

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WOODLANDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Derby

LEA area: Derby

Unique reference number: 112999

Headteacher: Alan Wayment

Reporting inspector: Roy Hedge  
2932

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2001

Inspection number: 243231

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Blenheim Drive  
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Derby

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Ian Stewart

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART D: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>30</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Woodlands is a larger than average comprehensive school of 1160 boys and girls of whom 174 are in the sixth form. Many pupils live in the northern suburbs of Derby, close to the school, though some travel from closer to the city centre. A below-average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The standards reached by pupils at the time they enter the school in Year 7 are above average, as are standards of literacy and numeracy. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below average and the proportion for whom statements of special needs are maintained is above average. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is a little higher than in most schools. The school has enhanced facilities for hearing-impaired pupils who are fully integrated into mainstream lessons. At the time of the inspection there were nine such pupils.

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

Woodlands is a very good school. Standards reached by pupils in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11 are consistently well above average and well above the average for other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is principally because the general quality of teaching and support for pupils is very good, the quality of management is excellent and pupils have very good attitudes to school and to learning. Some higher attaining students continue their education after Year 11 elsewhere. As a result, sixth form pupils reach only average standards in GCE A level examinations. The school offers very good value for money.

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

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well, largely because of very good teaching.
- High levels of care and support for pupils encourage and promote very good attitudes and good levels of achievement. There is a civilised ethos in which learning can flourish.
- The headteacher's contribution to the life of the school and the achievements of its pupils is outstanding.

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

- Achievement is not good enough in English in Years 7 to 9.
- There is not enough systematic information and communication technology (ICT) skills teaching across subjects.
- There is not enough time for religious education after Year 9.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in November 1996. Standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have improved and the quality of teaching is better. The key issues from the last inspection have largely been addressed successfully, although provision for ICT still needs further improvement and there is still not enough time for religious education after Year 9. Expectations of what pupils might achieve have risen though there is room for further improvement in this respect in English in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' capacity for independent learning is now good. The sixth form has been established with some success and sixth form students achieve well though there is room for improvement in the quality of support and guidance they receive and in the recording of sixth form attendance. The quality of management continues to be very impressive and management of the humanities faculty is now satisfactory.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                  C

below average          D

well below average      E

In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001 overall standards were well above average. Boys' and girls' results were equally impressive. Results are improving year on year in line with the national trend. Both mathematics and science results were well above average and English results were above average in terms of the proportions of pupils achieving level 5 or better and in terms of overall points score. In comparison with other schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals results were average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Results in mathematics and science are better than in English because curriculum planning in English fails adequately to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils and as a result there are too few high grades. There is no subject in which standards are not at least average by the end of Year 9. In art and design standards are very high and the development of pupils' skills and enthusiasm in the subject continue to stand them in good stead throughout their time in the school. Standards of literacy and numeracy are also well above average by the end of Year 9. These standards represent good achievement.

Standards are maintained through Years 10 and 11. GCSE results were well above average and well above the average of similar schools in the last four years. Results are improving at a faster rate than is the case nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes with grades in the A\* to C range and the average points score achieved were both well above average. In comparison with similar schools results were well above average and when compared with schools with similar results at the end of Year 9 two years earlier, results again were well above average. Boys do particularly well in comparison with boys nationally and both boys' and girls' results in 2001 were well above average. Standards across the curriculum are impressive. Only in ICT, because of a lack of planned and systematic teaching of ICT skills in Years 10 and 11, are there concerns about pupils' continued progress. Standards in art and design remain very high. Overall, pupils' achievement is good. The school exceeded its ambitious targets in 2001 for the proportion of pupils achieving at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C and for average points score.

The school successfully meets the needs of all of its pupils. Those for whom English is an additional language and others of minority ethnic heritage make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very impressive GCSE results. Pupils with impaired hearing are fully integrated into lessons, are well supported by signers and make good progress.



Standards by the end of Year 13 are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement because standards on entry to the sixth form are also average, because a number of higher attaining students continue their post-16 education elsewhere.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are interested in their work and other activities, concentrate very well in lessons and persevere with the tasks they are set.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are polite and mature. There are very few permanent exclusions (three last year). The number of pupils excluded for a fixed period is broadly average.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good at all levels. There is no evidence of bullying or other oppressive behaviour. Pupils relate very well to each other, collaborate well and treat their teachers and other pupils with respect.
Attendance	Very good. Levels of attendance are above average and authorised and unauthorised absence are well below average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good and is the main reason why pupils do well. Teaching was good or better in seven out of every ten of the lessons seen by inspectors in Years 7 to 11. One lesson in four was very good or excellent. With Year 10 and 11 pupils almost nine lessons out of ten were good and four out of ten were very good. In the sixth form, teaching is very good: over a half of those lessons seen were very good or excellent. Pupils are unlikely to encounter a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching and inspectors saw only two unsatisfactory lessons. The quality of teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is very good, though there is too little emphasis on ensuring sufficient pace and intellectual challenge for the highest-attaining pupils in English in Years 7 to 9. Even so, there is good provision for teaching literacy in English and in other subjects. Numeracy is taught well, particularly in mathematics. There is a well-organised and well taught ICT course for all pupils in Years 7 to 9, though there is insufficient planned teaching of ICT skills in other subjects, partly because of some shortage of computers and partly because of inadequate planning. The teaching of art and design is particularly impressive and leads to very high quality learning.

Teachers across the curriculum are careful to meet the needs of all of their pupils. Lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment and as a result, those with special educational needs, including hearing impairment make good progress. These pupils are often supported in class and teachers plan special work for them. There are no subjects where teaching is unsatisfactory. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high and pupils respond confidently, work at good pace and concentrate. In contrast with the last inspection, pupils were seen to be good at working independently, often

in response to the purposeful homework which is routinely set. Pupils are consistently managed well, so lessons are orderly and good learning is possible.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally sound, though there is inadequate provision for the development and monitoring of ICT skills beyond the specialist lessons for pupils in Years 7-9. There is also too little time for religious education for Years 10-13 so the requirements of the local agreed syllabus are not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils, including those with hearing impairment, are well supported in lessons and provided with work that they find challenging but appropriate. Their success rate at GCSE is very impressive.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are very few pupils at an early stage of English acquisition. Support for these pupils is good; they are fully integrated into mainstream classes and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school is a civilised place that is extremely successful in promoting clear values underpinned by mutual consideration and respect. Teachers are excellent role models. Pupils develop habits of courtesy and care for others in an ethos in which learning can flourish and humane values are pursued.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are generally very high standards of care for pupils and a considerable concern to safeguard the wellbeing of pupils who experience academic or social difficulties. There is excellent provision for child protection. Pupils' academic progress, personal development and behaviour are carefully monitored and the school makes every effort to ensure that all pupils succeed. A weakness, though, is that the school does not always know how many of its sixth form pupils are on site.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher in establishing a caring ethos in which there is a dedication to raising standards of achievement and mutual respect is outstanding. Senior staff give very good support and the school is very well led and managed overall, though there are some shortcomings in the way the sixth form is managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors give sound support, are effective in their forward planning and financial oversight. They monitor the school's achievements and problems effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Assessment data are used well to identify strengths and weaknesses. Performance management is in place. Teaching is regularly monitored and good practice promoted.
The strategic use of resources	The school is careful to seek best value in its financial planning and resourcing. Financial forward planning is good. The school offers very good value for money. In spite of considerable improvement since the last inspection, there are still too few modern computers for pupils to use and inadequate facilities for indoor physical education.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• There are high expectations of pupils.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Pupils are helped to be mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school deals with complaints and suggestions well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are too few reports about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• The school does not work closely enough with parents.</li> <li>• There is too little homework.</li> </ul>

