

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTHWOOD SCHOOL

Northwood
Middlesex
HA6 1QG

LEA area: Hillingdon

Unique reference number: 102445

Headteacher: Mrs Kathy Brisbane

Reporting inspector: R Peter J McGregor
3525

Dates of inspection: 14-18 January 2002

Inspection number: 243285

Full 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:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Edmonds
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

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9595	Susan Cash	Lay inspector	-	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22423	Jon Lovgreen		English	
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30433	Chris Corp		Science Biology	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith		Art Equality of opportunity	How well is the school led and managed?
25073	Stuart Jordan		Geography Religious education Business studies	
15075	Bryan Goodman-Stephens		Modern foreign languages French	
22491	Lorraine Small		Design and technology	
4697	Robin Black		Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
3726	Maureen Bean		Physical education Sports studies	How well does the school care for its pupils?
10817	George Rayner	6 th form co-ordinator	History	
	Paul Spencer-Ellis		English as an additional language	
1522	Bill Keast		Information and communication technology (ICT) Special educational needs	
13623	James Waddington		Psychology	
18072	Joan Stephens		A-level mathematics	
24142	Sylvia McConville		Drama and theatre studies	
20767	Jerry Royle			
7926	James Bowden		Sociology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Northwood provides education for pupils in Years 7 to 13. Pupils transfer from over thirty local and more distant feeder primary schools. The school is bigger than most other comprehensive schools with 1225 pupils, 235 of whom are in the sixth form. It has grown in size from 978 eight years ago and is now oversubscribed. The number of boys and girls in the school is similar overall, but with great disparity in numbers in Years 9 and 10. About a quarter of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, mainly White European, Indian, Black Afro-Caribbean heritage and Pakistani. About eighteen per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, a small number of whom (20) are at an early stage of learning English. These are high figures compared with all schools nationally. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, about twenty per cent, is broadly average. About a third of these pupils are at the higher stages of need. The proportion of pupils with Statements, about two per cent, is broadly similar to that in other schools. Special educational needs are mainly communication and learning difficulties, including dyslexia, and emotional and behavioural issues. Judgements made in this report about national test results taken in Year 9 and in GCSE sometimes refer to similar schools: these are schools with between thirteen and twenty-one per cent of pupils taking free school meals. In 2002, the free school meal proportion at Northwood is fourteen per cent, a below average figure. Thirty-four of the 178 pupils in Year 11 had joined the school since the start of Year 7, indicating quite high mobility. Pupils of a full range of ability attend the school, but with fewer high attaining pupils currently in the older main school classes. Generally, standards are about average on entry. The area around the school is socially and economically mixed and average overall. The school has experienced difficulty in finding sufficient high quality applicants for teaching posts, as have other schools in the local education authority area. In the past two years, thirty staff have left Northwood, several on short-term contracts, resulting in staffing problems. Currently these difficulties have been largely overcome.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Northwood is a good school, with excellent features as well as some areas for further improvement. The leadership of the headteacher is very good indeed with an excellent emphasis on providing an inclusive education for all pupils and students. Management systems are very good. Pupils enjoy very good pastoral care as they progress through the school, developing personally and becoming confident and secure young people in the sixth form. The quality of teaching and learning improves as the pupils progress through the school and is good overall. Most pupils are extremely positive about their lives at school, but a small number in Year 8 have not learnt what is and is not acceptable conduct. Examination results in 2001 were above average in Year 9, average at GCSE, and above average in the sixth form. Staffing problems affected standards in several GCSE subjects but these are now less apparent and 2002 results are likely to be higher. Improving standards, good teaching, very good leadership and pastoral care, and a very good successful sixth form, in a context of quite low funding used very efficiently, mean that the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Achievements in English at the age of fourteen were very high compared with similar schools in 2001. Almost all pupils attain one or more GCSE pass and standards and achievement are high in art, history and geography throughout the school.
- A very good sixth form, where students do well and enjoy the experience.
- Very high quality pastoral care and guidance result in very good behaviour by almost all by the age of sixteen.
- Excellent integration of pupils of all ages, abilities, background and cultures, to form an extremely happy and cohesive school community where pupils and staff show respect for one another.
- Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress and achieve well.
- Very good leadership and direction from the headteacher, who is respected by governors, staff, parents and pupils.

What could be improved

- A small proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory, or just satisfactory, and does not result in good standards of work and behaviour. The behaviour of a small number of pupils in some Year 8 lessons was unsatisfactory.
- Pupils do not have specific, short term targets in most of their subjects to work towards and so their rate of progress and their achievements are difficult to gauge. Some pupils do not do enough work out of lessons, which leads to some underachievement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. Standards are now generally higher in Year 9 and in the sixth form, and similar in Year 11 on the evidence of the 2001 GCSE results. Evidence of current standards in Year 11, however, indicates that standards are higher than in 1997. Good literacy standards have been maintained. The quality of teaching is better than five years ago, with less unsatisfactory teaching and learning and a higher proportion of very good work. The curriculum is now broad and of very good quality, with better ICT provision. Moral, social and cultural development, and pupils' personal development, are great strengths of the school and have been built upon over the years; the promotion of pupils' spirituality is acceptable and an improvement, but it is not as strong as the other three areas. The very good leadership, effective governors and efficient use of available funds remain as strong as five years ago. The three key issues raised in the last report have all been addressed. The time for subjects has been changed in Years 7 to 9 to enable all to be taught effectively, and National Curriculum requirements for ICT are met. Staff now assess pupils using National Curriculum levels and several aspects of assessment are good, although inconsistencies remain in a few subjects. High standards of behaviour are promoted with very good systems, although these are not thoroughly implemented by a minority of staff. Progress in bringing about improvement has been hindered by staffing difficulties in subjects such as mathematics, science, design and technology and English. This has diverted senior manager and head of department time and resulted in some initiatives not being completed as effectively as it was hoped they would be. Nevertheless, good improvement has been made over the past five years.

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	C	C	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	C	E	B	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

At the age of fourteen the standards pupils attained in English, as seen in the results of national tests, were well above average and in the top five percent of similar schools nationally. In maths, results were above average and in science they were similar to national expectations, both for all schools and those in similar circumstances. The combined results for these three core subjects were above national averages. The trend of improvement in these core subjects over the past five years is similar to the national trend. Girls' results were similar to those of boys. Current standards are above average in English and broadly average in maths and science. In Year 9, no discernible difference was found in the standards being achieved by boys and girls, although the number of boys in the year group is much greater than the number of girls. Overall, achievement of pupils is satisfactory by the age of fourteen.

In GCSE examinations, overall results have stayed broadly similar to national standards for several years, although there was a fall in the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-C grades in 2001 - to 42 percent, compared with a national figure of 48 percent . Lower-attaining pupils do particularly well, with almost all gaining at least one GCSE pass. The trend of improvement at GCSE in the school over the past five years has been broadly similar to the national trend. The highest standards attained in subjects in 2001, when account is taken of the abilities of the pupils, were in art and design, drama, business education and geography and lowest in dual award science, English language, maths and modern foreign languages. When account is taken of the prior knowledge and background of the pupils taking these examinations, results overall show that pupils achieved well, and better than in similar schools. Girls' and boys' results were similar.

Currently, all departments are fully staffed with specialists and standards are higher in the four subjects that were weak last year. The school's target for GCSE in 2001, 48 percent to attain 5 or more A*-C passes, were not met, but indications are that the 2002 figure of 52 percent will be achieved. Standards are currently higher overall in Years 10 and 11 than last year. In English, results are likely to be above average and achievements are good, in maths average standards are expected and achievement is satisfactory, and in science standards at least equal to national levels are expected and achievements over time are satisfactory. The high standards in geography, drama and art and design are being maintained, and pupils are achieving very well. Some pupils still underachieve in modern foreign languages, mainly due to their reluctance to work at home. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, generally achieve well because teachers know the pupils well and good support is provided.

In the sixth form, standards improved greatly in 2001. Pupils now achieve very well and overall standards are above national expectations in the AS, A-level and vocational courses taught.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are well motivated, conscientious and keen to participate in lessons. They want to do well and become progressively more able to work and learn independently in lessons as they move up through the school. Pupils are courteous and helpful to visitors.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Eleven- to fourteen-year-olds generally behaved well in lessons, but a few, particularly in Year 8, were inattentive and occasionally disruptive. Behaviour of pupils in their GCSE years was good and very good in the sixth form. Pupils generally behave very well around the school and are confident that bullying is rare, but dealt with most effectively when it occurs.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships in the school make a very significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils and staff work together to build a school community where all are valued and develop self-esteem. The extent of racial harmony is a great strength of the school
Attendance	Attendance is broadly in line with national averages and punctuality is satisfactory. The school has worked very successfully to reduce the level of unauthorised absence to well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

In Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning were good overall in English and satisfactory in maths and science. The best teaching was of drama, art and geography. The teaching and learning of all subjects was satisfactory or better. In the sixth form, teaching in all subjects, except maths, was good or very good, leading to very effective learning overall.

In Years 7 to 9 the quality was significantly better in Year 9, because the pupils had learnt what was and was not acceptable in the school and applied themselves well. In Year 7 a number of pupils were rather lively. In Year 8 the task of teaching was sometimes made more difficult by an argumentative and misbehaving small group of pupils. For GCSE the quality of teaching and learning was similarly good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' conduct was often very good indeed, facilitating good teaching, so that pupils made good progress in lessons and achieved well. Pupils usually concentrated hard and questioned sensibly and confidently when they did not understand.

About four in every ten teachers taught very well indeed on at least one occasion and very few staff had unsatisfactory lessons. Characteristics of the most effective teaching varied from teacher to teacher, but important strengths included teachers' subject knowledge and understanding, their enthusiasm for their subjects, the quality of planning, and the quality of the relationship between the pupils and staff. In art and drama, teachers' very good expertise resulted in very high expectations and high standards. Teachers' enthusiasm in history and English resulted in very highly motivated pupils who enjoyed their lessons and wanted to do well. Good planning had a good impact on many lessons, enabling work to be carefully matched to the needs of individuals in both setted and mixed ability classes. Homework is generally set, but it is not always as effective as it could be. Pupils usually work hard in lessons, but their efforts out of lessons, for example in learning French and practising their maths skills, are sometimes insufficient.

