt to calculate these effects and use them to solve similar problems. Good regular assessment helps students to remedy errors and tackle new work with confidence.

31. The subject is managed well in each school. Teachers work well together and there is a positive ethos for learning. However, overall management systems for the subject within the joint sixth form are not in place, with no regular arrangements and procedures for example, for meetings and the sharing of information.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Above average results at AS- and A-level
- Good integration of a range of practical work into biology teaching
- Well-equipped laboratories.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient account taken in planning of the range of students' abilities
- Insufficient co-ordination between the partner schools.

32. Standards of work are above average. By Year 12 students can plan an investigation of the effect of ethanol on the cell permeability of beetroots. They can explain confidently the extent of solvent coloration under different conditions and justify their choice of filter for the colorimeter. These standards reflect the 2001 AS-level results, which were above average both for passes and at the highest grades. The staying-on rate is high, with over eighty per cent of students continuing their study of biology to A-level. By Year 13, students show confidence in the use of aseptic techniques. They use statistical techniques to interpret their work, for example, the density variations of several 'mock' blood samples. These standards reflect the 2001 A-level results which were above average both at pass grades and at the highest grades. While results have maintained similar standards over three years, the average points scored improved in 2001. In relation to their GCSE results, students' achievement is satisfactory. Almost all completed the course. Achievement in relation to students' qualifications on entry is satisfactory. Both in Years 12 and 13, the overall standard achieved at GCSE is maintained. Classes do not include different groups of students, for example from ethnic minority backgrounds, and gifted and talented students have not been identified by the schools. Male and female students do equally well. The joint sixth form has not analysed results according to gender.

33. Attitudes and response are good. Students' attitudes to biology are very positive. They evidently enjoy the subject and value the opportunity to work with students from other schools. Even when lessons merely require students to listen or answer written questions, behaviour is excellent. Students co-operate very well in pair-work, which in some classes includes mixed gender groups. However, there are limited opportunities for students to show initiative. Attendance levels are good.

34. Teaching and learning are good. Staff know their subjects well and expectations are generally high. Teaching of key skills is satisfactory. Planning has weaknesses which limit

some students' learning. Although subject content is covered, the schemes of work are either little more than a summary of the examination specification or else are incomplete. There are no planned strategies to cater for the range of students' learning needs. By contrast, good integration of practical work strengthens learning and resources are used well. In the less successful lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for students' participation. Students do not always receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. The strengths in teaching and learning ensure that standards are maintained well. The strengths do not raise students' achievement because of the areas needing attention.

35. Leadership and management of the joint sixth-form provision are unsatisfactory. Teachers from the three schools do not meet regularly to discuss methods of teaching the subject. There are no opportunities to share and so learn from good practice. Where teaching is shared between two schools, the biology co-ordinator does not have sufficient access to data from lesson observations of all the teachers involved. All laboratories are well-equipped. Libraries have numerous textbooks but there is inadequate provision of books to inform on recent subject developments, to challenge higher attainers and promote interest in biology.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Above average results at AS- and A-level
- Well above average higher grade passes at A-level
- Some good practical teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory long-term planning for teaching the curriculum
- Insufficient attention to the range of students' abilities in planning and in some teaching
- Insufficient contact and co-operation between teachers in the three schools.

36. Standards of work are above average. By Year 12 most students understand simple organic formulae. They can distinguish between free radical and electrophilic reactions. The ablest students can suggest why hydration of some alkenes forms more than one alcohol. These standards reflect the 2001 AS-level results which were above average both at pass grades and at the highest grades. Only about two-thirds of the students who started AS-level chemistry in Year 12 have continued to A-level. Over half of the students in one group discontinued their study of chemistry. By Year 13, students can tackle quantitative questions on equilibria. They apply their knowledge of intermolecular forces to interpret solubilities. Overall, these standards reflect the 2001 A-level results which were above average at pass grades and well above average at the highest grades. These results reflected the make-up of the group which included many students whose standards were well above average and others who were of lower attainment. Results have maintained similar standards over three years. In relation to their GCSE results, students' achievement was generally satisfactory. Almost all students completed the course. Students' achievement in the work seen in relation to their qualifications on entry is satisfactory overall. Both in Years 12 and 13, the overall standard achieved at GCSE is maintained. However, students in one very small group did not benefit from the challenge of working alongside other students. Most Year 12 students are being challenged and enthused by their teachers, but in one group, students were confused about redox behaviour of halogens. A wider sample of the work of this group was not made available. No gifted and talented students had been identified by the schools and classes did not include different groups of students, for example from ethnic minorities. Male and female students do equally well. No analysis of results according to gender was available.

37. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Students display very positive attitudes in lessons and co-operate well in practical work. In all three schools, students show high interest in chemistry. Attendance levels are good.

38. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Year 13, teaching was either satisfactory or good, whereas in Year 12 it was mainly very good, but there was some poor teaching. Staff know their subjects well. Teaching of key skills is satisfactory. Course planning is unsatisfactory. Some schemes of work are little more than lists of content; there is insufficient reference to the range of resources to be used, including ICT, and to strategies to cater for students' varying abilities. Where teaching is very good, students carry out practical work with care and due attention to safety, and can set up and use complex apparatus. The learning of weaker students is enhanced by teachers' careful explanations which make good use of molecular models. A very good lesson on thermochemistry supported students who found the calculation difficult, while including discussion of a challenging optional extension exercise. Although one group carried out a practical assessment carefully, they wore no protective clothing; students who did not observe the rule of silence disturbed others. Learning of one Year 12 group was taken forward well by very good, supportive comments on homework. In Year 13, marking was less detailed and students were given limited guidance on how to improve. As in biology, the strengths in teaching and learning ensure that high standards are maintained. The strengths do not raise students' achievement because of the areas needing attention.