Inspectors endorse parents' positive comments. The school reports on pupils' progress once each year, which is satisfactory. Where the school has concerns about individual pupils, or where pupils have special needs, parents are fully involved and there is close working between school and parents. There is generally good use of homework, which is regularly set and marked.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11 – 18 community comprehensive school had 174 students at the time of the inspection. It provides a satisfactory range of academic courses leading to AS and A Level examinations. No vocational courses are currently taken up by students. Around half of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form, and a small number join from other schools. The social background of sixth form students is similar to that of the rest of the school, although a significant proportion of the highest attaining students as well as those for whom AS and A Level courses are not suitable, leave for other schools after GCSE. There are no students at an early stage of English language acquisition or with learning difficulties. Students' attainment overall is average when they join the sixth form.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and cost effective. A Level results in 2001 were similar to the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection, however, were mostly above average. This represents good achievement given students' levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form. Very good teaching in most subjects and the very mature positive attitudes of students are responsible for this good achievement. Students make good progress in their academic courses. Students of minority ethnic heritage do as well as other students and gifted and talented students achieve their potential. Teaching is excellent in art and design and the standards students reach are very high. Outside their chosen subjects, and a compulsory course in general studies, students have little opportunity to broaden and enrich their experience. Subject teachers support students very well in their academic work. Beyond this, however, the tutorial programme is not designed to support or guide students in their academic and personal development. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

### Strengths

- Teaching overall is very good.
- Given their attainment on entry to the sixth form, students achieve well, and particularly well in art and design, geography and biology.
- Standards in art and design are very high indeed.
- Standards are above average in English, mathematics, biology, history, geography and physical education.
- Students are very mature, confident and articulate. They have very good attitudes to their work.

### What could be improved

- The sixth form tutorial programme does not provide adequate support for students' overall academic and personal development.
- Students have too little guidance or supervision in their use of private study time in school.
- There is a lack of rigour in checking students' movements into and out of school.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT in the course of their academic work, or to broaden and enrich their experience both within and outside the curriculum.
- The teaching of religious education in the sixth form does not follow the statutory agreed syllabus.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. Very good leadership ensures that students' progress is well supported.
Biology	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are above average. Students achieve well because they are very well taught and have mature attitudes to work.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average. Considering their lack of previous experience, students achieve well. Teaching is very good and students make strong progress.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above the national average. The subject is very well led and teaching is very good. Students would benefit from more extra curricular opportunities.
Art and design	<b>Excellent.</b> Standards are very high. Teaching is excellent and students are strongly motivated and committed to their work
History	<b>Good.</b> Although A Level results have been below average, and girls have not done as well as boys in examinations, standards in lessons are above average. Teaching is good and most students are achieving well.
Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are above average and students' coursework is of a very high standard. Students are making very good progress.
English	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching and their very mature positive attitudes.
French	<b>Good.</b> Results in 2001 were below average and standards in Year 13 are also below average. The current Year 12 students are achieving very well. Teaching is good and students' approach to work is very keen and independent.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	In their individual subject areas students are well supported by their teachers. However, there is insufficient guidance for students in their overall academic and personal development.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The school's management is fully aware of what needs to be improved in the sixth form. Management of the tutorial programme and control over students' attendance are lacking. Good leadership of subject areas has a positive effect on standards.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The courses on offer meet their needs.</li><li>• Teaching is very good</li><li>• Teachers are accessible and approachable</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are too few enrichment opportunities beyond the curriculum.</li><li>• They receive too little guidance and support in how to use their study time.</li><li>• Careers advice.</li></ul>

Students appreciate the high quality of teaching they are receiving and speak well of the support teachers give them. Inspectors agree with these positive views. Equally, inspectors agree with the feeling students have that, outside their academic subjects, they are not supported or advised as well as they might be, and have too little chance to broaden their horizons.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well, largely because of very good teaching.**

1. The teaching of Years 7 to 9 is good. Woodlands pupils are unlikely to experience much unsatisfactory teaching. In their responses to the questionnaire more than eight out of every ten parents agree. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and standards are well above average by the end of Year 9. Some high attaining pupils do not make as much headway in English as they might because teaching is not planned with sufficient sophistication to ensure that they are adequately intellectually challenged or that the pace of work is fast enough for them. ICT skills are also taught well at this stage, in lessons which are planned carefully and cover the range of expected skills.

2. The quality of learning in Years 10 and 11 is very good. In almost nine out of ten of the lessons seen by inspectors at this stage teaching was at least good and it was very good in four out of every ten lessons. A key feature of teaching is the effective relationships that characterise classrooms. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are productive, so they work hard and with interest. Inspectors saw a Year 11 art and design lesson, for example, in which pupils were preparing for trial GCSE examinations. They were clearly committed to producing their best work. They concentrated, worked hard and were keen to make best use of the teacher's help and advice. The quality of relationships in this lesson was striking. The teacher had established an ethos of enthusiasm and hard work that led directly to powerful learning as pupils carefully thought through their preparation. Much of the art and design teaching is of very high quality throughout the school. As a result, more pupils than is common opt to follow the subject to GCSE and A level. Solid foundations are laid from Year 7. A sense of purpose and determination characterised lessons. There is a strong emphasis on the teaching of basic skills but always in the context of imaginative tasks that engage pupils' interest and enable them to experience success. In a Year 8 lesson designed to introduce pupils to spray painting an imaginatively conceived task enabled pupils to learn new techniques, to practise their observational and drawing skills and to enjoy creating their own work. The teacher's explanations, both to the whole class and when supporting individuals, succeeded in fascinating and motivating pupils. Feedback to pupils both encouraged and challenged them to produce their best work. Teaching of this high quality promotes the high quality learning which results in high standards.

3. There is some teaching of this high quality in many subjects. A very good French lesson for Year 10 illustrated the teacher's good command of the language. Teachers generally are expert in their subjects, which gives pupils confidence. Good use is made of resources, which are frequently designed to promote learning for pupils at different levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs learn well in these circumstances, especially where they have further support in the classroom. A striking feature of many lessons is the presence of hearing impaired pupils, who are well supported by signers and make good progress. Pupils with special needs learn well and achieve very well in GCSE examinations. In an excellent history lesson about social conditions in the nineteenth century, the very skilful use of probing questions prompted pupils to reflect closely on the issues being raised and to try hard to understand complicated concepts.

4. The quality of teaching is the key reason why standards rise from above average at the beginning of Year 7 to well above average by the end of Year 11 and why pupils achieve well.

**High levels of care and support for pupils encourage and promote very good attitudes and good levels of achievement. There is a civilised ethos in which learning can flourish.**

5. The quality of care for pupils is very good. Teachers go out of their way to be supportive and to meet pupils' needs. This is evident in lessons, where teachers consistently relate to pupils in a civilised way, engendering mutual respect and consideration between all members of the school community. As a consequence behaviour is very good and an ethos which supports learning is apparent in classrooms.

6. The school places a high premium on good behaviour and civilised values. Expectations of pupils in this regard are very high and they respond very well. Behaviour and attendance are carefully monitored so that remedial action may be taken quickly where appropriate. The school goes out of its way to avoid permanently excluding pupils. Advice and counselling for pupils with academic or social difficulties is readily available. Temporary exclusion is used in cases of violent or abusive behaviour. These procedures work very well.

7. Staff consistently act as good role models in their relationships with pupils. They are firm in class, but in a context of supporting pupils well.

8. Procedures for child protection are very sensitive and very thorough and are applied with great care and skill. This level of concern for pupils' welfare is characteristic of the school's attitude to its pupils.

**The headteacher's contribution to the life of the school and the achievements of its pupils is outstanding.**

9. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. The school has a clear sense of direction and there is a very good understanding of what is needed to promote high standards and a civilised ethos.

10. There is a straightforward dedication to the needs of pupils. Monitoring of their academic progress and personal development is very good. Targets are set for pupils. Assessment data drawn from results of national tests and GCSE examinations are used to analyse strengths and weaknesses so that remedial action may be taken where necessary.