Pupils' literacy skills are well taught because all staff try to work to the whole school literacy strategy. Numeracy skills are well taught in maths, but too little emphasis is placed on developing these skills in other subjects. Teaching and learning of ICT skills are satisfactory overall, though some departments use ICT insufficiently as an aid to learning.

Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, and pupils from a rich and varied range of cultural backgrounds are all effectively taught. The school's inclusive approach to education is all-embracing and ensures that all teachers strive to match work to individual needs whatever they might be.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good overall. The curriculum offered to pupils aged 11-16 is wide ranging and inclusive. Planning for the needs of all is very strong in Years 10 and 11. The sixth form curriculum is very well structured. Careers and PHSE provision are both very good. Extra-curricular activities are excellent for all pupils and students. Very good links have been made with local primary schools and the community.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. A very well led and managed team of well-qualified learning support staff identifies and supports these pupils very well. The range of strategies used together with very good recording and monitoring procedures are effective in helping pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with	Good. A good screening system for the main school, but not for new entrants into

English as an additional language	the sixth form. Pupils' progress and achievements are reviewed regularly. Teachers know which pupils have language needs and provide good support. All pupils are very well integrated, which helps greatly with learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides all its pupils and students with a very good framework within which to develop. Excellent opportunities are offered for moral and cultural development and many aspects of school life encourage very good social skills. Provision for spiritual development is sound, but learning opportunities are missed for developing a more reflective attitude in pupils. The level of responsibility given to sixth formers is very good indeed and further supports their personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school has a very effective pastoral care system. Induction arrangements into Year 7 and the sixth form are very good. Procedures for assessing the progress of pupils from Years 7 to 11 are sound, but short-term targets are not sufficiently clear or subject-specific so monitoring progress lacks precision. Attendance is monitored and promoted well and arrangements for ensuring health and safety are good. Very good support and guidance is given on option choices and for higher education.

Very good links exist between the school and parents although pupils' work out of lessons is a weakness. Staff work exceptionally hard to build relationships with parents before their children start and this continues through the school. Parents greatly appreciate how easily they can contact staff and discuss any concerns. Written communication is of high quality and informative, including curriculum details. Reports are good. Parents contribute very well to the life of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very effective. The headteacher's leadership qualities are highly respected and admired. Equality of opportunity is the foundation for the school. Thorough systems and structures underpin the day-to-day work of the school that enable the pupils to learn in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect for each other's values and cultural traditions. The school development plan is a very effective working document that guides improvements in school life. The headteacher's leadership style results in a very strong team spirit amongst staff, pupils and students. All are working to achieve the school's vision of high standards in a caring and inclusive environment. Almost all subject departments are well led.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. The role of critical friend is taken very seriously. Governors take effective action in their monitoring of examinations and test results, calling staff to account when results are lower than they ought to be. In almost all respects statutory responsibilities are met, the exceptions being to ensure a daily act of collective worship and the teaching of religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Thorough monitoring of teaching and learning helps teachers practise and improve their skills. Pupils' achievements are closely followed and action is taken if they are likely to fall below their predicted grades in exams. Results are analysed to show where improvements can be made in the future
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning is excellent. The school spends more of its income on resources than many schools but purchases are clearly linked to agreed school priorities. The good resources and satisfactory accommodation are very well used and staff are effectively deployed. The learning resource centre is very good.

The school considers its sixth form curriculum with care to ensure that it complements provision in local further education colleges. Governors and the headteacher strive to attain the best value they can from funding and use all available data to inform their decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Their children make good progress in school • Teaching is good • They are comfortable with asking questions of the school • There are high expectations • The school is well managed and led • The school helps their children to become mature and to take responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of a small group of pupils in Year 8 • The wrong amount of homework is set: too much, too little, or all at once, in a range of subjects

Generally, parents are very pleased with the school, the quality of education provided and what their children achieve. Parents remarked upon the excellent leadership of the headteacher, her approachability, common-sense way of working and very good communication skills.

Inspectors agree with the strong positive views of parents about aspects of school life, particularly the approach and leadership of the headteacher. In some subjects, insufficient homework is set and constructively marked and generally the work culture out of school is not as strong as it could be. This affects standards as pupils do not learn and revise as thoroughly as they could. The behaviour of a small group in Year 8 is disrupting teaching and learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of 235 students, with 138 in Year 12 and 97 in Year 13, is larger than most. There has been a steady year-on-year increase for some time and the sixth form is oversubscribed. Girls currently outnumber boys but the reverse has been true in other years. Over half the pupils from Year 11 carry on into the sixth form and forty to fifty students join Year 12 from other schools. Some students travel substantial distances, six or seven miles across London, in order to attend Northwood. The number of students taking free school meals in the sixth form is substantially lower than the national proportion. Students from a great range of backgrounds transfer into the sixth form, speaking a range of languages, but very few are at an early stage of learning English. Entry requirements into the sixth form depend upon the courses followed. Four GCSE results at grade C or above are sufficient for the GNVQ and AS courses, and five GCSE results at grade C or above for two year AS or A-level courses. The standard of students on entry is broadly average, although their individual capabilities do vary greatly. Most students take A-level courses, currently 191 students, with 14 following intermediate GNVQ and 28 AVCE courses. Each year a small number of sixth formers retake their GCSE English and maths examinations to try to improve their grades. About four in every five students go on to higher education, selecting a great range of universities, from local colleges to Oxford and Cambridge. Almost all the remaining students go into employment.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very good and a great strength of the school. It provides cost effective education, well suited to students' needs and is well known locally for providing a good foundation for future careers. The students' attitudes to learning are excellent and these, combined with very good teaching, result in good and very good achievements. The highest achievements are in art and history, where they are very high. In the 2001 examinations, maths was the only subject where there was substantial underachievement, and current standards in maths are higher and improving. Overall results in 2001 at A-level and in vocational courses were above average and significantly higher than those attained in both 1999 and 2000. They showed good added value from the standards these pupils achieved at GCSE. The sixth form is managed very well, as a fully integrated section of the school. Senior managers' responsibilities extend over the full 11-18 age range and so each is fully involved in the sixth form. Students are given greater independence and freedom, appropriate for their ages. They see themselves, however, as members of the school community and are keen to shoulder added responsibilities and to provide leadership for their younger peers. Good sixth form accommodation adds to their sense of worth and they look after it very well.

Strengths

- Good achievement in almost all subjects and very good or excellent provision in art, history, theatre studies and psychology.
- Very good teaching.
- Sixth formers enjoy their time at school and participate fully in its life, taking on many helpful responsibilities.
- A good range of subjects is offered; students are provided with helpful guidance when selecting their sixth form subjects and deciding their future career paths.
- Pupils in the main school look up to the sixth formers, as models to emulate.
- The sixth form is popular, successful and effectively managed as a key part of the whole school.

What could be improved

- Standards in maths are not high enough.

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.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Just satisfactory. Results were well below average in 2001, and also well below those in students' other subjects. New appointments made recently have established a well-qualified teaching team with good subject knowledge. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall, and steps are being taken to raise student achievement.
Biology	Good. The attainment of students in A-level biology is above the national average. When compared to their GCSE results the students show good achievement. The lessons are planned effectively. Very good relationships between students and staff enhance the good teaching and learning.
Design and technology	Good. Results improved significantly in 2001 and current standards are above national expectations, showing good achievement by students. Teachers plan well for students to extend their individual knowledge and skills. Students learn well and apply their skills with confidence.
Business studies	Good. Results are above average and have improved since the last report. Overall, achievement is above the level expected from students' GCSE results. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and teaching is very good.
ICT	Good. Results are improving. Students achieve well against their attainment at the start of the course. Teaching is effective, though the use of assessment data to monitor progress is in the early stages.
Sports studies	Good. The first two years of students taking this new course are achieving well, with above average standards. Teaching is good, based on thorough preparation and high expectations. Interesting strategies lead to good learning and the full involvement of the students. Assessment and target setting are too informal.
Art and design	Excellent. Results were well above average. Teaching is very good and enables students to achieve very well, often exceeding their predicted grades. The standard of literacy and the quality of sketchbooks are very high.
Theatre Studies	Very good. Students' results indicate very good achievement compared with their previous attainment. Very good teaching enables students of all abilities to make good progress. Students respond with very positive attitudes and serious effort.
History	Excellent. Results were very high in 2001. Students achieve very well in the subject, due to very good teaching and their own highly positive response to this.
Sociology	Good. Standards of work seen are above average and achievement is good. Teaching is good and as a result of this students are enthusiastic and make good progress in their learning
Psychology	Very good. Standards in examinations and current work are above average showing that students achieve well. Very good teaching means that all students

	learn quickly right from the start of the course. Students' very positive attitudes further enhance their pace of learning. Target-setting is under-developed.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English	Good. Standards are above average. Consistently good and imaginative teaching combined with very good student attitudes result in good achievement. There has been a decline in the number of students taking the subject, but retention rates are good.
French	Good. All students achieve well and the highest attainers very well. Results in 2001 were well above average at A-level. Teaching, based on very good subject knowledge and linguistic skill, leads to very good learning.

Work in all the other subjects, ten courses in all, was sampled during the inspection. In all lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory or better and in most it was very good. The students were invariably well prepared for their lessons, keen to learn, and they worked hard. Achievements were usually good or very good and the lessons enjoyed. Relationships between the teachers and students were excellent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive very good support and advice, both academically and pastorally from their tutors and subject staff. New students joining from other schools are helped to settle quickly. The target setting system for examination grades is good in several subjects and excellent in art. It is less effective in a few. Students are given substantial help in making choices about the next steps in their education and careers.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is an integral part of the school. Senior managers manage the sixth form very well indeed. The head of sixth form very effectively manages the tutors. Results of senior managers' monitoring of teaching and the head of sixth form's monitoring of individual students' progress are leading to improvements in standards. All students are respected, treated equally and given equality of access and opportunity. The school development plan is very effective with appropriate sixth form targets. The budget is very well managed and appropriately targeted on priorities. Accommodation and resources are good and well used, although study facilities are limited.