39. Leadership and management of the joint sixth-form provision are unsatisfactory. Teachers from the three schools do not meet regularly to discuss teaching methods. There are no opportunities to share good practice and benefit from it. Three examination specifications are taught in Year 12 and two in Year 13. This has prevented the amalgamation of one uneconomically small Year 13 group with another. All laboratories are well-equipped. Libraries have numerous textbooks but few books on famous chemists, either male and female, or of general interest; for example on environmental chemistry or the impact of recent discoveries such as in polymer chemistry or pharmaceuticals and molecular modelling.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on food studies and product design within the subject area of design and technology. No lessons in other subjects were observed.

Design and technology

Food studies

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning
- Rising standards of attainment which mostly exceed the targets students are expected to achieve
- Very good relationships and mature attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students' lack of knowledge of food science
- Teaching of food science not integrated effectively into practical work to support learning.

40. Food studies are taught to two groups on two sites. The course was introduced as a

pilot in 1999. It is currently studied by female students only, although it is open to male students. The schools have responded to the different needs of students by offering two courses, the decision based on the monitoring of students' progress and results and knowledge of the way different students learn most effectively. The courses are generally similar but with some differences of syllabus and slightly different emphases in teaching and learning styles. In consequence, and because of very good teaching, standards have risen over the three years and numbers choosing to take the subject are rising.

41. Standards of work are above average. Although small numbers are involved, most students gain higher grades in their A-level work. They research and plan their coursework thoroughly and record the development of their projects in well-presented and logically sequenced order. Students achieve higher standards of presentation when they make effective use of computers to desktop publish their coursework. Students have a good knowledge of nutrition which they use to plan food for different groups, such as children and those who need to follow a gluten-free diet, applying quality control criteria resembling those used in industry. Students evaluate their work realistically and modify their products to improve taste, texture and appearance. They present practical work attractively to appeal to consumers and keep good photographic evidence of this. Students show very high regard for health and safety and very good knowledge of these in different settings. However, they have insufficient understanding of the underlying scientific concepts relating to food preparation to utilise this in sufficient depth when developing food products.

42. Achievement is good. Most students enter the sixth form with good GCSE grades, although some have limited experience of the subject. They adapt well to the higher demands of A-level work, except in food science which they find difficult. They make good progress in project management and independent research skills and in developing food products for particular niche markets. They learn to extract relevant information from published texts without resorting to plagiarism. Students write at length and accurately, communicating information efficiently through good use of technical terms. Most use computers to present the results of their research as bar charts. They have sufficient mathematical skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of the course.

43. Results at A-level in 2001 were above the national average, reflecting the rising trend in standards in the work seen. Results at AS-level were average and matched or exceeded students' expected standards.

44. Students' attitudes are very good, often excellent. Students are interested, enthusiastic and determined to achieve their best. Their very good relationships with each other and with teachers encourage high quality discussion and respect for others' views.

45. Teaching and learning are very good, and on occasion, excellent. Teachers have high expectations. They have persevered with developing new courses and modifying provision to match students' learning needs. They have very good subject knowledge which they communicate effectively and with enthusiasm. They keep very good records of students' attainment which are used very effectively to monitor progress and set targets for improvement. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with time targets to develop students' ability to work to deadlines. Students learn to manage their projects well because they are given high quality guidance which encourages them to work independently. In the best lessons, targets for each student are set at the start so that students know exactly what they are aiming for and take responsibility for achieving it.

46. Although leadership and management are separate for the two groups, both benefit from good direction for the teaching of the subject and effective monitoring of performance which has led to successful modification of provision.

Product design

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

Strengths

- Very high standards
- Very good teaching and learning
- Very good relationships and personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough emphasis on knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials
- Development plan not updated.

47. Product design was introduced in one of the schools three years ago.

48. Standards are well above average by Year 13. Students have very good design skills and a mature approach to evaluating their work. They develop ambitious ideas and make excellent progress in learning the new and specific skills needed to complete projects. The products they design are imaginative and functional. Development of designs is documented well in logically organised folders. These show depth of research and understanding of the design process of a very high order. Sketches and formal drawings very clearly communicate ideas and chart the progress of projects, including how ideas change or are modified as a result of realistic evaluation of work in progress. Students work independently and consider their designs very carefully, discussing them with peers and the teacher. All expect to justify each design feature. Standards are above average in Year 12. Students adapt well to the additional demands of study at this level. Their work is highly original and shows a very good standard of craft skills when they make products such as a wine rack or items of furniture. Students use a range of hand and machine tools confidently and skilfully and know which to select for different tasks, paying very good attention to detail when they cut and join materials. They use computers as appropriate to present work and to achieve high standards in designing and drawing. However, their knowledge of the properties of the different materials they work with is not sufficiently developed.

49. Results in examinations reflect the work seen in lessons. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades at A-level in 2001 was well above average and has been consistently so in recent years. In AS-level examinations, the proportion of Year 12 students gaining the highest grades was high. All students exceeded their target grades.