11. The school is guided by the desire to do its best for all of its pupils. A strong family atmosphere pervades its working and pupils are keenly aware of this. Senior staff, including the headteacher, spend much time working with pupils in difficulty. Pupils themselves are clear that there is always help available if they need it. A culture of mutual consideration and respect characterises relationships and is clearly apparent in classrooms.

12. The outcome of this high quality management is a school in which learning and teaching can flourish. Staff and pupils are aware of what is expected of them and respond by consistently giving of their best. As a result, pupils' achievements are high.



## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Achievement is not good enough in English in Years 7 to 9.**

13. Standards by the end of Year 9 in English are above average but pupils do better in mathematics and science than they do in English. Fewer pupils attain the higher levels in English than in the other core subjects.

14. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 though there have been some staffing difficulties. This year there are three new teachers. Teachers have been deployed so as to safeguard pupils' and students' examination prospects in Year 11 and the sixth form. As a result much of the teaching of years 7 to 9 is done by less experienced staff. Although the department is not short of materials curriculum planning is not sufficiently detailed to provide good support to teachers and overall planning takes little account of the differing needs of pupils, in particular the most able pupils.

15. Management of the department has not recognised the importance of careful scrutiny of test results or prioritised the development of well focused planning in order to ensure pupils attain the standards of which they are capable. Too little support about teaching and learning strategies for mixed-attainment classes is offered to teachers of pupils in Years 7 to 9.

### **There is not enough systematic ICT skills teaching across subjects.**

16. The specific ICT course in Years 7 to 9 successfully promotes systematic learning of basic ICT skills. Across the subjects of the curriculum, though there is too little use of ICT and inadequate planning to ensure that pupils' skills are developed further.

17. There is no discrete ICT course for Year 10 and 11 pupils. Across the wider curriculum there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply knowledge of ICT, to use computers as part of their work or to improve their ICT skills. There is some logging of data in science, but access to computers in science and other subjects is difficult and the school needs more hardware. The music department has no computers for pupils to use for composition. In art and design too, the lack of computers limits the scope of pupils' work.

### **There is not enough time for religious education after Year 9.**

18. Insufficient time is allowed for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. This was the case at the time of the last inspection. Some provision is made as part of personal and social education but this falls well short of the requirements of the local agreed syllabus.

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

19. The school is in a strong position to ensure that the weaknesses identified in this report are remedied. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of provision further, they should:

- (1) ensure that there is effective planning to meet the needs pupils of all levels of attainment in English in Years 7 to 9, so that higher attaining pupils reach the standards of which they are capable by the end of Year 9;  
(Paragraphs: 13-15)
- (2) ensure that there are planned opportunities across the curriculum and sufficient computers to enable pupils to improve their ICT skill and apply what they have learned;  
(Paragraphs: 16, 17)
- (3) make provision to satisfy the requirement to teach religious education throughout the school.  
(Paragraph: 18)

### **Sixth form**

In order to improve provision in the sixth form the school should:

- (1) improve tutorial provision to give students better overall academic and personal oversight.  
(Paragraphs: 34, 35)
- (2) provide students with more guidance and supervision in the use of their private study time.  
(Paragraphs: 30, 31, 37)
- (3) improve procedures for checking on when students should be attending school.  
(Paragraphs: 26, 37)
- (4) ensure that students have more opportunities to use ICT in the course of their academic studies.  
(Paragraphs: 22, 24, 29, 39, 52, 58, 68)
- (5) provide more opportunities for enrichment, both within and outside the curriculum, to broaden students' experience.  
(Paragraph: 25)
- (6) fulfil its statutory obligations by providing opportunities for religious education.  
(Paragraph: 31)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	57
	Sixth form	102
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		34

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	1	13	24	15	2	0	0
Percentage	2	23	44	27	4	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	2	21	19	3	0	0	0
Percentage	4	47	42	7	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7-11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Years 7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	986	174
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	50	12

Special educational needs	Years 7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	106	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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	97	98	195

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	68	82	84
	Girls	73	83	85
	Total	141	165	169
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (79)	85 (83)	87 (76)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (42)	59 (59)	51 (45)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	84	86
	Girls	72	83	85
	Total	134	167	171
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (82)	86 (85)	88 (89)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (56)	58 (57)	45 (48)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	84	115	199

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	56	84	85
	Girls	84	110	110
	Total	140	194	195
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	70 (63)	97 (98)	98 (98)
	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	48
	National	39

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2000	20	31	51

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	13.6	17.3	15.8	10	4	5.2
National	17.1	18.0	17.6	2.6	2.9	2.7

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	6
Indian	13
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	1083
Any other minority ethnic group	22

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	1
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	23	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Years 7-13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.92
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4

#### **Education support staff: Years 7-13**

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	505

#### **Deployment of teachers: Years 7-11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Years 7-11**

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	20.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3 164 285
Total expenditure	3 135 741
Expenditure per pupil	2 724
Balance brought forward from previous year	34 915
Balance carried forward to next year	63 459

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22.98
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28.16

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
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	1160
Number of questionnaires returned	269

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	58	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	49	3	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	58	12	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	60	14	4	1
The teaching is good.	28	58	5	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	47	17	6	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	51	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	47	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	20	48	21	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	33	54	4	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	57	4	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	52	10	3	19



## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

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

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

20. Results in the 2001 A Level examinations were better than they were in 2000, and, taken together, were similar to the national average. In a number of subjects, notably English, mathematics, art and design, biology and geography, results in 2001 were above the national average. In art and design they were unusually high with the large majority of students gaining the top two grades. In most subjects girls and boys did similarly well, though in history boys' results were better than those of girls. Students with modest grades at GCSE mostly achieve well, though in mathematics such students lagged behind the rest in the 2001 A Level examination.

21. Evidence from work seen in the classroom and from looking at students' folders shows that current standards are higher than recent examination results would suggest. In all of the nine subjects inspected the majority of students in both Year 12 and Year 13 are doing better than expected given their attainment when they entered the sixth form. Many of them are producing work of a high standard and are well on target for good results at AS and A2 level. For example, in geography Year 12 students have a secure knowledge of the environmental effects of flooding and are able to apply this knowledge in other contexts. Their use of geographical terms is accurate and confident. In art and design students have very well developed skills in drawing and painting, skills that were rigorously developed further down the school. In English literature, also, students use terminology very well; they develop and sustain their ideas, drawing on their knowledge of a text to illustrate the points they are making. In French Year 13 students have difficulty in developing their spoken language beyond elementary and incomplete sentences. By contrast, however, Year 12 students have a good understanding of advanced French and speak it with flair and enthusiasm. Year 13 students showed their good understanding of mathematics by drawing on their understanding of calculus to differentiate trigonometric functions.

22. In most subjects students have very little opportunity of using ICT. This is particularly true in art and design and business studies where the lack of computer equipment and software in the departments is currently depriving students of important opportunities, such as the use of graphics as an extension to the range of students' portfolios or a familiarity with spreadsheets for the presentation of accounts.

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

23. This is an area of significant strength, particularly as it affects students' academic life, and in part explains why the large majority of students are achieving so well. They have very mature and positive attitudes to their academic work. This shows itself in a number of ways. When spoken to about their work students speak with genuine enthusiasm about what they are doing and clearly appreciate the rigorous teaching they receive. In class they are intelligently attentive, asking questions that demonstrate their understanding but at the same time wanting to take this even further. They are confident and articulate in discussion and participate eagerly when the opportunity arises. In a Year 12 French lesson, for example, students entered keenly into the spirit of an imaginary situation where they were representatives of marketing firms devising a new questionnaire for a large French food company. In an English lesson students took an active part in a discussion about new words in the English language. Students on the physical education course arrive in lessons expecting to work hard and maintain their concentration and involvement throughout the lesson.