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"> • They are well taught and challenged • They are helped to study independently • Teachers are easily accessible and give good support with their work • They are treated as responsible young adults • The printed information they are given is clear and helpful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school does not always listen to students' views • The range of activities offered outside lessons • The thorough assessment of work • Information they are given on their progress

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are helped to settle into the sixth form • They enjoy being in the sixth form and recommend it to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice given on future options
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Discussions with many of the sixth formers, in subject groups and more informally, supported these positive views about the school, given by at least four in every five of the students who responded to a questionnaire. The negative views were those of a minority of students, about one in every five, responding to the questionnaire. The school cannot always do as the students would wish, and cannot offer a sufficient range of activities to suit all students. Inconsistencies between subjects result in the negative views of the minority about marking, and being kept informed about progress and standards. Inspectors found that advice on future options was good and the students' views depended upon whether they had yet experienced the full programme

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

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 2001, the pupils' results in the national tests taken in Year 9 were above average overall in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There was, however, great variation between the three subjects: Considering the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels 5 or 6, or higher, in English standards were well above average; in mathematics, results were above average; and in science they were similar to national averages. When compared with similar schools, overall results were well above average. English results were very high and in the top five per cent of all schools in the country, mathematics results were above average and science results were close to the national picture. The principal cause of this variation was the range in the quality of teaching, resulting from staff recruitment and retention problems over a number of years. One of the reasons the English results were so good was that teachers ensured that the pupils were very well prepared for the assessment tests.
2. The profile of pupils' results in the three subjects shows high, average and low attaining pupils did well in 2001 in English. In mathematics and science, the higher attainers did not do as well as in English.
3. Girls' and boys' results were similar in 2001. Their results over the past five years have fluctuated, with boy's results higher than those of girls one year, and then the reverse. Over the period, however, there is no discernible pattern, with boys and girls doing equally well overall. This indicates that variations in the cohort's abilities, rather than teaching and learning issues, result in gender differences.
4. The trend of improvement in these core subjects over the past five years has been similar to the national trend, despite variations from year to year. Using average points scores that take account of all pupils' attainment, English results have been above average for the full period, although they dropped greatly in 1999, to just above average. In mathematics and science, however, the pupils' average points score has been below the national average. In 2000 and 2001, results did approach the national average in both subjects.
5. Current standards in English at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average, representing good achievement for the pupils. Strengths are in the study of literature and use of language, but with a relative weakness in extended personal writing. Attainment in mathematics and science is broadly similar to national expectations in Key Stage 3, with pupils achieving satisfactory standards overall, considering their abilities. Strengths in mathematics are in the use of algebra and number but their investigative skills are not as strong. All aspects of science are learnt, but higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged at times. No difference was apparent in the standards being achieved by boys and girls, although the number of boys in the year group is much greater than the number of girls.
6. In other subjects, attainment at the end of Year 9 is broadly average overall, reflecting satisfactory progress. In drama, pupils make very good progress because of the quality of teaching, achieving very well, attaining above average standards. In subjects such as art, physical education and geography, standards are broadly average in Year 9, but achievements are good because pupils' entry standards are below average in those areas. In design and technology and ICT, average standards could be higher if skills were practised to a greater extent. In ICT this means more use of computers across a range of subjects. In one or two subjects, including religious education, higher attainers underachieve when work is insufficiently demanding. Taking into account test results, current standards and their attainment at the start of Year 7, pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 3 is satisfactory.
7. In GCSE examinations, overall results have stayed broadly similar to national standards for several years, although there was a fall in the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-C grades in 2001 - to 42 percent,

compared with a national figure of 48 percent . Over the past five years, the high point was in 2000, when 49 percent attained five or more A*-C grades, and the low point was in 1997 when 35 percent attained this. A major factor in underperformance was staffing difficulties, particularly in mathematics and the sciences. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-G passes is below the national average, with about nine in every ten pupils attaining this. Statistics are, however, skewed by the fact that the school enables a proportion of pupils to take some courses as an alternative to GCSE, for example as work experience or at a local college. Lower attaining pupils do particularly well, however, with almost all gaining at least one GCSE pass. The proportion attaining one or more A*-G pass is well above national figures.

8. When Northwood's 2001 results are compared with those schools that attained comparable Key Stage 3 results in 1999, using average points scores, overall results are good. This data indicates good achievement. Information comparing the proportion of pupils who gained five A*-C grades shows that attainment was average and achievement satisfactory, but where the proportions of pupils gaining one or more GCSE passes are considered, results are well above average and achievements very good.
9. Boys' GCSE results were higher than those of girls in 2001, although the reverse was true in 1999. Over time, results of boys and girls have been broadly similar.
10. The trend of improvement at GCSE in the school over the past five years has been broadly similar to the national trend with results just above or below the national figures. The highest standards attained in subjects in 2001, when account is taken of the abilities of the pupils, were in art and design, drama, business education and geography, and lowest in dual award science, English language, mathematics and modern foreign languages. When account is taken of the background of the pupils taking GCSE examinations, results overall show that pupils achieved well and better than in similar schools.
11. During the year 2000-2001 the school experienced great difficulty in appointing specialist staff in English, mathematics and science and this has had an impact on the standards pupils achieved in their GCSE examinations. Currently, all departments are fully staffed with specialists, although six are as yet untrained, and standards are higher in the four subjects that were weak last year. The school's target for GCSE in 2001, 48 percent to attain 5 or more A*-C passes, were not met, but indications are that the 2002 figure of 52 percent will be achieved.
12. Standards are currently higher in Years 10 and 11 than last year, with overall standards a little above national expectations. In English, standards are at or above national expectations and improving and achievements are good; in mathematics, average standards are expected and achievement is satisfactory; and in science, standards at least equal to national levels are expected and achievements over time are satisfactory. The high standards in geography, drama and art and design are being maintained, and pupils are achieving very well. Very good, knowledgeable teaching that motivates the pupils is the key to the success of these subjects. Pupils' achievements in lessons were good in several other subjects, such as music and history. In modern foreign languages standards are below average but teaching and achievement are satisfactory in lessons, and good at times. A considerable proportion of pupils show a lack of effort out of lessons in consolidating language work carried out in school, leading to their underachievement over time. This is an issue in other subjects as well, albeit to a lesser extent. ICT standards are average overall and achievement is sound. In several subjects, such as design and technology, very good use is made of ICT, but in others, little or no use is made of computers. The general picture of achievement in Key Stage 4 is good, reflecting most pupils' good progress.
13. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, generally achieve well because teachers know the pupils well and good support is provided. The inclusive nature of the school ensures that pupils ask if they are uncertain, and they invariably receive support.

14. Gifted and talented pupils do achieve satisfactorily, but their success is dependent upon the quality of challenge provided by individual teachers. So, for example, high attainers in English in Key Stage 3 do particularly well but, in ICT, knowledgeable pupils are not given work that extends them.
15. On entry, pupils have average literacy skills. As they move through the school they make good progress in improving their skills because a whole school approach is followed. Progress is not uniformly good, however, because a number of staff are insecure themselves. The regular use of discussion means that pupils can, for example, explain principles in mathematics such as triangular numbers, and are comfortable with terms such as highest common factor and lowest common multiple. Particularly good practice was seen in history, where Year 7 pupils read plays and worked on possessive apostrophes in work on the Battle of Hastings. In religious education, very precise definitions of terms like 'prejudice' and 'discrimination' enabled pupils to make very good progress in relating the concepts to real situations. In drama, too, pupils benefit from being expected to learn lines from Shakespeare, use a range of drama terminology correctly, and redraft work. In all subjects 'key words' and listening skills are well taught and used.
16. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Pupils acquire their numeracy skills in mathematics lessons, which often include a mental mathematics starter activity. Pupils mostly have good recall of number facts, although some lower attaining pupils are insecure in their knowledge of tables. Pupils manipulate numbers including fractions, decimals and percentages. They give results to a required degree of accuracy and represent and interpret data in graphical form. They can explain their strategies, as in a Year 10 lesson on estimating percentages of given quantities. They use correct mathematical vocabulary and are able to explain the meaning of symbols such as inequalities. Pupils have few opportunities to use their numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum apart from science. There are plans to draw up and implement a policy for numeracy across the curriculum.

Sixth form

17. In the sixth form, standards improved greatly in 2001 compared with 2000. 42 percent of the results were at grades A or B, twice the figure for 2000, and 94 percent of the entries at A-level were at E grade or higher. Substantially more girls were entered for A-level examinations than boys. Students now achieve very well and overall standards are above national expectations when compared with all post-16 provision nationwide in the AS, A-level and vocational courses taught. Average points scores are taken as the comparable data. Boys and girls attained above average standards, although girls' results were substantially higher than those of boys, reflecting the national picture. In 2000, overall standards were well below national standards. Girls attained better results than boys then too, although boys' results were below average when compared with the national picture whereas girls' results were well below. Standards have fluctuated from year to year depending upon students' entry levels, but overall, standards in 2001 are similarly good to those referred to in the last inspection report in 1996. The school has high expectations of standards in the sixth form and strives to achieve them through effective management and teaching.
18. In 2001, students' attainment compared with national standards was very high in history – in the top five percent of all schools nationwide – and high in art and design, economics, French and geography. In most other subjects at A-level and at GNVQ Advanced level, standards were above average. In mathematics, however, students' attainment was well below average. Subjects can be compared, using the results students attained in their other subjects over the past three years where the numbers of candidates was five or more. This data indicates how well students are achieving, taking account, to a certain extent, of the varying capabilities of the students in each group. The highest achieving subjects overall have been history and art and design, but with good work in 2001 in chemistry, ICT and physics. The lowest achieving subject was mathematics, where results have been low for the past three years, but data indicates some underachievement in English and sociology as well.