50. Achievement is very good. Most students enter the sixth form with high grades at GCSE. They respond very well to the additional demands of advanced level work and make very good progress. All current students exceeded their targets grades in examination coursework in March 2002. Some did so significantly, for example improving from grade E to grade C. The staying-on rate to Year 13 is good. Those who discontinue the course in Year 13 have considered reasons for doing so.

51. Students show excellent attitudes and response. Their approach to learning is mature. Their relationships with each other and their teachers are excellent. When evaluating each other's work, they listen to advice from their peers as well as from teachers. They take responsibility for their work and develop in confidence.

52. Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use teaching methods which inspire and challenge students. They encourage independent learning strongly. Students take their work very seriously because teachers have very high expectations of them. Teachers plan lessons very well and provide excellent individual guidance to ensure that all students achieve their best. They encourage students to be ambitious in their plans and to develop high quality designs. The level of discussion develops confidence and maturity in students and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. The teaching of key skills of literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT are successful in guiding students to produce accurate, well-written and well-presented assignments.

53. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is very clear direction for the work of the subject. Teachers work as a team and share good practice, sometimes by combining lessons to provide additional support and to communicate their enthusiasm for the subject to students. The head of department sets a good example in this respect and uses such occasions as a contribution to staff development in which technicians, trainee teachers and learning support assistants are included. All work together for the benefit of students and because they gain clear enjoyment from being involved.

BUSINESS

The focus was on A-level business studies. The Advanced Vocational course in business and the A-level economics and business course were also sampled. The work in the AVCE course shows average standards and good teaching and learning. In the economics and business course, the work shows above average standards; satisfactory teaching and learning were observed.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and very good planning
- Good use of assessments to monitor students' progress
- Good planning across the three schools for the introduction of new courses
- Wide range of courses catering for all students' needs across the three schools.

Areas for improvement

- Marking not clear enough about how standards can be improved
- The three business departments not meeting regularly enough to explore good practice.

54. Standards at both AS- and A-level are above average. Both male and female students develop a good understanding of key business concepts and apply this knowledge effectively to case studies. Most take pride in their work, with well-organised notes and very well presented coursework assignments showing good ICT skills. A significant number however, have weak skills in file management, presenting work without dates or headings and without identifying homework and class work. In lessons, Year 13 students confidently answer questions on business strategy and show that they appreciate the factors affecting growth and recession. These standards are reflected in the 2001 A-level results. All students gained grades A to D, with half gaining the highest grades. This has been a continuing trend over the past three years. When account is taken of the students' prior attainment at GCSE, this represents good achievement. Value-added data suggests that a significant number attains better grades than predicted. The course is popular and most students continue into Year 13.

55. Students are usually well-motivated, many choosing to continue with business studies at degree level. Relationships are very good. Students enjoy business studies, listen attentively, collaborate well and are keen to do well. All show a willingness to engage in independent study.

56. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers' very good up-to-date subject knowledge provides a solid basis for students to develop their understanding. This was notable in Year 13 when students looked at factors leading to global prosperity and stability. Lessons are planned well; most have shared learning targets and a wide range of timed activities; the increasing level of challenge in successive activities generates good pace in the work. A case study on well-known national companies, investigating corporate responsibility, ensured that Year 13 students were well-engaged throughout the long session. A mix of brainstorming techniques, group work and individual reflection were all supported well by the teacher's interventions; there was constant review of the targets and questions to prompt students' understanding. These methods strengthened the learning. Lessons offer good opportunities for students to develop key skills. For example, students communicate their findings orally and use computers to enhance written presentation, although sometimes their oral contributions are limited and insufficient use is made of ICT. Tracking of progress is good and takes account of prior attainment, class work, homework and examinations. Work is assessed conscientiously and positively, although students do not always receive enough guidance as to how it can be improved.

57. The joint sixth form works very well in terms of the wide range of courses provided to meet students' needs. However, opportunities are lacking for the three departments to meet more regularly to explore and develop good practice. While the individual departments are well-managed, the leadership and management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on A-level ICT. The joint sixth form provides a very good choice of ICT courses for students. Results in the Advanced Vocational course in Year 13 were above average in 2001. All students achieved well, gaining at least a merit, with over half securing a distinction. Overall standards in the Year 12 Intermediate GNVQ course are average. However, there is some variation within the two teaching groups, with about a third of students working at an above average standard, and a third at a standard a little below average. This variation reflects the attainment on entry of different students. In all teaching groups the general level of achievement is good. No students studied for the Intermediate GNVQ in 2001.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Very good range of courses to meet the differing needs of students
- Good achievement by most students
- Effective teaching of a wide range of courses because of teachers' very good subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Students not benefiting fully from the various courses on offer because of the lack of subject liaison between the three schools.

58. Standards by Year 13 are above average. Most students can write an effective specification for a database. They confidently explain how they arrived at this in order to meet the requirements of their task and how they used the technical facilities available to produce a user-friendly system. Most can produce a system to meet requirements such as providing a booking system for a concert series. Most show good methodology in testing different proposals before selecting one. Achievement is good. In 2001, results at A-level were average. Although a below average proportion of students gained the highest grades, all passed by securing at least Grade E. The 2001 results were less good than those gained in recent years, although achievement was generally satisfactory. There have been improvements aimed at securing a return to normal levels in 2002. Most Year 12 students who took the AS-level examination passed.

59. Students show good attitudes and a high level of commitment to their individual projects. In discussions, they are very positive about the courses on which they are enrolled and the teaching that they receive. A significant proportion identified ICT as their favourite course. The course is popular and numbers increasing. Students intending to continue their studies into Year 13 usually do so.