24. Most students are independent learners and respond well to the more adult approach in the sixth form where assignments need deeper thought and greater initiative. Students show they can be trusted to do their work without too much reminder or guidance. Their coursework in geography and their portfolios in art and design, for example, show that they have done a lot of independent research and drawn upon a number of sources. In this respect, however, students are not helped by the deficiency of resources in some departments and the shortage of reference books and computer equipment in the sixth form centre. Many students make up for this by using computers at home.

25. Students have some opportunity to take responsibility and show initiative beyond the demands of their academic subjects. A few opportunities exist for students to help younger pupils, such as the literacy summer school for pupils in Year 7. The sixth form council runs its own meetings and, in the absence of activities which they would like to take part in, students have started up football and hockey, a debating society and a madrigal group on their own initiative. Other initiatives run in previous years such as Young Enterprise and Young Engineers are no longer available.

26. The school does not keep systematic records of the attendance of sixth form students. However, analysis of a representative sample of daily absence sheets revealed that attendance is similar to that in Years 10 and 11. Many students have become lax in their adherence to the school's expectation that they will attend at the beginning of the morning unless they have parental permission to miss school. Year 12 students who do not attend the voluntary physical education session on one afternoon a week often go home without signing out. The school therefore does not know whether they are on the premises or not.

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

27. Teaching in the sixth form is very good, and together with students' mature attitudes, accounts for their good achievement. In more than half of the lessons seen the quality of teaching was very good, and in a few notable cases it was excellent. In the rest teaching was mostly good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers are competent practitioners of their subjects and have very high expectations of their students, challenging them to think independently and stretch themselves by doing more than expected. In physical education, for example, teachers continually challenge students to justify their answers to questions and to draw on their own experience to illustrate their responses. In French teachers use the language all the time and do not allow students to reply in English. This habitual rigour has accustomed students to hearing and speaking French to the extent that their understanding of it is good and many of them, particularly those in Year 12, speak with increasing confidence and fluency.

28. Teachers plan their lessons with skill and imagination, ensuring for the most part that learning happens more through students' active participation than passive listening. They use varied and effective methods, some well tried, others innovative, to introduce new concepts to students and help them to understand. In business studies, for example, the use of vivid and humorous anecdotes helps students to "own" key business terms. Skilful questioning in history helps students to understand the factors that need to be considered when explaining complex events in the past. The use of small group work is most effective in encouraging students to deepen their understanding through discussion. This happens frequently in English and French. One-to-one tutorials are particularly helpful in art and design, business studies and geography for discussing individual projects and setting new targets, or simply to help clear up confusion. Without exception teachers enjoy a very friendly, mature and professional relationship with their students. This lends a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere and creates a very good context for learning

29. In most subjects a greater use of ICT would add to the repertoire of methods at teachers' disposal. In other cases, such as history, business studies and physical education, there is greater scope for extending students' experience of the subject through extra-curricular activities and visits.

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

30. The school provides an academic curriculum of satisfactory breadth that caters for the needs of its students and is inclusive in allowing all students equal access. Beyond the National Curriculum subjects students can take theatre studies, psychology, business studies and communication studies at AS and A2 level. The majority of students who embark on AS level courses in Year 12 are successful in completing them and continue them to A level in Year 13. Although a few vocational courses have been offered, students who do not wish to follow the more academic route choose to find suitable courses elsewhere. In Year 12 students are taking either three or four AS level subjects. Those with only three subjects have more than a third of their school week not in lessons. By their own admission some of these students find it difficult to make best use of this time and would benefit from more guidance on how to study productively.

31. Outside these subject areas there is very little provision through the curriculum for students to broaden and enrich their experience. All students follow a general studies course for one lesson each week. This course contains a module that deals with beliefs and values, but this is not based on the local agreed syllabus so the school is not fulfilling its statutory obligation to provide a course of religious education. The school does not currently offer a course in key skills. One lesson each week is timetabled for physical education for Year 12 students, but this is a voluntary activity and very few students take part. There is no opportunity on the timetable for Year 13 to do physical education. Students feel the lack of opportunities to broaden their experience and commented on this through the students' questionnaire and in the course of discussion.

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

### **Assessment**

32. Procedures for assessing students' work are good. Good day to day assessment takes place through encouraging and thoughtful marking which lets students know how they can improve their work, although in mathematics this aspect of assessment could be better developed through providing more helpful comment on students' work. Teachers let students know the grades predicted of them on the basis of GCSE results and other information. In most cases teachers also set individual target grades in their subject to encourage students to evaluate their own performance and strive to achieve their best. This is particularly strong in English, biology and physical education. In history, however, there is no formal method of identifying and setting targets against which students can measure their progress.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

33. Students receive good support and guidance in their academic work through subject teachers who are effective in tracking students' progress in their subject and in giving advice on how they can achieve to their potential. This happens in all subject areas and students appreciate the support they receive.

34. However, this individual subject support is not adequately followed through as part of

an overall tutorial programme. Students do not receive guidance on how to make best use of their private study time. There are no procedures for tutors to receive information about students' progress that can be co-ordinated and used as a basis for discussing with them how they are getting on in all of their subjects. The time set aside for tutor periods amounts to no more than brief registration sessions during which nothing of substance can take place. This means that there is no one in the school who has an informed overview of an individual student's academic and personal development. The tutor's only role in this respect is to provide a draft reference for Year 13 students applying for university admission. This important role is made harder by the absence of any prior information on students' progress. This is an unsatisfactory situation, which the school intends to put right as soon as a new head of sixth form is in post.

35. Students receive satisfactory careers guidance which is chiefly orientated towards entry to higher education. The head of sixth form has sole responsibility for the careers programme and arranges a number of workshops and visits by outside speakers to help students choose the next phase in their career. Guidance on application to higher education is good. A member of the careers advisory service gives helpful advice to students who request an interview. In discussion students commented that the guidance they receive is useful as far as it goes, but that it provides little for those who do not want to proceed to higher education after school.

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

### **Leadership and management**

36. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall. Leadership of subject areas is good and this benefits sixth form students through the quality of teaching, which is universally strong, and the good support teachers give to students in their academic work. However, management of the overall provision for the sixth form has lacked a co-ordinated vision so that the experience students have of their sixth form life is uneven and less richly fulfilling than it might be. This is borne out in the feelings students expressed through the questionnaire, completed by ninety of them, and in discussions with them. They are emphatic in their appreciation of the teaching they receive, but a large minority are equally clear that other aspects of their experience are lacking.

37. The management of students' attendance and their movements into and out of the school is not rigorous enough and has given rise to a situation where students expected in school are absent. There are implications for health and safety when the school does not know which sixth formers are on the premises. Too little is delegated to tutors so that an undue burden of support and guidance rests on the shoulders of the head of sixth form. The sixth form centre, separate from the main school, has too little staff presence during the working day so that students who have no lessons are left too frequently unchecked. Students themselves admit that they would benefit from more supervision. The centre itself, while offering good space both for work and recreation, is in a poor state of decoration and looks shabby. The areas for recreation and private study are too close to each other so that students who wish to work are, by their own admission, tempted away from it by the proximity of those who do not.

38. The school's management and governing body are conscious of the areas of sixth form provision that need improvement. The governors with a special interest in the sixth form are knowledgeable about it and readily recognise its shortcomings. They welcome the opportunities for change that are to take place as a result of changes in staffing and are taking appropriate steps to prepare for it.

## **Resources**

39. The sixth form is cost-effective and is resourced from within the funding made available for it. However, the resources that are available for sixth form students, both within the sixth form centre and in a number of subject areas, are in some respects inadequate. This is especially true of the provision for ICT. The independent learning centre in the sixth form block has only three computers, all of which are heavily used. In most of the subject areas inspected' students have too little chance to use ICT in the course of their work. In subjects such as business studies, biology, art and design and geography this is depriving students of essential experience.