19. The school uses a commercial package to determine value added in sixth form courses, using students' GCSE data from two years earlier. This also indicates that history and art and design were the top performing subjects in 2001 and the three-year average shows achievements to be highest in art. This analysis also indicates significant underachievement in mathematics
20. Current standards are as good as those attained in 2001. There is variation amongst courses, but the overall picture is of above average standards and good or very good achievement. The highest standards were in history and art and design , as they have been for a number of years, but achievements were also very good for several students in French and theatre studies. Students' achievements were good in all other focus subjects except mathematics where standards were satisfactory, but improving. Students' achievements in the sampled subjects such as vocational courses in business studies and A-level chemistry and physics were good in the lessons observed. Students' achievements are good because they work hard, have positive attitudes and high attendance, and learn well, and because teaching is invariably good or better.
21. Students' key skills in application of number and communication are developed well through their vocational and A-level courses. The standard varies depending upon students' prior attainment at GCSE and the range of courses taken in the sixth, but attainment and achievement are at least satisfactory. Teachers are generally aware of the importance of both to the students and give each sufficient focus. ICT skills are developed less effectively with too little use made of computers in some subjects, so standards are not as high as in the other two core skills. The very good relationships that are developed throughout the school result in high order skills in 'working with others' for most students. Study skills are generally good because teachers have clear expectations that the students know they must live up to. Problem solving has a strong focus in some subjects such as history, art and design, ICT and physics, but not in all subjects with the result that this skill is not uniformly well developed in all students.
22. Students for whom English is an additional language generally make satisfactory or good progress because of effective teaching. The screening process for sixth formers new to the school, however, is not entirely effective and some students' needs are not fully met. The few students with special educational needs make progress commensurate with their peers. Their needs are well known and teachers respond to them.
23. Students leaving Northwood at the age of eighteen have been very successful in developing their careers. About four in every five over the last two years have gone on to courses in higher education. Almost all have been successful in gaining places at their chosen institutions, including those with very high entry requirements, such as Oxford and Cambridge. Students who have chosen not to enter higher education have found jobs on leaving school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

24. Pupils come into school keen to learn. Almost all are conscientious, listen attentively and join in willingly. This was noticeable, for example, in a Year 9 English lesson, where pupils were engrossed in studying 'Macbeth', and also in a Year 11 German lesson, when they had to listen very attentively to a tape and make notes on what they heard. Pupils throughout the school are fully aware of the high standard of behaviour expected of them and understand the consequences of not complying with the school rules. There is now a consistent approach to discipline through the school, a good improvement since the last inspection. Behaviour in Key Stage 3 is sound overall. A small number of pupils, mainly in Year 8, do not always pay sufficient attention and are silly and disruptive at times. At Key Stage 4, behaviour is good, with eight lessons in every ten being judged good or better and just under half being very good or better. Pupils are well-motivated and the majority complete course work on time and to the best of their ability. Those studying art, for example, do a lot of work at home and achieve high standards. Attitudes to working at home are less positive in some cases, notably modern foreign languages and mathematics, which affects achievement. Pupils take full advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered. Pupils spoke with pride of representing the school in various sports teams.

25. Numbers of fixed term exclusions are broadly in line with national averages. A small number of pupils have been excluded several times indicating that these young people do not learn from the experience. The number of permanent exclusions is below average. The school tries very hard to keep pupils in school, using internal exclusion as a first stage. Reasons for exclusion are clearly defined and procedures are followed carefully. The school works hard to obtain the support of outside agencies when needed, not always with the desired success, especially when pupils live in other local education authority areas.
26. Pupils also behave well around the school. They queue patiently for the canteen and file into assembly in silence. They amuse themselves happily at break and lunchtimes and are confident that there is very little bullying. Minor incidents are very quickly dealt with. The degree of racial harmony is a great strength of the school. Pupils work and socialise together in mixed race groups. All are valued and treated equally. Pupils also show respect for each other in the way they listen and respond to each other's ideas in lessons. They rarely laugh at another's mistake. They take good care of the school environment, for example by not damaging the art displays in the corridors, though there are a few who seem reluctant to use the many litter bins provided. Pupils are courteous, helpful and polite, to each other, to staff and to visitors.
27. Good behaviour and positive attitudes to school stem from the very good relationships that exist across the school. Teachers frequently make positive comments about pupils' work and build self-esteem. Pupils enjoy receiving 'points' for good work or for having all their equipment with them. They feel happy to seek advice, knowing they will be listened to and helped. The headteacher sets an excellent example through her detailed knowledge of individual pupils and her interaction with them on a daily basis around the school. Senior staff arrive rapidly to support colleagues on the rare occasions that this is necessary. There is a strong sense that everyone in the school is working together and pupils are a part of that. Pupils represent their peers on the school council or on other committees dealing with pupil affairs. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, both in lessons and around the school. For example, if a tutor group wishes to raise funds for some cause, pupils organise it themselves once the school has agreed. Parents are right to be confident that their children are growing into mature and helpful young adults.
28. Attendance levels are slightly higher than the national average, and unauthorised absence is much lower than in most schools. No year group had attendance below 90 percent last term. This is an improvement over the previous inspection. Registers are marked promptly and efficiently at the start of each session. Teachers also call a register at the start of each lesson, which leads to virtually no truancy occurring. Punctuality in the mornings is satisfactory. Much lateness is caused by bus and train delays but there are a small number of pupils who are late several times a week. Punctuality throughout the day is good. There are no bells to signal the start and end of lessons but pupils move between lessons quickly and sensibly.

Sixth form

29. The attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form are very good. In lessons, they are very attentive, make copious notes without prompting, join in discussions and, for the most part, come well prepared. For example, in an A-level history lesson, all were very interested and involved in a discussion on Nazi policies. In GNVQ business studies, students collaborated well and worked diligently. They appreciate being treated like young adults and willingly take on positions of responsibility within the school. The head boy, head girl and prefects set a particularly good example to younger pupils, and all sixth form students contribute to school life because the sixth form is an integral part of the school and they have a high profile within it. Each student is expected to do something to serve the school community. Some play an important part in the support and guidance offered to younger pupils. They will speak to them about drugs and sex education as part of the PSHE programme. They offer a peer mentoring service. Some help with tutor groups or paired reading, others help at parents' evenings and school events, while others organise fund-raising events or help with productions like 'Grease'. Very good, and sometimes excellent, relationships between teachers and students allow constructive dialogue, which helps students to understand how to improve their work and challenges their thinking, in subjects such as theatre studies and sociology. Students get on very well with each other. A large number join the sixth form from other schools and are quickly absorbed and

made welcome. Students from many different ethnic backgrounds relate well together and make a strong contribution to the racial harmony in the school.

30. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form is sound. Most students attend lessons regularly but the school is aware that there are some whose examination performance will be affected by poor attendance. While punctuality for lessons is mostly good, too many students, for example, arrive late on the day when they should be in their year group assembly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning in observed lessons in Key Stage 3 was satisfactory, good in the GCSE years and very good indeed in the sixth form.
32. In Key Stage 3, the quality was significantly better in Year 9, because the pupils had learnt what was and was not acceptable in the school and applied themselves well. In Year 8 the task of teaching was sometimes made more difficult by an argumentative and misbehaving small group of pupils, who disrupted others' learning in a few lessons.
33. For GCSE years the quality of teaching and learning was similarly good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' conduct was often very good indeed, facilitating good teaching. Pupils made good progress in lessons and achieved well as a result. Pupils usually concentrated hard and questioned sensibly and confidently when they did not understand.
34. The best subject teaching was of art and design and drama but teaching was good with very good aspects in several other subjects including English, geography, history, physical education and religious education. In all of these subjects, and in many more individual lessons, the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils was very good, facilitating effective learning. Many teachers, about four in every ten seen teaching, taught very well indeed on at least one occasion and very few staff had unsatisfactory lessons.
35. Teachers' knowledge and understanding were good in Key Stages 3 and 4, as was the effectiveness of their planning. Planning was a strength no matter how the pupils were grouped, in mixed ability classes or where setted on the basis of their prior learning. In a Year 9 English lesson on Macbeth, for example, the teacher's excellent knowledge of the end of key stage assessments enabled the very able class to break through the mystique of the examination and to see it as an opportunity to excel. The teacher's expectations were high and all made very good progress in their learning. The structure of the lesson included use of a good video that both motivated and informed the class. The pupils' vocabulary was refined by the teaching as the pupils discussed words such as 'betrayal' and 'confess'. Teachers' expectations were high in many lessons, with clearly stated learning objectives at the start of most and good use of both time and resources. A Year 10 art and design lesson started with challenging objectives for the class as they discussed experimentation with texture and tone. Pupils were made to feel confident and secure yet were challenged by the demanding work. The progressive development of skills, knowledge and understanding resulted in excellent achievement and highly motivated learners.
36. In Key Stage 3, behaviour management, although sound overall, is not as good as in Key Stage 4. In a Year 8 science lesson, the work was not well enough matched to the pupils' prior knowledge, which resulted in groups being too talkative and not responding well to requests for quiet. The chatter disrupted the learning of others. The colouring in and labelling of a work sheet did not challenge the high attaining pupils. In a Year 8 religious education lesson, the work was interesting and challenging but because the teacher did not have ready answers to all their questions, the pupils were disobedient and silly at times. In both these lessons the root cause of the misbehaviour was the quality of the work presented, but in both cases the teachers did not have the strategies needed to deal with the situation. In Years 10 and 11, in virtually all lessons seen, pupils had good learning skills, applied themselves to the tasks and ensured that they gained as much as they could from the lessons. Behaviour was managed well.