60. Teaching and learning are consistently good. A very high level of subject expertise enables teachers to adapt their approach successfully for different course requirements and the specific needs of students on each. For example, difficult concepts and techniques, such as database construction, are explained with clarity and sensitivity so that students are well-supported in 'conquering' these. However, in one Year 12 lesson, a small number of students of lower prior attainment encountered difficulty in handling some difficult concepts. This was not helped by the fact that the teaching group was large and there was considerable variation in students' attainment. When students work on individual projects, teachers monitor their work closely and guide well. They do this by pointing students in the right direction but leaving overall responsibility for the work with the students themselves. Teachers have very good rapport with their students.

61. The leadership and management of the subject are good within the school that provides the courses. Students' needs have been effectively audited and courses provided to match the range. There is however, scope for better liaison between the three schools to ensure that all students are able to benefit fully from the courses and that their progress is monitored closely, whether or not they are following a course in their 11-16 school. Comments from students indicate that timetabling considerations often influence the allocation of a place in a vocational or A-level group, rather than the suitability of the course for individual needs. This is rightly recognised as an issue by the three schools.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on A-level sports studies within the subject area of physical education. Lessons were also sampled in the Advanced Vocational course in leisure and tourism. The standards seen are average and achievement is good. Most students complete the course and results in 2001 were above average. Staff have very good subject knowledge. Detailed assessments and the use of ICT as a support for learning are features of this successful subject.

Physical education

Sports studies

Overall, the quality of provision in sports studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The availability of the course at each school
- Good teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistent encouragement of students' independent learning
- Means of improvement not always indicated in assessments of students' written work.

62. All the lessons observed were on the theoretical elements of the course.

63. Standards of work are average. Students in Year 13 have sound and sometimes very detailed knowledge of the required elements of anatomy and physiology. They have a good understanding of characteristics of excellence in performance and can speak and write intelligently about sociological and psychological issues associated with sport and healthy life styles. They are on course to achieve results consistent with their prior attainment in examinations. Written work is usually relevant, clearly communicated and with appropriate detail and illustration. Most students make appropriate use of ICT, including imported graphics, and use both electronic and printed text for research. The effectiveness of the work of a small but significant number in each group, including that of some otherwise able writers, is reduced by errors of elementary spelling and faults of grammar and punctuation. There are no clearly identifiable differences in the attainment of female and male students.

64. The majority of students who begin the AS-level course in Year 12 complete it and continue to A-level. Those who cannot meet the demands of the course, despite additional help and support, are advised at an early stage not to continue. At AS-level in 2001, the majority gained a pass grade, with more than a quarter gaining the highest grades. Since this examination was introduced only recently, comparisons cannot be made with national figures. Most of the students who were unsuccessful in the examination have subsequently re-taken it successfully. In recent years, results at A-level have been close to national averages. In 2001, all students gained at least a pass grade. The proportion gaining the highest grades was average. There were significant differences in the average point scores of the three groups but their combined average was just above the national figure. Almost all students gained the grades expected on the basis of previous attainment. Achievement is satisfactory.

65. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and occasionally, very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of how students' attainment is assessed externally. They explain their aims for each lesson and link the work to earlier and future learning so that students understand the relevance and coherence of what they are doing. They have high expectations of students' effort and achievement and insist that work should be completed by agreed times. They value the contributions that students make to lessons and express their approval, although sufficient opportunities for students to work independently are not always provided. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and support good attitudes to learning. There is variation in the quality of assessment of students' written work both within and between the groups. The best practice identifies the strengths of the work, makes a judgement and offers guidance to students on the means of improvement, such as the need to provide more detail or illustrative examples.

66. The management of the course in each school is based upon a common concern for the success of each student and a determination to raise standards further. There is no formal sharing of experience or practice between the schools and no joint management structure. The management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus in the inspection was on the Advanced Vocational course in health and social care. No other subject was sampled.

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching encouraging good learning
- Work matched to students' needs through individual support
- Well-qualified and experienced teachers
- Students' good attitudes and response
- Good co-operative planning of the new Advanced Vocational course.

Areas for improvement

- Too many students not completing the course
- Unsatisfactory attendance
- Middle ability students' weak skills of critical analysis and evaluation.
- Students' lack of confidence in tackling the highest level of work.

67. Standards are average. Students' coursework is generally thoughtful and well-presented, with effective use of ICT. Higher attaining students in Year 13 show critical ability when considering how communication methods can affect a health campaign. Teachers' records indicate a rate of absenteeism that has a negative effect on learning. Students' assignments in Year 13 reveal that they are not challenging themselves sufficiently to meet the criteria for higher grades. Discussions with Year 12 and 13 students indicate that they are making good progress in developing independent study skills and in understanding the assessment criteria for their assignments. However, the skills of analysis and critical evaluation of middle ability students are insufficiently developed. Of the eight students entered for health and social care (advanced) in 2001, three gained distinctions and one a merit. No course completion results for AVCE are available. The current Year 13 students have achieved pass grades in the unit tests. Of the 14 students who started in September 2001, nine remain committed to the course. Students generally enter the course with lower average GCSE scores than those of students entering other courses. A comparison of Year 12 students' coursework with their GCSE grades shows good achievement. Students are well-informed about the subject in advance, have good attitudes to their work and teachers stress good standards. In 2000, in the health and social care NVQ course, three students gained a pass result.