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

In the inspection, nine 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 2000.

### ***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	19	95	89	53	45	6.6	6.0
Chemistry	8	88	89	25	42	5.0	5.8
Biology	12	100	88	50	34	6.3	5.3
Physics	6	67	88	50	41	5.0	5.7
Design and technology	3	100	92	100	41	9.3	5.4
Business studies	13	100	91	15	30	4.6	5.3
Physical education	5	100	91	60	25	7.2	5.0
Art and design	6	100	96	100	45	9.3	6.2
Music	1	100	93	0	35	2.0	5.7
Geography	8	100	92	13	37	4.5	5.7
History	9	67	89	33	34	4.4	5.4
Psychology	10	90	88	50	35	6.2	5.3
English Literature	8	88	96	25	36	5.0	5.9
English Language	7	86	92	29	31	5.4	5.4
Communication Studies	8	75	93	0	30	3.0	4.2
French	4	75	91	25	39	3.5	5.7
German	2	100	92	100	41	8.0	5.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and biology

#### Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

##### Strengths

- Teaching is good: lessons are well structured, teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and their expectations of students are high.
- Students' very positive attitudes to learning underpin their good achievement.
- The subject is very well led and managed and strong curricular planning ensures good progression in learning.

##### Areas for improvement

- The achievement of students with below average GCSE standards does not match the good achievement of other students.
- Teachers' questioning of students does not always ensure that they are all able to contribute equally.
- The day-to-day marking of students' work does not sufficiently identify areas for improvement.

40. A good proportion of students in the sixth form study mathematics. The school offers mathematics at AS level and A level. Most students who begin in Year 12 complete the course successfully. A high proportion of students who followed the AS level course in Year 12 have gone on to study mathematics to A level. A few students also study further mathematics at AS level.

41. The mathematics department does well for its sixth form students. The 2001 GCE A Level examination results were above average although not as far above average as in the previous two years. This represented good achievement, given the average standards of students when they started the course. The achievement of a small proportion of lower attaining students did not match the achievement of most other students. Male and female students did equally well. In relation to their GCSE results most students did as well as expected. The results in the 2001 AS Level examinations were above average with over one-third of the students achieving grade A or B. All but two out of twenty two students entered gained a pass grade. There is room for further improvement in the sixth form in relation to the achievement of students who begin the course with lower GCSE results.

42. The standards of work seen in lessons by current students are broadly average. Standards in Year 12 are average and in Year 13 above average. Male and female students do equally well. Students in Year 12 are only a short way into their course, but are achieving much as expected. They show good knowledge and understanding of the use of the symmetrical properties of graphs and can apply their knowledge to distinguish between odd and even functions. They use graphical calculators confidently to check results. In statistics, they understand and use probabilities confidently when working on problems involving the binomial distribution. Students are successfully building upon their GCSE work as they study new topics.

43. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE

results. All have successfully completed the AS modules - over a half with grade A or B. Students on all courses have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work when they are introduced to a new topic. For example, in one lesson students drew well on their knowledge and understanding of calculus to differentiate trigonometric functions. In another they used their knowledge of vector notation well to find position vectors and calculate their lengths. In the lessons seen they were doing well as a result of their very good attitudes and effective teaching which demanded much of them. The good lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Most students can recall knowledge and apply it well to their written work.

44. Teaching is good overall. Students learn well on the AS and A Level courses because the teaching is good. As a result students are highly motivated and work hard. Teaching is carefully planned and lessons always have clear aims. Teachers structure lessons well, keep up a good pace and provide appropriate levels of challenge and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show a very good knowledge of mathematics in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set. However, sometimes questioning is not sufficiently directed at individual students to ensure that all students are able to contribute to the learning. Students make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing even when they find it difficult. The marking of student's work does not contain sufficient comments to help students see how they can improve.

45. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being very well led and managed. This is a significant improvement on the last inspection. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The progress of students is well checked and supported. Much of the consistency of approach to mathematics comes about because of the positive way in which teachers work with each other. The teachers are enthusiastic and committed to bringing about improvement. The scheme of work is carefully planned and reflects well the subject's requirements, and sets the stage for good teaching. It identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning.

## **Biology**

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards of attainment are above average and students are achieving very well.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students are very articulate, keen and well motivated.
- The subject is very well managed.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Students have too little opportunity to use ICT during lessons.

46. Results in A Level examinations between 1998 and 2001 have been above the national average overall. They vary between well above average in 1999 and 2000 and just above average in 2001. In 2001 students gained the A Level grades that were predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Very few candidates chose to have a grade at AS level and it is not possible to make any meaningful comparison with national figures. However, the large majority of students who took the AS Level examination in 2001 have continued into the second year. The performance of the current sixth form in the module tests for their A level examination shows that, on average, students are doing better than is predicted from their GCSE grades. Students regularly obtain the highest grades in their A level examinations. Boys and girls have achieved equally well.



47. In lessons in both Year 12 and Year 13 the standard of students' knowledge and understanding of biology is well above average. For example, the work of the highest attaining students on the biochemistry of respiration and their calculations of the amount of energy provided for the body is of a very high standard. Similar work done by other students is less detailed but is of a standard that is appropriate for good A Level grades. Work about patterns of inheritance is very good, as are students' practical skills when they find out how starch is digested by fungi. Course work for the A Level examination is done well, often very well. Students find out about biological reactions and they tabulate data and draw graphs very carefully and accurately.

48. Teaching is very good. In particular teachers' high expectations and excellent relationships with their students create a classroom ethos in which students work hard and are confident that they have the support of their teachers. Lessons are well planned and contain demanding and interesting activities that keep students' attention and give them confidence about their examination performance. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good. They use question and answer sessions very skilfully in order to ensure that students know exactly what they have to do in their practical sessions, and to check regularly on their understanding of what is being taught. For example, students' ideas were used very well in an activity about a graph showing how enzymes work quickly or slowly. Good use is made of information sheets to support students' work in the classroom; these include interpretation of graphs about the amount of sugar in the blood.

49. Because teaching is very effective all students, both male and female, make very good progress during their lessons in both Year 12 and Year 13. In a lesson about classifying plants and animals the teacher used lichens to ensure that students learned that classification systems are not fixed and that they can be uncertain. Students learn to use concept maps as a means of learning and revising. In this way the teachers use time very effectively so that students learn to study and learn some difficult ideas about the structure of proteins at the same time. In a lesson about animal behaviour students learned to investigate why animals behave as they do and during a discussion of their work they discovered how that behaviour helps the animal to survive. Students' practical skills develop very well in lessons about digestion of starch.

50. Students' attitudes to their work are very positive and mature. During practical work, for example, they are careful and responsible with the materials they use. During all of their lessons they are highly motivated and always interested in achieving understanding of the most difficult ideas that they come across. They are very co-operative and capable of organising their own work in groups showing initiative during practical work about digestion. A very strong feature of their approach is their willingness to explain their ideas, which they do articulately and accurately. Their teachers foster these skills by listening to them carefully and creating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom.

51. Management of the department is very good. The head of the department was appointed recently and has produced a new overview of the teaching plan that provides clear guidance about the teaching programme. In particular it identifies occasions on which students will learn to investigate problems. This aspect of the plans is just being put into effect. Records of students' progress are detailed and are used very effectively to check on

progress and to provide support through setting targets and discussing progress. Students feel very confident in the support that they receive.

52. Since the previous inspection good progress has been made. Teaching is no longer led too frequently by the teacher and very good use is made of a wide variety of teaching methods. There are more opportunities for independent learning such as the reading research carried out in a lesson about plants and animals. Expectations of hard work and development of understanding are high. Little use is made of ICT during lessons and pupils do not benefit from the learning opportunities provided by this equipment. Access to computers for private study is limited and there are times when students are not able to use a computer when they need to.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus of the inspection was on business studies.