37. The pace of work was good in most lessons for pupils of all ages. In a Year 10 history lesson, the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject carried the pupils with her as she discussed the Nazi German economy. Teacher talk dominated at times but the pupils' interest had been captured and they listened with rapt attention. When the pupils were set questions to answer they did so in total silence, except when questioning the teacher further, wishing to maximise their learning. This was a very good lesson where pupils exhibited excellent learning skills and the teacher's demanding pace of work resulted in very good achievement. A relative weakness in both key stages in the good overall picture was teachers' use of assessment to identify weaknesses in pupils' learning. Insufficient questions were asked at times. Homework, although satisfactory in content and frequency, was not as rigorously followed up as it could be. Some pupils worked effectively in lessons but did not consolidate their learning as well as they might at home, and teachers did not test their homework knowledge.
38. Literacy skills are well taught throughout the school. Teachers are increasingly aware of how to pay attention to such skills in their daily work as a result of the very useful whole school strategies being used. The principles of the national literacy strategy are well understood and applied by the majority. A literacy group has met for the past three years and all teachers have accepted their responsibility in this important area. Under the guidance of a senior manager, all staff have been made aware that if there is to be 'achievement through support' for pupils then the key is through literacy skills. Current helpful priorities are in reading for information and in punctuation. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics lessons but greater emphasis is needed on teaching number work in other subjects such as science, design and technology and physical education. Teaching generally makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' development of ICT skills, with some good examples of its use to support learning in subjects such as English. In several subjects, however, insufficient use is made of ICT in the course of lessons for pupils to appreciate its value.
39. Pupils with English as an additional language are very well integrated into the school community and are known by staff. Pupils from all backgrounds are given equality of opportunity through the teaching. This helps to ensure that work is matched to their needs in this very inclusive school.
40. In mainstream lessons, some subjects, for example mathematics, use setting as a strategy to meet the needs of the lowest attainers and those with special educational needs, whereas others have mixed ability groups. Pupils with Statements are supported in a proportion of their lessons by learning support assistants, who also support other pupils in the class whenever possible. The support department maintains up-to-date subject schemes of work to help these assistants be fully prepared to teach pupils in mainstream lessons. This is good practice. Some pupils with Statements are also withdrawn for intensive 1:1 sessions with a teacher. These are very effective in tackling specific weaknesses for individual pupils. In addition, pupils in Years 7 and 8 with reading ages significantly below their chronological age, but who do not receive other support, are offered a weekly session of side-by-side reading. The tutors involved are learning support assistants or sixth form volunteers who are thoroughly trained for their role. The twenty-minute sessions are enjoyable and pupils learn very well in them. Tutors and pupils work well in their pairs; boy with girl, ethnic minority with white heritage, without any sign of tension, a reflection of the very good relationships within the school. Most pupils start their English lessons with literacy work, but a number of pupils with learning difficulties go to the support centre to work on specific programmes of work with support assistant help. Work in these small groups starts promptly, pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy the immediate feedback the programme supplies. Its effective use increases pupils' confidence and skills. The learning support assistants then help pupils to reintegrate effectively into the lesson when they return.
41. The school's learning support department has successfully established a reading extension club for pupils in Years 7 and 8 of very high ability. Identified pupils are invited to attend at lunch times to read and discuss a challenging text. Currently, by pupil choice, this is a volume of *Lord of the Rings*. This teaching is very effective and appreciated. Generally, where teaching is good and very good, high attainers are catered for well in lessons, as teachers know the pupils who need to be challenged by demanding work.

Sixth form

42. The quality of teaching in the sixth form was very good with more than four in every five lessons observed good or better. More than two in every five were very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed in the 58 sessions seen. The quality was equally good in Years 12 and 13 and almost every lesson resulted in effective learning.
43. Students' learning was good or better in all subjects except mathematics, where teaching was satisfactory. The best teaching in the sixth form focus subjects, where three lessons were seen of each, was in French, theatre studies/drama, history, business studies, psychology and art and design. In all these subjects the quality was very good. Teaching strengths in lessons were also apparent in the work sample provided, which showed attention to the detail of the subject. The work indicated that staff had good awareness of examination syllabus requirements. Strengths in the sampled subjects were similar to the subjects focused on. The best teaching in the sampled subjects, where just a single lesson was seen of each, was in A-level economics and GNVQ intermediate business studies. Most of the sampled subject teaching observed was good.
44. The greatest strengths in the teaching and learning in the sixth form were similar to those seen in the 11-16 age group classes. Teachers have good subject expertise, know their students very well and relate very well to them, and the students enjoy their subjects.
45. A Year 12 drama lesson exemplified some of the teaching qualities seen, where pairs produced an exaggerated moving image, making the familiar strange in the style of Brecht. High quality and challenging questions ensured that the pace of the lesson was very good as students put into practice what they had been taught. Students gave articulate responses and the teacher's very good subject knowledge was apparent in the discussions that took place. Learning and achievement were very good. In a similarly effective lesson in history, on Mussolini's foreign policy, the teacher had clear learning objectives that were shared with the students. A whole class discussion took place that enabled all to learn from one another as each contributed, and the session was very well guided by a teacher with expert knowledge. A good range of activities maintained student motivation and involvement and resulted in very effective learning.
46. In a sampled lesson in economics, the explanations were clear and lucid. The importance of ratios was well taught as students developed their knowledge of the United Kingdom in the global economy. The teacher noticed if an individual student's concentration lapsed and challenged her/him most effectively. Teacher knowledge played an important part in this very good lesson where students learnt quickly and well. The high quality relationships were also key to the progress made. Few lessons were just satisfactory, but when these occurred learning could have been better. For example, in a GCSE English re-sit lesson for a Year 12 group, some students had not completed their homework tasks which led to a difficult start. Too few responses were expected from the students and students were insufficiently involved at times. Opportunities to clarify points of grammar were not always taken and used well.
47. In all lessons observed, the school's inclusive approach to education was apparent, as all students were treated equally. Teachers valued each as an individual. The small number of students with special educational needs were taught as effectively as their peers; teachers were aware of their needs. Those students for whom English is an additional language, although not at an early stage of acquiring English, in some cases did warrant greater attention in terms of the vocabulary being used, although all made at least satisfactory progress.
48. Appropriate provision in key skills meets the needs of the students. The school was keen not to rush into a system which would demand considerable time and resources but which would not have value for, and therefore status with, students. In a pilot scheme last year, teachers were expected to point out where key skills were relevant and students kept a log of such occurrences and how they used the skills. Although

this was for an examining board portfolio, it was not for accreditation outside the school. For the past two years, a rolling programme of lessons has been provided for Year 12 students. This takes the form of a briefing for a future activity, a tutorial about skills' use, or a practical or life skills activity. Activities during the course include a first aid course, problem-solving, and a two day industry conference arranged in conjunction with the education business partnership and Brunel University. In the lesson seen, the good level of attendance and participation showed that students felt the course was worthwhile. Some gave specific examples of how it had helped their ability to give confident and well-prepared presentations in other lessons. Finances have been set aside in the school development plan for workshop sessions to develop further this important and successful initiative. The school is expecting that when the key skills course is evaluated the need for a further computer skills course will be confirmed.

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

49. The overall quality and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils are very good. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements, except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. ICT is taught across the curriculum in all year groups and is well integrated. A wide and impressive range of extra-curricular activities encompasses sports, leisure and the arts. Altogether the curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities to meet the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. The curriculum is strongly inclusive and pupils with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language have equal access to this curriculum and are well catered for.
50. The provision for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good. All follow the National Curriculum subjects as well as a very good personal, social and health education programme which includes discrete provision for religious education.
51. The arrangements for implementation of literacy skills are good. The staff are kept well informed of objectives and are encouraged to check their own department against a subject mapping list. The national strategies for numeracy are being introduced and, so far, implementation is satisfactory.
52. The provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good. All pupils follow a core curriculum and choose additional subjects from a wide range of options. The planning of the curriculum in Key Stage 4 is very good and responds very well to pupils' needs. In conversation, Year 10 pupils spoke with particular enthusiasm of the help that they had had in making choices and of the opportunities offered to them. The Key Stage 4 curriculum enables some pupils to be disapplied from doing a modern foreign language. With a combination of college courses and work experience, they can follow a work related learning course in Year 11 or consolidate their learning in literacy, numeracy, ICT and study skills. This disapplication also provides opportunities to support work in other subjects, including coursework assignments. In the current year the National Curriculum is partially disapplied for approximately forty-five pupils.
53. Improvements since the last report are good. The school has carried out two curriculum reviews within this period. History and geography have both been given additional time by adding an extra lesson for each subject for half a year. All pupils have at least one lesson of religious education per week. This subject is taught within PSHE, which has been given an extra lesson in Year 7 and 8. The provision for modern foreign languages has changed in that the second language is now available only for the more able linguists in Year 9. Other pupils concentrate on the first language and have more time for the one language that they do study. The department has also made French the sole main language, with German only available as a second language. Arrangements for providing adequate time for music across the whole of Key Stage 3 are satisfactory.
54. Provision for work-related education is good. Careers education is very good and is provided through the PSHE programme. In Year 9, for example, very good teaching increased pupils' self-awareness to decide what they are good at and what they enjoy doing. Much use is made of computer-aided guidance to help

pupils develop their interests in, and knowledge of, appropriate careers. Very good resources, with a wide range of information, are available to pupils. Pupils were enthusiastic about the careers programme available to them.

55. The school has a very strong programme of extra-curricular activities. In excess of fifty different activities are organized, on a regular basis, by over thirty staff. The sports programme is very well supported by pupils. In response to a questionnaire last year, it offers access to golf and Tae Kwon Do, as well as all the traditional activities, such as football, athletics, cricket and hockey. Art clubs, drama and music are all popular and whole school productions are a regular feature. A current production of the musical 'Grease' involves more than eighty pupils across the school. Other clubs, such as the cartoon club, film club and chess club, ensure that there is a wide range of opportunities available to all pupils. The school has received two Education Extra awards in recognition of the excellence of its extra-curricular provision.
56. The overall provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. Since the time of the last report, a very well-planned and taught programme of PSHE has been established that includes education in health, racism, drugs, sex and parenting. The well-planned and discrete provision for religious education develops understanding of world faiths. All Year 10 and 11 pupils follow a GCSE short course 'God and morality'. Education in citizenship is being planned as a key feature of this very good PSHE programme.
57. Links with primary schools have been well developed. There is a long standing tradition of staff visiting the junior schools to talk to Year 6 pupils, who are excited by the induction days. They also benefit from visits to Northwood to have lessons in the ICT suite and enjoy joint drama, music and sporting activities, for example a Year 6 versus Year 7 cricket game. The junior schools have a high regard for Northwood. Links are also good with other institutions and the local community, for example through work experience.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

58. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development and has improved this aspect of its' work since the last inspection.
59. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound overall though the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The 'thought for the day' is read to most tutor groups but very rarely is time given for reflection or discussion. When this does happen, it is effective and provides good support for pupils' personal development. The quality of year group assemblies also varies, with some making a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development and others having little or no spiritual content. The school has developed links with local religious leaders who come in to speak during assemblies from time to time. It has set aside a room where Muslims can go to pray and supports them, for example during Ramadan, when they must fast during the day. Some departments, notably drama/theatre studies and art, provide a very good foundation on which teachers can increase pupils' self-awareness. One class of Year 11 pupils left a drama lesson saying they felt emotionally drained but elated after a searching lesson exploring feelings of rejection and alienation. Religious education lessons teach pupils the facts about the major world religions but this rarely leads to reflection about how faith might affect an individual's life. Quality circle time is used on occasions to help pupils reflect on their lives. For example, one tutor group shared important decisions they had made recently. Too many opportunities are missed when pupils could be encouraged to respond to moments of awe and wonder or to reflect on what they are doing.
60. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' moral development. Many subjects include consideration of ethical issues in their schemes of work. For example in science, pupils consider the effects of pollution on global warming and the ethics of using nuclear power. Issues around vivisection and animal welfare are discussed in English. The danger of the 'glamorisation' of war is also debated. Pupils taking art and design GCSE have looked in depth at issues such as stereotyping and the impact of the foot and mouth crisis, as well as producing some powerful work as a result of the September 11th atrocities. Many of the 'thought

for the week' topics have a strong moral message. Pupils are strongly supported by the school as they consider right and wrong and making wise decisions.