68. All students are well-motivated. They show maturity in discussion. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and application to work and students respond well to these expectations. Students see the value of the course to their future career plans.

69. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have strong knowledge of their subject and use a range of teaching approaches that facilitates effective learning. There is good planning for lessons and good long-term planning of the course. Students are given good guidance, so

that they are very clear about what needs to be covered in the lesson. There is a high level of individual support for students and this means that all are fully included in lesson activities and make progress. By good interaction with students, teachers' provide reinforcement of the language and care values of the subject. Homework and class-work are integrated well.

70. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. All teachers of health and social care are well-qualified and well-informed about developments within the subject. Their good co-operation in planning the new course is now benefiting students' progress. Assessment procedures are good. There is a commitment to improving standards. Joint sixth-form arrangements are working satisfactorily.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on A-level art and design. The A-level music course was also sampled. Very few students have studied music in recent years. Recent appointments have reinvigorated the subject. Teaching is lively and students' attitudes are positive. Small numbers make national comparisons at AS-level impossible. Students take advantage of every opportunity out of hours to practice their skills.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject
- Very well targeted advice and guidance for students
- Students' use of their research into the works of artists to enhance the development of their own work.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient communication and sharing of skills between the three schools.

71. Standards by Year 13 are above average. A broad range of media and approaches are pursued to a high and often very high standard. Standards of drawing and painting skills are generally very high, whether vigorous and expressive or very skilfully controlled. For example, in a photography project, a 'blue-flash' technique, often used as a lucky chance shot, was effectively refined and controlled. Students' research into the work of artists and their subsequent use of the findings to enhance their own work is a strength in all three schools. For example, a study of the painter Ben Nicholson led to the absorption of elements of his style in students' work. In 2001, the results at A-level were broadly average. Within these results, there was some under-achievement among students taking A-level art and design but overall, achievement is broadly satisfactory. About half the students choose to continue the subject to A-level.

72. Teaching and learning are good. A key strength across the schools is the teachers' very good knowledge of students as individuals that enables them to give students very well-targeted advice and guidance. In a very good lesson, the teacher prepared individual lesson plans for each student, outlining their main targets for the lesson and the materials and resources required. Individually and collectively, the teachers show a breadth and depth of subject knowledge that instils confidence in the students to follow their own interests and ideas. A variety of teaching styles is used, reflecting the differing characteristics of each department, but all create a good working atmosphere and mutual trust and respect between teachers and students. All students receive good guidance on examination requirements. Key skills are taught well. Literacy skills are extended by the good quality of the discussions

between staff and students that enhance the use of both expressive and technical vocabulary. This is reflected in students' logbooks and research essays and in the confident way in which they speak about their own work. The teaching of ICT is good. There are many very good examples of word-processing in the form of well-produced and illustrated essays. Explorations into digital imagery are evaluated, refined and used creatively. Teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory overall. It is unevenly represented across the departments, although skills are well-taught where appropriate as, for example, in the photography course.

73. Students' attitudes and response are very good across all the schools. Very good levels of effort and concentration are common features, along with a strong emphasis on careful presentation and pride in the work.

74. Within the individual departments, priorities and educational direction are very clear. Each is committed to improvement and has the potential to build on its present levels of success. There is a special character to each of the departments, each with strengths in particular media. The range of expertise contained collectively in the departments is extensive: staff are practising artists and skilful teachers. However, the limited communication between the three departments results in a loss of potential development. The management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on A-level geography, history, government and politics and psychology. The A-level courses in electronics and religious studies were also sampled. Students make good progress in religious education lessons and teaching and learning are good. Excellent teaching and learning were seen in electronics so that the standard of work was well above average.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Above average A-level results in 2001, well above for male students
- Students' good attitudes
- Good teaching well-matched to the needs of students.

Areas for improvement

- Highest attainers, particularly female students, not gaining as high grades as they should in 2001
- Lack of systematic liaison between the three departments adversely affects students.

75. Standards by Year 13 are well above average. Generally, students are achieving well. Those who reached high standards at GCSE generally maintain these and those with below average standards at GCSE improve on them. A Year 12 group for example, in which GCSE results were below average, is moving well towards average standards, although many students are not yet fully secure in these. There is no significant variation in the work of male and female students. The evidence from recent A-level examinations however, is that the highest attainers, particularly female students, are not translating the standards shown in lessons into the highest grades to the extent that might be expected.

76. A-level results were above average in 2001. The results of male students were well above average, for both pass rates and the highest grades. Those of female students were above average for pass rates, but only average for the highest grades. All students gained a pass grade. In 2000, both the proportion passing and the proportion gaining the highest grades were lower than in previous years. In 2001, while the pass rate recovered, the proportion gaining the highest grades did not. The overall results were slightly lower than the grades predicted on the basis of prior attainment, although in one of the two groups they were slightly better. On the whole, the performance of male students was slightly better than expected, while that of female students was a little worse. All Year 12 students passed their AS-level examinations.

77. Students' attitudes are good. They listen carefully to teachers and other students and concentrate well on their work. When asked to undertake research, most do so diligently. Students are generally willing to volunteer answers, although a small number do not persevere with these as well as they could. There was little evidence of participation in discussions in lessons. In discussions with inspectors, students were overwhelmingly positive about their courses and teachers. However, one group feels that they could have received better guidance when choosing their courses as they were not fully aware of all the options available within the joint sixth form. Generally they believed that timetabling considerations were a more powerful influence when choosing which course to take up than the respective qualities of the various geography courses on offer. The findings of the inspection about the unsatisfactory induction for students support these views. Geography recruits well; students complete their course. About 80 per cent continue into Year 13.

78. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is well-pitched to the needs of students. For example, a Year 12 group in which prior attainment was predominantly below average, was given strong support in grasping complicated statistical calculations; the homework provided a good opportunity to practise and consolidate the skill. Learning is often improved by the good balance between strong guidance from teachers and opportunities for students' independent work. In most lessons, teachers give good guidance on examination techniques. Good opportunities are provided to analyse numerical data. For example, Year 13 students examined burglary statistics to assist their learning about urban hazards. Occasionally, teachers take answers from volunteers, but do not sufficiently challenge those choosing to stay silent. There is often an overestimation of what can be achieved in the lesson time available. Generally, teachers take steps to ensure that students not following the course in their 11-16 school are included well in activities.

79. Teachers in the three schools co-operate well with each other. However, this depends upon the efforts of individuals and is not organised systematically by the three schools together. Consequently, the benefits to students of having a good choice of courses with for example, different emphases on the contribution of coursework to the final examination, are not fully realised. The management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Government and politics

Overall, the quality of provision in government and politics is **good**.

Strengths

- Good results at AS-level and good achievement
- Students' very good attitudes and full use of the learning opportunities offered to them
- Good, knowledgeable teaching, often providing depth and challenge to students.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of collaborative working between teachers
- Lack of opportunities to visit political events and activities.

80. The course has recently been re-introduced; no students took the A-level in 2001. All Year 12 students who took the AS-level examination passed and achieved well. Now in Year 13, these students are continuing to achieve well, by maintaining well above average standards overall. In some parts of their work, for example when debating the effectiveness of pressure groups, the majority show very high standards. Many students embarking on the course in Year 12 show that they have yet to fully grasp the conventions of essay-writing and the need to write with full relevance to the questions asked. However, the work of current Year 13 students shows that they pay very good attention to advice given in marking and produce essays that are fluent, relevant and confident. This is shown for example, in work which analyses in detail the differences between the democrat and republican parties in America.

81. Students' attitudes are very good. They prepare thoroughly for presentations and debates. Because, during these, they listen so well and respond with commitment and relevance, they make full use of the opportunities they provide. In discussion with inspectors, students were highly appreciative of the course and the way in which the subject is taught. A view was stated however, that the two parts of the course, taught by different teachers, did not always fit together well. This comment reflects the inspection finding about the lack of collaborative working.

82. Teaching and learning are good. In most lessons, knowledgeable teaching adds depth to learning, for example, by alerting students to the complexities of the relations between pressure groups and different governments. Opportunities are frequently provided to prepare for and take part in presentations and debates; these are a highly challenging and effective means of learning through active participation. They also strongly reinforce key speaking and listening skills. During debates, teachers facilitate with tact and restraint, but with assertiveness when appropriate. Teachers usually ensure that all students are involved in discussions. Occasionally however, contributions are taken predominantly from volunteers, with insufficient challenging of those choosing to remain silent. Diligent marking, with much helpful guidance, makes a considerable contribution to the good improvement that most students make in their essay-writing technique. While there is generally good focus on the learning and use of key vocabulary, this is less good on a few occasions when teachers fail to ensure that expressions are understood by all. A few lessons have the characteristics of a lecture, supported by teachers' questions. These lessons tend to be satisfactory, rather than good or better, because students' active participation is restricted.

83. Leadership and management are good. The newly re-established course is a significant improvement to the curriculum offered to sixth-form students. It is developing well, with twice as many students enrolled in its second year as in the first and attracting students from each of the three schools. Students benefit from visits to events such as sixth-form conferences and talks from visiting speakers, but this provision does not include visits to

political events such as local council meetings and sessions of parliament and this is a weakness.

History

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

Strengths

- Wide choice of courses
- Good teaching
- Students' very good attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of resources sometimes limits students' learning
- Lack of procedures for liaison between the departments
- No joint sharing of good practice.

84. Standards of work are average and achievement is satisfactory. A-level examination results in 1999 and 2001 were average, while those in 2000 were below average. Over the same period, the proportion of the highest grades has been above average, with the proportion in 2001 being well above average. Overall in 2001, students underachieved in relation to their GCSE scores on entry to their courses. The pass rate in the new AS-level examination was high in 2001 with over one third of students entered achieving the highest grades.

85. In the work seen, higher attainers in Year 13 use sources very well to compare and contrast attitudes to reform in the Habsburg Monarchy and display very good skills in analysis and argument when assessing the significance of Henry VIII's wish for divorce. Average and lower attainers show varying weaknesses in technique, for example in failing to fully explain key terms. For example, Marxist theory and Lenin's methods were assessed as contributions towards Stalin's dictatorship without first being fully defined. In Year 12, higher attainers can give a clear analysis and evaluation of the significance of rival alliances as causes of World War One and the effectiveness of propaganda and terror as means of control in Nazi Germany. Average and lower attainers show weaknesses in essay technique, including too narrative a style and lack of definition of key terms. For example, an assessment of a past government's effectiveness in dealing with the problems of Ireland was not prefaced by an adequate definition of the problems themselves.