### **Business studies**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good. As a result students achieve well.
- Starting the subject from the beginning in Year 12, students make good progress through the two-year course.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work. They are keen, mature and articulate.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The lack of ICT provision compromises standards.

53. Students have no opportunity to start business studies before the sixth form. Over the past two years A Level results, taken together, have been similar to the national average. The number of students gaining the higher grades at A Level in 2001 was above average. In 2000 results were below average. All students who took the 2001 AS Level examination have remained on the course to A Level. Their results at AS Level were broadly equal to the national average.

54. Standards of students in both years seen during the inspection cover a wide range of attainment. In Year 12, students in an accounts module lesson looking at working capital were making good progress in understanding the concepts and in doing the mathematical calculations necessary to complete the tasks. Because no business studies courses exist in the main school, all students are starting from the same point in Year 12, with no direct learning about business behind them. The range of their attainment seen in Year 12 is average for students with no such background. In the lesson, students learned about these new applied mathematical concepts well through very good teaching that put the ideas in a real context. Vignettes applied to the real life of businesses made these accounting procedures meaningful for students of all levels of attainment. Although some students in the Year 12 group are potentially high attaining, they lack the experience of the subject for standards to be as high as many students nation-wide on the AS level course, many of whom have good grades in GCSE business studies when they start the course.

55. Year 13 groups have made up this deficit and are beginning to show higher standards. Few, as yet, show potential for the very highest A Level grade. Attainment, again, is broadly average in Year 13. Some students' mathematical competence is weak. This was evident in units such as the finance module on profit and loss accounts and balance sheets seen during the inspection. Here, some students' calculations revealed basic errors in mathematics. Written work is also sometimes untidy, so even when calculations are correct, presentation of work is often weak. The lack of computers in the department is a major handicap in this respect. Students, for example, cannot compensate for their poor handwriting through word-processing because the business studies room has no ICT. This also means that students are not acquiring an expectation that ICT will be used as a business or learning tool in the department. Accounts, for example, cannot automatically be done on spreadsheets in the teaching room, or anywhere nearby in the sixth form block. While it is useful for students to do these by hand and with a calculator, their understanding of the use of spreadsheets for these functions is under-developed.

56. Teaching is very good. This leads to very good learning, especially at the beginning of the course where students are beginning the subject. Explanations are very careful and new ideas made very accessible to students whose basic skills are not always strong. The pace of lessons is very fast, necessary because all students have a great deal of ground to cover. Expectations are high, but appropriate to the known underlying strengths and weaknesses of students. The well focused one-to-one help and facilitation given as students work is sensitively modified to take account of these needs. Very good links between theory and practice make learning real for students. The department could usefully extend students' contacts with local and other businesses.

57. Students are very keen on business studies and bring very good attitudes to their learning. Several students speak regretfully of having no opportunity in Years 10 and 11 to start the subject. Students' relationships with their teacher are very good. They bring a maturity to their work, often informed by experience of their own in places of work. They enjoy the humorous methods the teacher uses to engage their interest and remember key business terms and practices because of the anecdotes that accompany them. Many are very confident to ask questions, especially when they are not following or do not understand immediately. Most students can explain articulately what they are doing, calculating or writing about and they generally take good notes from the more formal presentations in lessons for later revision.

58. The department is within the humanities curriculum faculty, but has all the hallmarks of a discrete subject department. It is a well-managed subject, facing some difficulties. A critical lack of ICT is a major disadvantage to students' proper development in business studies. Their inexperience of the subject before the sixth form is another disadvantage and is an important factor potentially limiting highest grade attainment in the subject for the strongest students.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education.

### Physical education

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have a strong grasp of their subjects and effectively use a range of teaching approaches to stimulate very good learning.
- Mature, well-motivated students participate well in lessons.
- Students have a good understanding of their progress and are confident of the support available to them from teachers.
- Leadership and management are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for extra-curricular activity, including community involvement.

59. In 2000 standards of attainment at A Level were much better than national averages. The average points score per student was 7.2 compared with the national average of 4.99. In 2001 the number entered for the examination doubled and all students obtained pass grades. The average points score was similar to the national average. Only five students entered the first AS Level examinations in 2001. All were successful and their average points score was better than the national average.

60. Overall standards of attainment seen during the inspection were good. Students are developing a good understanding of course work and the ability to apply it to practical situations. AS Level students studying mental preparation for a sporting event were able to apply the key components to situations familiar to them and appreciate their value. A Level students have good recall and grasp of earlier work on principles of training which they accurately relate to their specialist sports. The standard of work in personal performance profiles is very good. The portfolios are well presented and show evidence of ability to research relevant information from a range of sources. Levels of achievement are good given the attainment levels of students on entry to sixth form courses.

61. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and work with commitment and enthusiasm. They are anxious that their students should do well, which is recognised and appreciated by the students themselves. Time is very well used, lessons are well resourced, very well planned and proceed at a strong pace. Questions and discussion are encouraged in all lessons to demonstrate and extend learning. Teachers are very challenging, continually asking students to justify their answers to questions and to draw on their own experiences to exemplify responses. Teachers show much respect for students which is reciprocated. Students are confident of the support that is available to them. Relationships in class are excellent. Teachers use a range of teaching styles and there is a good balance between teacher directed and student directed work. Students are encouraged to be independent learners but support is always available. Students take full advantage of the very good learning environment. They are keen to learn and their attitudes are mature. They are confident young people who discuss their work easily and readily ask questions and respond to them. The atmosphere in classrooms is

relaxed but purposeful. Students arrive expecting to work hard and maintain concentration and involvement throughout lessons.

62. Standards of support available to students are good. Students have a good understanding of how well they are doing against the targets set for them. There are good arrangements to track performance and provide support when necessary. One period a week is timetabled for physical education for all Year 12 students but this is a voluntary activity and very few students take part. There is no timetabled slot for Year 13 students. Many sixth form students are involved in sporting activities through school teams and outside clubs and some perform at a high standard. Some students following sixth form courses in physical education do give time to support in lessons lower in the school. It would be helpful, however, if there were more formal arrangements for extra-curricular activity, including community involvement, to give more opportunity for students to officiate and coach in their chosen sports.

63. Leadership and the management of provision are very good. The focus is clearly upon high standards of attainment. There is a very good match between the expertise and interest of staff and the areas they teach. Sixth form work is well resourced. The imaginative arrangement in Year 12 whereby each group of three students share three different text books providing a range of quality reference material, is very effective. There is insufficient indoor accommodation and this limits opportunities.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus of the inspection was on art and design. Theatre studies was sampled. Small numbers of students take theatre studies at A level making comparisons with national data unreliable. In 2001 all students entered gained a grade at A level although none achieved the highest grades. Students did well at AS level – two thirds of the group attained A or B. Standards in the present Year 13 are broadly average. Teaching in the lesson observed was very good giving informal but purposeful direction to discussion about the development of character and use of symbolism in *Hedda Gabler*. Students responded very well to the challenging and lively style.

### **Art and design**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Examination results in recent years have been very high.
- The quality of work in current students' portfolios is outstanding.
- Teaching is excellent. As a result students' achievement is very high.
- Students are highly motivated and committed to their work.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Students lack opportunities to do creative work using ICT.
- Students do not reflect enough in their written work on the processes of their own learning.

64. Students' recent A Level results have placed the department in the highest position when compared to schools nationally. Some students' recent work has gained national prizes for the highest marks awarded nation-wide. With a good number of students taking the subject in 2001, A Level results were again significantly above the national average at the highest grades, sixty per cent of students gaining grade A. Standards seen in lessons in both years during the inspection show similarly high attainment.