61. There are many very good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills, both through discussion and planning work in lessons, and through extra-curricular activities, visits and residential trips. They often discuss and plan in pairs and small groups, though this could happen more frequently. Team fixtures and theatrical and musical productions help them to learn to work together in larger groups, as does the school council and its sub-committees. Skiing trips and adventurous activity holidays also contribute well to building relationships. The whole of Year 7 went to the pantomime just before Christmas; this was a great success. Modern foreign language students go on exchange visits and some do work experience abroad. Many pupils are also involved in different fund-raising events throughout the year. Sometimes these are a whole school effort and sometimes a small group of pupils organises one. They result in large sums of money being raised for less fortunate people and increase awareness of the needs of others.
62. The cultural diversity of the school is celebrated and a strong sense of respect for others and valuing their traditions and beliefs is engendered. This racial harmony is a major feature of the school. It is supported particularly by subjects such as art and design, music, religious education and English, as well as others. For example, in art and design, pupils study a wide range of artistic styles, including Aboriginal art of Australia. Pupils' own work is widely displayed throughout the school and in the London Underground, contributing to the impact the subject makes in the school. Pupils listen to music from Africa and India and play the Indonesian Gamelan in music lessons. In English, they study a wide range of texts and reading is strongly promoted. Theatre studies are broadened by visits to a number of productions each year. Each curriculum area takes pupils on well-structured and related visits, whether to an art gallery or a geographical field visit. The provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent.

Sixth form

63. The quality and range of opportunities for learning are very good. Twenty two subjects are on offer, at AS and A-levels, to meet the interests and aptitudes of the students. Very clear guidelines help students take the curriculum path of most relevance to their future plans. Many students take at least four AS subjects in Year 12 and three A-level subjects the following year. A few students are able to increase this to five AS and some take less. Some A-level courses in Year 13 run with small groups following student choices at the end of Year 12. There are a limited number of vocational courses available, including intermediate GNVQ and advanced VCE. Business studies is very well supported by the students, but some subjects which have been offered, for example, leisure and tourism and health and social care, have not been taken up. Facilities are available for students to re-take GCSE in mathematics and English. There is a good programme, particularly in mathematics, science and ICT of after-school and lunchtime lessons to extend the learning opportunities for students, where it is appropriate to do so. A programme for developing key skills in communication, numeracy and ICT has been introduced into Year 12. There is good provision, for example in art, for independent study throughout the courses. Several students have attended summer schools at London Arts Colleges.
64. Enrichment of the sixth form curriculum is provided through a strong general studies programme, which all students follow in Year 12. Students are helped to understand issues of current national concern by being able to hear a wide range of visiting speakers. For example, a session on 'homelessness' was given by a speaker from the Barnados organization and a speaker from AEA technology addressed the sixth form on 'considerations for nuclear power'. The scheme of work also approaches issues of drug use and provides an opportunity to increase understanding of local and national politics. Students following a course in politics organized a parliamentary style debate to help raise awareness of democratic procedures. It is a weakness of the curriculum that it is only through a small unit of this general studies programme that students have any opportunity for religious education. In this respect the curriculum fails to deliver statutory requirements.

65. Extra-curricular provision includes an extensive range of activities in sports, drama and music, ranging from basketball to a sixth form choir. Sixth form students are involved in the current school production of 'Grease'. A sixth form student has actually arranged the music for the show for a school rock band. Visits, especially to other countries, are a strong feature of the excellent curricular opportunities. For example in this current year, a trip to Munich is planned for historians.
66. The school makes very good provision for student's personal development in the sixth form. Particular strengths are the level of responsibility students are given, for their own study and for community work within the school. They are encouraged to raise funds for a number of charities. Some recently joined in a sponsored abseil and a parachute jump. They are heavily involved in arrangements for charity week. Students should attend an assembly each week. Year 12 general studies and several A-level courses make a good contribution to students' personal development. In sociology, for example, students analyse modern religious movements and cults and then consider their own beliefs. They can discuss ethnicity and educational achievement with sensitivity for the values and beliefs of others. Theatre studies and art and design both make a very strong contribution, through the exploration of thoughts and feelings about contemporary issues. The very culturally diverse nature of the sixth form is a strong feature of the school and students' excellent role models contribute significantly to the racial harmony within the school. A weakness in provision is the lack of opportunity for students to reflect in a meaningful way on the thought for the day or to take part in any sort of collective worship.
67. It is strength of the school that the senior management provides a curriculum which is accessible to all students. The planning of the curriculum takes account of students' aspirations and offers wide opportunities, which are open to all. The great success of this curricular provision has led to the sixth form being over-subscribed. It takes in over forty students into the sixth form, in addition to its own students who have moved on from Year 11. These additional students find that the provision for continuing study in the sixth form is very good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

68. Child protection procedures are firmly in place. The school tries hard to work closely with outside agencies to ensure the support and welfare of pupils about whom it is concerned, but this support is variable where agencies from other local education authorities are concerned. The school has a very effective pastoral care system. Every pupil is well known to a number of key adults who regularly review the pupils in their care. Good records are kept from the moment information is shared by the junior school from which the pupil is transferring. Induction arrangements are very good, ensuring that pupils settle quickly. Sixth formers offer a peer mentoring service for main school pupils and have been trained to do this. The school also provides access to counsellors if pupils need this support. It is part of the borough 'Healthy Schools' pilot project.
69. All adults are working to provide a happy and positive atmosphere in which pupils can learn. Very good use is made of praise and there is frequent recognition of pupils' achievements. Even older pupils value the points they receive for good work or for bringing the correct equipment; this system of rewards has a positive impact on learning. To celebrate achievements, each year group has a commendation evening every year, to which parents are invited. The school has a very good behaviour policy. It is detailed and prominently displayed in all classrooms so that teachers and pupils are clear what the procedures are. This, together with training of teachers in behaviour management strategies, has led to greater consistency in handling incidents of difficult behaviour than was seen by the previous inspection, which has in turn led to significant improvements in behaviour amongst pupils. Senior staff are very quickly on hand when emergencies arise. Form tutors, heads of year and heads of department liaise closely and have very effective systems of communication. They have very good strategies for dealing with pupils who find it difficult to behave, are aggressive or make racist remarks. Such incidents are dealt with very firmly and, pupils feel, fairly. The school works hard to keep as many of these pupils in school as possible, though

temporary exclusions are sometimes for a long period while additional support is arranged. The school works very closely with parents and keeps them fully informed.

70. Attendance is monitored and promoted well. A big decrease in the levels of unauthorised absence has been achieved following the appointment of an attendance officer, who phones home on the first day of absence if there is no explanation forthcoming. Those with full attendance in a half-term have their names put into a draw and three from each year group are awarded a £5 music voucher. In addition, certificates are given. Full attendance and good punctuality contribute to form points awarded each week. The school does not have an electronic registration system, but still generates a three-weekly analysis of attendance by year group. Realistic, but challenging attendance targets have been set for the year. These measures are having an impact and attendance is improving. Punctuality is also recorded, via late slips, and those who are persistently late are followed up. The school has good systems for ensuring that post-registration truancy will be noticed and acted upon. Education welfare support varies greatly, and unhelpfully, depending on the local education authority concerned.
71. The school provides very good support and guidance on options and careers for pupils. The careers programme is well co-ordinated and integrated into the curriculum. It is effectively delivered as part of PSHE. The careers library is well stocked with up-to-date resources. There is material available in brochures, books, videos, CD-ROMs and via the Internet. Very good support is given by staff from the local careers service with which the school has signed a contract agreement. All pupils receive an individual careers interview before the end of Key Stage 4. The school has recently been awarded the Quality Award for Careers.
72. Arrangements for the general health and safety of students are very good. Very effective arrangements are in place for dealing with first aid, sickness and accidents. The school follows clear guidelines for the organisation of and participation in off-site visits and activities, and there are regular checks on fire and electrical equipment. The health and safety committee regularly monitors health and safety issues and reports to the governing body once a term. The procedures that are in place for fire drills, risk assessment and safety checks are very good.
73. The school's systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic performance are satisfactory. Improvements have been made since the last inspection and the school continues to develop the use of assessment to support pupils' learning. A whole-school recording system is well established to track pupils' progress and to provide teachers with detailed information about pupils' prior attainment and targets. Sound use is made of assessment information to guide curricular planning, but there is undue variation between individuals and departments. The analysis of data has supported course and syllabus choices in subjects such as science, geography and history. The school monitors pupils' progress from ages 11 to 14 and 14 to 16, checking the achievement of different groups, for example according to gender, prior attainment and ethnicity. In addition to the national tests, the school uses reading and other tests to monitor the performance of each year group and of each subject.
74. Individual pupils receive sound support and advice that is influenced by assessment information. Recent modifications to marking and reporting make better use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. The very good practice in art and design for example, involves the sharing of clear targets and how to achieve them, and progress sheets that follow pupils through the school. Monitoring and recording of achievement are strengths also in modern languages. In some other subjects, such approaches are less well developed. The school recognises the key priority of ensuring consistency in the use of the systems and, longer-term, extending pupils' self-assessment and the use of targets within teaching and learning. A particular aspect for improvement is the setting of precise subject-specific targets to individual pupils. For example, in English the targets are too general and lack detailed skills criteria. These are needed in order to build on the thorough marking and tracking of progress. Significantly, the school is introducing a whole-school target-setting day this year. This will involve individual pupil interviews, and is intended to improve the use of target-setting. The school realises that this has a key contribution to make in raising pupils' achievements.