86. Students' attitudes are very good and the great majority complete their courses of study.

87. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a secure knowledge and lessons are well-planned to give students a clear structure for their learning. In Year 13, students discussed and defined the concepts of liberalism, nationalism and conservatism and then used these concepts to analyse the German government of 1871. In some lessons, there are good opportunities to develop study skills and then share research in class discussion. This approach works well in larger groups where, for example, sub-division into smaller groups is possible. In one Year 13 lesson, groups examined religious differences at the time of Elizabeth I from a variety of perspectives and then presented their findings. In another, students used their own research in a wide-ranging discussion on the inability of French monarchs and their ministers to achieve financial stability. The sharing of ideas is limited in smaller groups and teaching is less able to build on students' responses. In another Year 13 lesson a discussion on essay-planning was limited significantly by the very small teaching group. Lack of resources sometimes restricts learning; in a Year 12 lesson, a narrow range

of resources limited the work of higher attainers during group activities. These are features which have a limiting effect on students' achievement. They are not picked up as significant because of the lack of joint planning for the sixth form.

88. Courses are generally planned well; the range of three courses is good. Good use is made of monitoring procedures to check progress. However, there are insufficient structures to facilitate effective departmental liaison. Good practice is not routinely shared. Leadership and management across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning
- Good relationships and care for students' welfare
- Students taking responsibility for their own learning in a mature way.

Areas for improvement

- Students' lack of individual learning targets and awareness of the grade levels at which they are working
- ICT not used for storing and collating students' assessment data.

89. Standards by Year 13 are above average. Year 13 students make good progress with assignment work and can put forward well-reasoned arguments. They have a clear understanding of the investigative process and can criticise methodology well. For example in health psychology, students readily identify the subjective measurement of pain as a weakness in studies. The work seen indicates an improvement in standards. A-level results for 2001 were average for a pass grade but below average for the highest grades. The results were similar for the year 2000. The 2001 AS-level results were average and similar to those in 2000. Students did better than their GCSE results predicted and this good level of achievement was reflected in the work seen both in lessons and in students' files. Year 12 students evaluate psychological studies effectively. For example in a study on bystander responsibility, students were able to identify strengths and weaknesses and explain with confidence the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' in relation to experimental design.

90. Relationships between staff and students are good. Mutual respect is a strong feature and this results in a safe and caring environment for the students. As a result they enjoy psychology and show a very positive attitude towards the subject. Recruitment is good and numbers are increasing. Those students intending to continue into Year 13 do so.

91. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The main features are very good subject knowledge, well-planned lessons, very good use of resources and good classroom management. For example, in a good Year 12 lesson on the human brain, students were provided with access to excellent resources that included information sheets, a computer programme and evaluation sheets. The stimulating material was incorporated into a range of well-managed activities; as a result students made good progress, gaining a clear understanding of how the functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain differ. In a very good Year 12 lesson on correlation, students progressed from basic ideas to more complex applications of correlation through a well-structured sequence of activities in which they were all fully involved. Students are constantly encouraged to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. For example in a very good lesson on evaluating psychological studies, students were skilfully prompted by the teacher to relate crime reduction methods to psychological theories. The teacher made good use of prior learning in

using evaluation skills and students demonstrated confidence and independence in their responses. The work is challenging and any student who experiences difficulties is given individual support. Communication, numeracy and ICT skills are handled well and the teachers go out of their way to ensure that all students are included in all aspects of the lessons. Assessment is good. Marks for end of unit tests and essays are recorded in teachers' mark-books, although no centralised profile of students' progress is in place in the department. Technology is not used to aid the recording of assessment data. Although students obtain good written feedback about the value of their work in terms of general comments, grade levels are not given and students are not always clear about the level at which they are working. Consequently individual subject specific targets are not in effective use. These are features which limit students' achievement.

92. Leadership and management are good. An enthusiastic teacher who is concerned for students' welfare as well as their academic progress leads the department, showing commendable commitment to supporting both students and staff. The department is well-organised, well-resourced and well-managed. Schemes of work are in place together with an informative handbook. Although relatively new in post, the head of department has already had a positive effect on students' progress.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and French A-level courses. A-level courses in German and Spanish were also sampled. Results in recent A-level and AS-level examinations in German show standards to be average for the small number of students entered. In the Year 13 lesson seen and in students' files, standards remain average. Teaching is good. A-level results in Spanish in 2001 were well below average. However AS-level results for students now in Year 13 show a sharp improvement. In the lesson seen, and in files of work, it is clear that these students are making good progress in response to good teaching.

English

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, sometimes very good
- Good range of five English or English-related courses
- Students' positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Results overall not reflecting students' prior attainment
- Opportunities for students to develop their own ideas restricted in some lessons.

93. Standards by Year 13 are above average overall. Nevertheless, students are not working at a standard which reflects their GCSE results, so their achievement in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. In the language element, higher attainers show well above average confidence in their analysis of writing for different purposes and audiences, using linguistic vocabulary with accuracy and perception. They recognise and reproduce the style and register of authors from different periods, often with entertaining results, such as a commentary on a Grand Prix race by Samuel Johnson. Overall, however, students' ability to comment on the impact and development of their own writing is variable in its depth and analytical skill. In their study of literature, the majority of students write well-organised essays in which their arguments are clearly developed and supported well by close reference to the text. The students studying the World War One poet Wilfred Owen had each read at least one relevant novel as background, and most of them were able to relate the attitudes in these

books to the poetry. In Year 12, students are generally more confident when commenting on themes and meaning than on the effects of language and imagery. This is because these two aspects of the course are not given equally close attention. By Year 13, most have developed the skills of reading and analysing unfamiliar texts. One group, for example, was very capably researching ballad conventions to inform their reading of 'The Ancient Mariner'. When given the opportunity, students work together well in mixed groups, refining their ideas through discussion and deducing meanings from context. The key skills of oral and written communication are well-developed, and students use ICT effectively in presenting final versions of their work.