65. Students usually enter the sixth form with good grades in art and design from GCSE and continue to make very good progress in Year 12 and Year 13. Students benefit greatly from the department's earlier rigour in developing their core skills, particularly in drawing and painting, identifiable from their work in the lower school. They use these excellent two-dimensional mark-making skills to very good effect in current practical work, combining these highly effectively with very good levels of research work. Work seen in the current AS Level project, based around ideas of "decay and decomposition" shows excellent examples of this. Here, well-applied thoughtful combinations of imaginative visual ideas with a range of unusual research are synthesised into interesting well-displayed presentation boards for students' folios. Standards in Year 12 are outstanding. Even judged against their relatively high achievement on entry to Year 12, students' achievements are very good. An area for development in both years would be for students to demonstrate greater depth in their written, evaluative reflections about the process of their learning as they have developed and modified their ideas. They often describe very well the practical process of what they have done, but analyse and reflect upon more abstract learning rather too little.

66. In Year 13, the highest attaining students from last year's AS Level have continued with A level. These students' practical work is also of an exceptionally high standard. During the inspection Year 13 students were engaged on their personal study, investigating in very good depth artists, themes or movements of their choice. These studies display the same quality of highly sensitive and well-researched material about an interesting variety of subjects, illustrated skilfully with technically excellent imagery. Two dimensional work is again exceptional. Few students choose to develop studies in three-dimensional media, but the range of materials they use in two dimensions is very good. Although most students use ICT as a word-processing tool, using unusual imaginative fonts, for example, which improve the quality of their personal studies, few use computers as a creative tool to enhance the visual presentation and range of their portfolios. This extension would be useful for many students as an additional medium in the very good range they already use.

67. Teaching observed during the inspection was always very good and some of it was excellent. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers share excellent relationships with students whose own attitudes and commitment to their work contribute significantly to the outstanding work they produce. Lessons take place in a very mature, apparently relaxed, adult atmosphere where students work very hard in a highly focused manner. Teachers are very experienced, transmitting their knowledge very effectively in highly targeted one-to-one "mini-tutorials" in lessons. These convey to students the very high expectations teachers have of them, simultaneously drawing from students their own creative ideas and contributions. In these ways students' individuality is cultivated in their aesthetic work, developing the high level of personal response expected for these courses. These effective individual interactions between teachers and students are the prime vehicle for informing, guiding and stretching students and include a high degree of personal assessment, support and guidance. Little of this is written or formally recorded, though, so it remains ephemeral. Key aspects of these sessions, written down, would form a very good mechanism for setting targets to allow students to track their own progress through courses. They would also form a stimulus for the type of reflective evaluation mentioned above.

68. The department is very well managed to achieve these excellent standards, and to help create such a high level of commitment and enjoyment on students' part. All staff are involved in teaching the sixth form which gives students contact with a very good range of expertise and experience. The department lacks a range of ICT equipment and software of the quality expected for sixth form use. This creates a gap in students' thinking about ICT as a creative tool, and in their portfolio presentations. Art provides a very significant contribution to students' cultural development in the sixth form. Visits to galleries inform work appropriately. Visits further afield would lend an additional dimension to students' work, as would contacts with contemporary artists from different artistic disciplines.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus was on geography and history, and psychology was sampled. A level results in psychology have been below average in recent years. The quality of psychology teaching in the one lesson observed was good and students were achieving well in learning new concepts and methods.

### **Geography**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards of attainment are above average and students are achieving very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students enjoy the subject; they are very interested, mature and independent.
- Students' coursework is of a very high standard.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- More software and reference texts are needed to support independent learning.

69. Standards in geography are above average overall. In 2001 all fourteen A level candidates achieved at least grade D with more than half gaining the two highest grades. This was significantly better than the national average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In 2001 twenty-five candidates were entered for the AS level examination. All of them passed. This represented very good achievement for most students, especially those who had gained only modest grades at GCSE in 2000.

70. Students have a secure grasp of the work they have studied. They draw on the knowledge they have and apply it in other contexts. They relate, for example, the environmental effects of flooding in Shrewsbury with river discharge and link lag times to the nature of the river's catchment. They have the skills to express themselves well in extended writing and orally, to correlate and graphically illustrate sets of data and to use ICT to good effect in the presentation of their project work. They use terminology accurately and appropriately.

71. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are proficient in their subject and have high expectations. They recognise the need to introduce students to the skills of effective note taking, especially in Year 12. Lessons have clear objectives which are shared with students and are skilfully paced so that students acquire knowledge swiftly and at the same time in suitable depth.

72. The quality of coursework is a particular strength of the department. On the day of the inspection, all Year 12 and Year 13 students were engaged in personal research projects, mostly independently, but small numbers were working with teachers in a tutorial setting. One such group was briefly introduced to a new area of environmental investigation in a well-planned manner. The teacher's explanation was clear and forceful so that students knew precisely what was expected of them and as a result they wasted no time in getting down to their work. At the same time the teacher was sensitive to what some members of the group might find difficult.

73. Students tackle their work with interest and enthusiasm showing the extent to which they accept responsibility for their own learning and can work independently. Their progress so far mirrors the varied teaching strategies revealed in their work folders. They routinely employ case studies to extend and illustrate their findings in global geography topics. Students use the tools they have acquired in human and physical geography lessons to analyse fieldwork data derived locally and in Shropshire. They clearly enjoy the subject and speak positively of relationships with teaching staff. In tutorials they are very mature and attentive. Discussion with them about their progress revealed a committed and studious attitude.

74. The department is well managed. The quality of accommodation is much improved since the previous inspection. However, more software and a broader range of reference texts are needed to support independent learning and so complement the department's current focus for development; the fine tuning of schemes of work so as to raise still further the number of high grades.

## History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

### Strengths

- Good teaching is helping students develop good levels of historical knowledge and skill.
- Standards in lessons are high and most students are achieving well.
- Results at AS Level in 2001 were well above average.
- The very positive attitude of students makes a significant contribution to their learning.
- The department is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Girls are not attaining as well as boys.
- Students do not have individual targets to help them evaluate their rate of progress.
- Students do not have enough opportunities for debate in lessons.
- Students' classroom experience would be enriched through visits or attendance at conferences.

75. The overall pass rate at A Level in recent years has been below the national average. Performance at the higher grades, however, was above the national average in 2001 and matched the national average in the previous two years. Boys did better than girls, especially at the higher grades. These results indicate that higher attaining students do well in history but that the performance of lower attaining students is below the national average. Results at AS Level in 2001 were very high. All students passed and two thirds of those who sat the examination gained higher grades. Boys did significantly better than girls at these higher grades.

76. Attainment by students in lessons is better than performance in recent examinations



would suggest. The majority reach above average standards. This is particularly so in the current Year 12, because the new AS Level course provides more opportunities for students to build on the skills of historical enquiry which they have developed in Years 10 and 11. Students are acquiring detailed knowledge of the periods and themes they are studying. They can often draw impressively upon material previously studied to answer questions in class, though they are less confident in placing their knowledge in a wider context as, for example, in connecting the American Civil War with events in nineteenth century Ireland. Most students write well and at length, though some still need to develop a more analytical style of writing and to reduce the amount of description in their essays. Many students have very good speaking skills and are confident and fluent in expressing their opinions. The evidence from lessons and written work shows that all are making progress in their knowledge of the past and in the skills of historical analysis, and that their achievement is good.

77. Teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons that challenge pupils to think historically and to give reasons to support the judgements they make. Very good teaching in a Year 12 lesson on the reform of Parliament in the early nineteenth century led to a lively exchange between students and teacher in which the students showed very detailed knowledge of the topic. Skilful questioning by the teacher helped students to understand how a variety of factors need to be considered when attempting to explain complex events in the past. A carefully planned lesson in Year 13 enabled students to work collaboratively in smaller groups to research information about the history of the Third French Republic. Students were diligent and worked well together though their contributions to discussion were limited. Students in both years are acquiring a good historical vocabulary and most express themselves with confidence and fluency when presenting their views and results of research. However, teachers do not always make the most of this to encourage debate among students. Occasionally teachers' input into lessons is over long, restricting students' participation and leading to a more passive learning style.