75. Good procedures have been established to support pupils with special educational needs. These start with close liaison and regular visits to several main contributory primary schools by the special educational needs co-ordinator or SENCO. This person has a key role in ensuring that there is a smooth transition for pupils with identified special educational needs. The SENCO and heads of year work closely together for the benefit of these pupils. Good procedures ensure that pupils who exhibit special educational needs during their time at the school are identified and their needs diagnosed and appropriate support action taken. The department has a good bank of diagnostic tests which are well used to achieve this. The regular school screening process makes an important contribution to this early identification.
76. Individual education plans (IEPs) are very good. They address the needs identified in pupils' reviews or formal Statements. Targets on the IEPs are clear with achievable success criteria. Targets are well supported by guidance and suggested strategies. Reviews of the IEPs of pupils on the current stage 2 are carried out regularly within the department. Reviews of the IEPs of pupils on the current stages 3 and 5 are undertaken regularly and involve gathering evidence from all the teachers of a pupil. The contribution to this process made by the learning support assistants is detailed and very helpful. This results in IEPs which are modified or developed as the pupil makes progress in moving towards the targets. These procedures are very good. All teachers are aware of the IEPs for the pupils they teach and most incorporate them well into their lesson planning.
77. Records of pupils with special educational needs are carefully maintained and used very well to monitor pupils' progress and guide their development. For example, the tutors' recording in the five weekly groups of side-by-side reading is reviewed by the assistant co-ordinator, from which the subsequent week's work for each individual pupil is planned in detail. This important but time-consuming task maximises the impact of the strategy. Weekly meetings of the team of support assistants and teachers, to share information and discuss specific pupils, ensure that all have a clear and full understanding of the work of the department.
78. The local education authority's behavioural support strategy has moved towards training teachers to deal with issues while pupils remain in school, following their normal curriculum. The regular screening procedures operated by the school, together with close monitoring of the school's 'bleep' strategy to remove disruptive pupils from specific lessons, allow the early identification of pupils showing behavioural problems. Individual behaviour plans are put in place for these pupils and are largely successful in dealing with the situation. For a small number of pupils who need further support, pastoral support plans are devised in an attempt to keep pupils in education rather than exclude them. These plans involve the use of appropriate external agencies and have been effective in maintaining the education of a number of pupils in school.
79. The English as an additional language (EAL) register contains 185 pupils of compulsory school age. However, only 20 are at stages 1 or 2. The significant rise in the recorded percentage of EAL pupils reflects a good screening system for Year 7 as well as for pupils admitted to other years. There is a need for formalisation of the reviewing, at regular intervals, of all pupils at stages 3 and 4 on the register.

Sixth form

Advice, support and guidance

80. Sixth form students are confident that they receive very good support and advice, both academically and pastorally. They feel that they are given effective guidance before they start and during their courses. The printed information is clear and helpful, and the induction arrangements are good, so that students are helped to settle well into the sixth form. New students joining from other schools are also helped to settle quickly.

81. Students are generally good at remembering to sign in and out of school. The school is aware that it needs to monitor attendance in the sixth form more closely. Arrangements for the general health and safety of students, however, are very good.
82. The school provides very good support and guidance on options and career possibilities for its students. The careers programme is effectively delivered as part of the general studies course and supported by the well-stocked careers library. Very good support is given to individual students from tutors and staff of the local careers service. Guidance on completing UCAS forms is provided effectively by subject specialists on the staff. Students speak positively about the quick response to their requests for support and the quality of advice and help given. The recent award of the Quality Award for Careers indicates the school's success in supporting students' selection of their future careers and higher education institutions.

Assessment:

83. The school has good arrangements for assessing and monitoring students' academic performance and reporting on their progress.
84. The tracking system incorporates "target minimum grades" for each student in their examination courses. Students say that they know their individual targets and how well they are doing, and that they are given good guidance. Excellent practice in art and design, for example, involves written comments and individual oral reviews. The good practice in business studies and sociology includes good marking and thorough analysis of performance in order to improve provision. However, in some subjects, such as mathematics and design and technology, more precise short-term target-setting is needed, that focuses on specific learning goals. The annual reports for students at the end of Year 12 are detailed and informative, including a useful section to indicate how the student might improve.
85. In the sixth form, almost half the students are on the EAL register, but none are at stages 1 or 2 and only five are at stage 3. A significant number of the students new to the sixth form EAL register do not have a recorded stage. Sixth form students admitted from other schools have not been automatically screened for their language skills. The school is already planning to introduce this process.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

86. Parents express positive views about the school. They particularly like the ease with which they can contact staff and raise concerns. They also think that the school expects their child to work hard and achieve well, and that it is well led and managed. The inspection confirmed these opinions.
87. The school works very hard to build relationships with parents before the pupils start and is then very good at keeping in touch with families. It provides very good written information, including monthly newsletters and planners through which parents and teachers can communicate. Excellent annual booklets for each year group detail what will be learnt in each subject, and include expectations about homework, uniform, behaviour and attendance. Individual teachers, form tutors and heads of year also telephone parents or write letters, with praise as well as with concerns. There are regular opportunities for parents to come into school, for formal meetings with teachers to discuss progress or to learn about a curriculum area, or to attend productions and social events. The school canvasses parents' views about the school and responds to points raised when it can. The school has very good links with parents.
88. Annual reports at the end of the summer term are good. They give a clear indication in writing of what level the pupil is working at (though the bar graph used is less easy to understand). They also state clearly what the pupil can do and his/her attitude to the subject. In some subjects, a target for improvement is given but this is not consistent and some targets are very broad. A good feature is the detailed report each pupil writes about him/herself and these also include one or two targets, though not necessarily subject

based. Interim reports, which grade a number of aspects, such as behaviour, attendance, completion of homework on a 1-4 scale, give a quick and easy guide to the progress being made for pupils, tutors and parents.

89. Parents make a good contribution to the life and work of the school. Most parents take an interest in their children's learning and come to discuss progress with the teachers and support the school's disciplinary actions. Performances and social events are always very well supported. A parent-teacher association raises substantial funds for the school. Overall, the close links which the school builds with parents is encouraging their involvement and helping to raise standards.
90. The school recognises that sixth form students have a greater responsibility for their own lives and are less dependent on their parents. Nevertheless, they also recognise that students do need informed support and advice and that parents play an important role in this. Parents are encouraged to attend information evenings about careers options and university courses and are given very good written information to share with students.
91. Parents are invited to attend the annual reviews of pupils with Statements of special educational needs. Generally they are kept very well informed about the progress their child is making, about the outcomes of reviews and about the individual education plans that the school makes to respond to the identified needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

92. The headteacher is a quietly powerful and very effective leader, whose skills are greatly respected and admired by the pupils, parents, governors and staff. Equality of opportunity is the foundation for leadership and management of the school. The headteacher has been especially successful in underpinning the day-to-day work with thoroughly considered systems and structures that enable the pupils to learn in an atmosphere of trust, and mutual respect for each other's values and cultural traditions. Pupils take an active role in some management decisions and this in turn encourages them to take responsibility, not only for their own learning but also the learning of others. The headteacher's management of this, for example by involving pupils in the decisions about the food on sale in the dining hall and the seating in the playground, helps to create a cohesive, socially inclusive community.
93. The work of key staff with delegated roles and responsibilities to oversee and implement school policies is effective in helping to foster a corporate responsibility for improvement and a shared desire for the school and the pupils to be successful. In striving to achieve these goals the management of pupils' personal development, in particular, is very effective. Heads of year, form tutors and department heads each play a key role in reinforcing the values the school stands for and instilling the codes of behaviour and attitudes to work that enable pupils to learn. Overall, they are very successful. As pupils move through the school their achievement and attitudes to learning improve. Together and individually, staff enable pupils to progress from the different starting points to achieve well by the end of Year 11. The leadership of the headteacher and the way those with management roles carry out their responsibilities are central to the school's success.
94. Recruiting specialist staff and retaining them, especially in subjects where there are shortages nationally, is a very high priority for the headteacher and the governors. This key responsibility has been handled extremely well, ensuring every opportunity is seized to recruit subject specialists, and to lobby local politicians. The problems of recruitment have in the past had a negative impact on standards, not only because teachers lacked expertise in areas such as science but because the headteacher and members of her senior team had to divert their energies and time away from their prime task of improving standards further.
95. Governors have been active in monitoring standards, through their analysis of test results and examination data and in their visits to the school. The achievements of particular groups of pupils are followed closely

and some governors closely question senior managers and heads of department in order to gain a better understanding of why performance in some subjects is better than in others. The role of critical friend is taken very seriously. Overall the governing body fulfils its statutory role well. Some productive links have been established with senior staff that help in setting realistic performance targets and in informing spending decisions.