94. In 2001, A-level results were close to the average in the three English courses. Overall, the candidates across the joint sixth form under-achieved in relation to their previous attainment at GCSE, except for those who followed the language course. In 2000, results were above the average in language and close to it in language and literature combined; English literature results were below average. The proportion of students gaining the highest two grades has been variable in all three courses.

95. Almost all students choose to continue their English studies to A-level. Students usually respond well to their English teaching. They listen with respect to their teachers and to each other, and their level of concentration is good - except where there is an excess of teacher talk. When given a variety of learning situations, including group research and reporting back, they remain fully engaged throughout the lesson. When directed or encouraged to work in mixed gender groups they have lively discussions. The care that students take in organising and presenting their work is good.

96. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, teachers plan a sequence of activities that enables the students to build on previous knowledge and to develop independent but well-justified insights and opinions. When group work is directed well, it allows students to learn from each other. The very good subject knowledge demonstrated by most teachers gives the students confidence in them. Relationships are generally good-humoured but purposeful. Marking is thorough and helpful, challenging students to extend their thinking and their linguistic or critical skills. Many students have improved their work significantly through re-drafting in response to teachers' written comments or one-to-one progress interviews. Individual progress is monitored carefully in most classes.

97. English is well-resourced and managed in each of the three schools. Students are provided with helpful information about course requirements. The teachers' good knowledge of individual progress enables them to intervene with appropriate guidance when it is needed.

French

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

Strengths

- Above average results at A-level in 2001
- Students' good progress
- Good teaching
- Students' excellent attitudes contributing to their progress.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of pace in a minority of lessons
- Lack of cohesiveness in the management of learning
- Lack of opportunities to spend time abroad.

98. By Year 13, standards are well above average, and improving. Most students begin with high GCSE grades and all achieve well. They speak fluently and with very good pronunciation. They are able to exchange and challenge views on topics such as the impact of the Euro or future applications of new technology. All students join in such discussions because they have good command of the language and the necessary factual information. They work independently of the teacher if required to, and have the confidence to use overhead projectors to deliver oral presentations. Their files show rapid improvement in learning and applying complex language structures, verb tenses and moods. As a result, they cope well with challenging extracts of written and spoken French, following the gist and identifying key details. There is more variation in written work, though much of this reflects the high standards reached in other skills. Higher attaining students write at length, building arguments on a range of social and moral issues such as traffic pollution and the situation of Jews in France during the Second World War. Some such writing emanates from literary study, which they enjoy. On occasion, students write less ambitiously. Although they apply newly learned structures well, they are prone to errors in basic language, such as gender and number. However, they convey a good deal of information successfully.

99. Although results have varied in recent years, they have been close to or above the national average. In 2001, results for an increased entry were above average, with one quarter of students achieving grades A and B, and most others achieving grade C. Grades achieved at AS-level by students now in Year 13 indicate that there is a trend of improvement.

100. Standards in Year 12 are average, overall. All students are making satisfactory progress. Female students are much more confident in oral work, which enables them to seek clarification of matters they do not fully understand and to participate more fully in discussion than male students. In writing, both male and female students make basic errors in using pronouns, auxiliary verbs and in making appropriate choices of vocabulary. Apart from oral confidence, there is no significant difference in the progress of male and female students.

101. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and show considerable maturity when talking about it. They are capable of personal research to expand their factual knowledge, accessing the Internet and benefiting from the authentic materials such as magazines and video clips. They are generally keen to take part in discussions, using their factual knowledge well to challenge or defend arguments. They express appreciation of the efforts of teachers to make lessons interesting and keep them informed of their progress towards good A-level grades. Recruitment for French is modest. Those students intending to continue into Year 13 generally do so.

102. Teaching and learning are good, overall, and very good in Year 13 where they have a significant effect on standards. Teachers use their language expertise effectively to provide a model and raise expectations. No use of English is tolerated in lessons, so that students make regular progress in developing their oral skills. In addition, the constant exposure to the foreign language develops their listening skills. In the best lessons, students participate in a variety of activities which accelerate their learning. In Year 12, there is not so much pace, and a considerable amount of repetition in fairly unchallenging activities. Teachers' language expertise is not as secure. As a result, students are not yet making the good progress anticipated by their GCSE grades. In both years, teachers make good use of authentic written and aural resources in the language to improve learning. Marking is particularly helpful, and provides useful reference points for future work. Students are usually well aware of their progress and of what they need to do to improve. This is due to very good procedures for tracking progress and to individual reviews.

103. The management of French within the joint sixth form is fragmented. Each school works independently. Consequently, teachers do not meet to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of provision. There is no sharing of ideas or good practice, and opportunities to learn from or assist colleagues are lost. Within individual schools, there is good management, so that the lack of co-operation does not affect progress. In two departments, there are particularly good procedures for assessing students' progress, which help their progress towards identified targets. There is no evidence of assessment data being used to improve schemes of work, but these have been very quickly mapped out in response to the requirements of the new courses. A weakness in sixth-form provision is the lack of any initiative for students to spend time abroad to further improve their linguistic and cultural development. As a result, their knowledge of contemporary French society is limited.