78. The curriculum is well planned to develop the historical skills and knowledge acquired at an earlier stage. The subject is making a good contribution to students' cultural and social understanding, though there are no opportunities to enhance classroom experience by visits or attendance at conferences. Students have access to printed material through the department's ICT system and the Internet and are encouraged to use a number of web-sites that are relevant to their studies. They have a very positive attitude towards the subject. This is shown by the quantity and quality of their written work, by their ready participation in lessons and the fact that all those who took last year's AS level course have gone on to A2 level.

79. Assessment of written work is thorough and gives detailed advice about how students may improve, though there is some inconsistency in the way the two teachers indicate the level of attainment. Students know their predicted grades but there is no formal method of identifying shorter-term development targets against which students may measure their progress.

80. Management of the subject is good. Clear curriculum planning underpins the department's work in the sixth form. Resources are good and easily accessible to students. There is a strong sense of common purpose and an evident desire by teachers to provide a good historical education for students who respond very positively to the subject.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and French. The English language course and German were also sampled. The English department entered eighteen students

for the combined language and literature A Level examination in 2001. Results were well above average. More than two thirds of students gained A and B grades. All language and literature students gained a grade at AS level at the end of Year 12 and more than forty per cent gained A and B grades. Eight students took the English language course at AS level. All passed and three students attained the highest grades. Teaching in the lesson seen was good. Students participated well in a lively and wide-ranging discussion about new words in the English language. They receive good support for learning over the period of the course and some students produce course work of a very high standard.

In German relatively few students have been entered for the A level examination in past years. In 2001 the six candidates gained below average results, but did as expected considering their GCSE results. Two lessons were observed, one in Year 13 and one in Year 12. Teaching is good overall. Students in Year 12 are achieving very well and attaining standards above the national average. Standards in Year 13, however, are below average. Students are reluctant to commit themselves, especially in speaking German.

### **English literature**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good.
- Students achieve well given their prior attainment.
- Students are very mature, lively and interested. They respond very well in discussion.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- There are no significant weaknesses.

81. In 2001 the number of students entered for A level English literature increased substantially to twenty-three. Nearly all students passed, ten at the highest grades. The average points score attained by students was above average and much better than 2001. Fewer boys than girls take English at this level. Twenty-four students took the new AS course at the end of Year 12 in 2001 of whom sixteen gained the highest grades. All students passed.

82. Overall attainment is above average. Students have very good oral skills and respond very positively to the seminar style of most lessons. They are lively, interested and engage in discussion with enthusiasm. They ask perceptive questions indicating good knowledge and understanding of the text. In Year 12 for example students had sufficient knowledge of Hamlet's soliloquies to support their ideas about his state of mind. By the end of Year 13 they are able to write critically and in an appropriate style. Their writing is technically accurate. They can develop and sustain their ideas in their essays, drawing on the text to illustrate and support their points. They have a good grasp of literary terminology and use it well. In a Year 13 class, for example, students could identify similar aspects of form, structure and language in planning a piece of comparative course work on two novels.

83. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are presented with sensitivity and enthusiasm. Much teaching is based on very strong knowledge and experience of the subject and students benefit from an important but not over-stated emphasis on examination preparation and techniques. In most lessons students respond very well to discussion led by the teacher in an informal but authoritative style. Their thinking is extended through teachers' thorough knowledge and careful questioning which draws themes together and focuses students on the language and content of the text. All students are drawn into discussion and most feel confident enough to participate freely in the exchange of ideas. There is some opportunity for students to discuss the text in pairs or groups and present their conclusions to the class. In a lesson on *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example, students working in pairs made very good progress in understanding how the reader's perception of character and the structure and organisation of the repressive state of Gilead are altered in a few chapters. Teachers know students well and have high expectations of them. Their ideas are often challenged in lively and constructive debate. Assessment is used well to set targets and to inform teachers' planning. Good oral feedback is given, marking is sound and students are clear about how to improve their work.

84. Management of the subject is good. Students' performance is checked and evaluated and careful steps have been taken in the deployment of staff to ensure that standards are maintained. Arrangements for assessing work are good and students are given very good advice and guidance about their work. Teachers' planning is thorough and the department has adapted well to the new course arrangements. Some well-prepared and structured materials support and guide students' work. Students make no use of the library and there are no computers for their use.

## French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is good.

### Strengths

- Standards in Year 12 are above average, particularly in students' speaking and understanding of French.
- Challenged by strong teaching, students in Year 12 are achieving very well.
- Students of French in Year 12 are very keen independent learners.
- The department is well led and efficiently managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in Year 13 are below the national average.
- In spite of good teaching, students in Year 13 are reluctant to take a full part in lessons and are therefore not achieving as well as they could.
- Students have too little opportunity to use ICT in their language work.

85. Over the past two years relatively few students have taken French at A Level. Results in 2000 and 2001 were below the national average, although most students did as well as expected when taking account of their GCSE results and their attainment when they joined the sixth form. Evidence from work seen during the inspection shows that standards in the present Year 13 are also below average. Their understanding of advanced French spoken at speed is sound because teaching is almost entirely in French and students hear it spoken well in lessons. Outside the classroom, however, they do not hear enough French spoken. Most of them have not spent a substantial period of time in France and they do not read or listen to French voluntarily during their spare time. As a result of this students are diffident in speaking French and therefore unwilling to take a full part in lessons. When they do speak their sentences are elementary and often incomplete. Their written work is well completed, but it lacks depth or a secure enough grasp of the more complex aspects of French

grammar. In spite of modest French GCSE results, these students are not achieving to their potential. Their lack of independence and vigour holds them back.

86. Standards in Year 12, by contrast, are above average for this stage of the AS Level course. Students have made very good progress during this time and are thriving on teaching entirely in French that challenges them to make copious and active use of the language. As a result of this they now have unusually good understanding of French and speak it with flair and enthusiasm, not restrained by the likelihood of making mistakes. They are beginning to form complete and complex sentences, both in speaking and writing, and are showing an increasing grasp of more advanced French grammar. Students who gained the highest grades at GCSE are skilful at manipulating language and adapting it to express what they want to say. The others are also achieving well, carried along by the general enthusiasm for learning and their enjoyment of French.

87. The teaching and learning of French is good overall, and very good in Year 12. Teachers are very proficient speakers of French and use the language consistently in the classroom so that students are exposed to high quality French during lessons. As a result they improve their listening skills well. Lessons have clear aims which are shared with the students, and are planned with care and imagination using a rich repertoire of method and resources. The effect of this is to give students varied opportunities of putting their French to active use.

88. In a lesson exploring people's attitudes to healthy living, for example, the teacher split students into two groups, each one representing a different marketing firm competing for the public relations business of a large French company. Each group had a limited time in which to come up with a series of well-phrased questions in French about people's approach to health. The group with the largest number of accurate and usable questions would win the contract. Students entered keenly into the spirit of this imaginative exercise and through it learned how to form fuller and more complex sentences in French.

89. Teachers enjoy a very friendly but professional rapport with their students who reward them with attentiveness and hard work. Students in Year 13, however, are not secure enough in their spoken French to develop their responses without more direct intervention by their teachers. They would benefit, for example, from more help in the elementary building of sentences. There are currently very few opportunities for students at this level to use ICT in their language learning, for example through e-mail or use of the internet for keeping up to date with what is happening in France.

90. The management of French is efficient and committed to high standards. The long-term absence of a sixth form French teacher has had less impact than expected because the head of department has stepped in to teach the vacant lessons. Good practice is widely spread within the department through frequent consultation and checking on the quality of teaching. Students' work is regularly and helpfully marked so that students know how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Students speak very highly of the quality of teaching they receive and the careful tracking of their progress.