96. Governors have ambitious plans for the school in the future. They share a good understanding of the academic strengths and weaknesses and where improvements are necessary. They are less certain about the statutory curriculum and whether requirements are being fully met, for example in ensuring that a daily act of collective worship takes place.
97. There is a complex but very effective planning cycle in place to agree priorities for whole school improvement and to draft the school development plan. Governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and other members of the school community, all take part in the process. The school and department plans work very effectively in practice. The monitoring that is carried out by senior managers and heads of department provides information on how successfully action plans are being implemented and having an effect in lessons and on pupils' work.
98. At the time of the last inspection, monitoring was at an early stage of development. It is now very effectively established across the whole school. There are regular observations of teaching by heads of department and senior staff. In addition the very good induction programme for newly qualified teachers includes half-termly observations of teaching by the member of staff with this responsibility. In almost all cases, observations are carried out very thoroughly and teachers receive detailed written and oral feedback. Senior staff have used the opportunity to monitor the impact of and, in some cases, strengthen the classroom routines around which teachers plan their lessons. As a consequence, teachers are consistent in applying them. An example of this success is clearly expressed learning objectives that are in lesson plans and shared with pupils. The percentage of good, very good and excellent teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and, although the behaviour of a small group of pupils is a cause of concern, behaviour is not the issue that it was at the time of the last inspection. In a minority of subjects, classroom observations by heads of department, whilst satisfactory, have not been carried out with the same thoroughness or attention to constructive criticism.
99. Systems for financial control and administration are very effective. Principles of best value are applied when making decisions, for example, about school meals, the telephone system and payroll provider. Specific grants are used very effectively for their intended purposes. Pupils benefit from wisely targeted spending. For example, money spent on training support staff has led to improved quality of support for pupils. The school consults on major spending decisions through the discussions which take place on the school development plan. The school makes effective use of new technologies.
100. The school special education needs policy meets all current requirements of the code of practice. The governors' annual report to parents contains very full and detailed information about the school's response to provide for those pupils with special educational needs. The school makes a major commitment to these pupils. The resources used to meet their needs are greater than the identifiable income (through Statements and grants) that the school receives. The budget for this aspect of the work of the school is driven by the identified needs rather than the need being addressed from a fixed sum. The provision of a SENCO and a second in the department together with two other qualified teachers and a number of learning support assistants is very good. Most of the learning support assistants are well qualified and others are currently undertaking professional development towards qualification.
101. The learning support department is very well resourced in terms of the high quality of the available accommodation and of the learning resources made available for use. The department is very well led and managed by the SENCO, ably supported by the recently appointed assistant. There is a clear understanding of the direction the department wishes to take and how this is going to be achieved. The development planning is detailed and clear. The SENCO meets regularly with heads of year and the

pastoral deputy to share concerns and strategies. This helps create a unity of approach and purpose within the school. Members of the team are actively involved in their own professional development. Development training has been provided, periodically, for the whole school staff, with more to come on the new code of practice. Link teachers in all the major subject areas have been identified and meet regularly with the SENCO to share subject concerns and receive training in some specific issues. They act as channels of communication and support between subjects and the support department. All subjects have a standard item on special educational needs on the departmental meeting agenda - a further indication of the emphasis the school places on responding to the needs of these pupils.

102. As a result of the successful efforts to overcome staff shortages, some extremely effective appointments have been made over the past year. The school has now a staff that is well qualified and suitable, with clearly defined job descriptions. The school is still proactive in recruitment and is confident that a suitable qualified and experience staff will continue to be in place to take the school forward. Once staff are in post, the school supports the teachers well and the retention of staff is good. Newly appointed staff and newly qualified teachers are taken through extensive procedures so that they understand the school's values and procedures. All have the advantage of an excellent handbook which clearly explains the procedures to be followed in all aspects of school life. Newly qualified teachers have regular meetings with senior staff to review their teaching and are encouraged to undertake relevant training to assist them. The teachers are appreciative of the support and guidance they receive. They found joining the school a pleasant experience.
103. Other staff are well supported, receiving suitable further training based on their personal needs and the school development plan. Staff development is also supported by the monitoring system. The outcomes of any discussions and observations can be linked directly to identifying training needs.
104. The use of an existing member of staff, instead of buy-back from the local education authority, improves the ability of staff to communicate on EAL matters to the school's co-ordinator, as she is present in school on every teaching day of the week.
105. The school has an efficient group of support staff who are also well supported by the school. The school received a very complimentary report from the recent Investors in People assessment.
106. The overall level of resources is good. They are good in most subjects, and very good in art and design and modern foreign languages. The satisfactory resources in mathematics are supplemented by others acquired as a result of running a numeracy summer school. Resources in science are satisfactory, but insufficient use is made of computers which limits pupils' experience in such activities as data-logging. The computer ratio across the school, at one for every seven pupils, is good. Resources in music are unsatisfactory. The lack of access to recording facilities and computer programs narrowed pupils' practical opportunities during the inspection. New facilities have been purchased.
107. The good resourcing of almost all subject departments has been brought about by very good planning and carefully prioritised spending. As a deliberate policy, the school has spent a higher proportion of its budget on resources than many other schools. Departments bid for extra spending according to what they need for new developments, having to justify requests by reference to previously-agreed priorities. The system is fair and very thoroughly monitored. Shortfalls in resources for teaching modern foreign languages, history and business were noted in the previous report. These have been remedied. ICT facilities are good with increased numbers of computers. The management and deployment of resources remains good.
108. The library/learning resource centre is attractive, well organised and very well managed. The amount of usage is testimony to the good quality of its resources. At break and lunchtime it is often very crowded. The book stock is satisfactory. Its range is restricted by the habits of some pupils who borrow books but fail to return them despite the considerable efforts of librarians and teachers. Over a thousand pounds worth of books are lost each year in this way. The learning resource centre gives good support to literacy by being a focal point for reading for pleasure or information, researching via the Internet, and quiet study.

The librarians withdraw old and unused stock annually, and are careful to seek pupils' views about new fiction, and to display it under themes such as crime, horror and romance. They are well supported by volunteer sixth form students who have to be computer-literate.

109. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Few spare rooms are available because the school is fully subscribed, the sixth form is popular and a very good range of courses are taught. Specialist accommodation for design and technology and science is satisfactory and used effectively. Accommodation for physical education is good and well used, although the poorly drained fields make them inaccessible for part of the year.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

110. The management of the sixth form is integral to the main school. There is a very clear rationale for its composition as an open sixth form and the management structure that supports it. The head of the sixth form shares similar roles and responsibilities to those of other year heads and is very effective. Students experience a smooth transition from Year 11 into the sixth form. Very few leave the school midway through the year or find they have made the wrong choice of subjects. The tutors are managed very effectively. They are a highly effective team and work closely with colleagues. The progress students make in their chosen subjects and the use made of time outside of lessons is closely monitored. Very good communications exist between the various groups and difficulties are effectively and speedily dealt with, as the improved results show.
111. Staff, governors and parents are totally committed to the sixth form. Legal requirements on the provision of religious education in the sixth form, however, are not met. Older students are important role models for younger pupils. In this respect sixth formers themselves gain from the experience by practising leadership skills whilst at the same time also making an important and valuable contribution to the life of the school.
112. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching has been used just as effectively as in the main school to bring about the improvements in learning and standards. The head of the sixth form monitors closely the progress individual students make towards meeting their target grades, maintains an overview of their attendance, monitors how well they are achieving in their chosen subjects and their attitudes to school. This information helps to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved and may be used when drafting the whole school development plan.
113. The plan identifies specific issues that apply to the sixth form. The budget is very well managed and efficiently administered to targeted priorities and the development and training of staff.
114. Systems for financial control and administration are very effective. The proportion of expenditure on post-16 provision is slightly less than that generated by post-16 students

Resources

115. Resources to support sixth form lessons are good in terms of range, quantity and condition. They are well deployed and managed, and carefully looked after by teachers and students alike. The funding of resources is scrupulously checked and kept separate from that for pupils aged 11-16. Each department receives a maintenance allowance. Bids for further funding are then made according to the departmental needs, articulated in school and subject plans. The most recent priorities have been new text books for changed AS and A-level syllabuses. ICT facilities are satisfactory and generally well used but, in some subject areas, better facilities and use would be helpful. The learning resource centre is very good and students appreciate the study facilities which it provides. Considerable use is made of it by pupils and

students in all years and congestion results. An additional sixth form library area would be helpful when funds permit this development. Sixth form courses are well staffed with knowledgeable, effective teachers who keep their knowledge of examination board requirements up-to-date. Staffing difficulties in previous years in the main school have had less impact on the sixth form. Currently all courses offered are staffed by appropriately qualified and experienced teachers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

116. To improve further the quality of education and raise standards the school should:

- (1) Improve the quality of teaching in the small proportion that is unsatisfactory, or just satisfactory, and does not result in good standards of work and behaviour. The unsatisfactory behaviour of a small number of pupils in some Year 8 lessons needs to be dealt with.

(Paragraphs 1, 24, 32, 36)

- (2) Ensure that pupils have specific, short-term targets in each of their subjects to work towards, enabling staff to gauge their rate of progress and achievements. Some pupils do not do enough work out of lessons, which leads to underachievement.

(Paragraphs 12, 24, 37, 74)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve standards in A-level mathematics through more effective teaching and learning

(Paragraphs 18, 19, 43, 232-236)

117. Less important issues referred to in the report that warrant attention and which the school may wish to consider including in its action plan:

- Increase the use of ICT in some subject teaching and improve access to computers *(6, 12, 38, 182, 186)*
- Ensure that high attaining pupils are identified and challenged in all their lessons *(5, 6, 14)*
- Increase the teaching of numeracy across a range of subjects *(16,38)*
- Review the use of the lengthy double periods for physical education *(213)*
- Use the outcomes of assessment more in planning what next to teach, to meet pupils' needs and to keep pupils well informed of their attainment and achievement levels *(73)*
- Screen students new to the sixth form more effectively to assess their English language skills and ensure that staff make use of this information in their teaching, and review more formally the progress of pupils at stages 3 and 4 on the register of those for whom English is an additional language. *(79, 85)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	138
	Sixth form	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	5	26	59	42	4	1	0
Percentage	4	19	43	31	3	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	22	22	11	0	0	0
Percentage	5	38	38	19	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 the sixth form as each lesson represents about two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	990	235
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	131	8

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	250	11

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	185

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	61
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	81

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.43
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.37
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	90	106	196

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	54	54
	Girls	96	74	73
	Total	169	128	127
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (74)	66 (66)	65 (60)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	50(37)	36 (38)	29 (29)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	68	54	50
	Girls	88	69	56
	Total	156	123	106
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (74)	63 (65)	54 (64)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (32)	34 (42)	25 (26)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	88	86	174

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	37	81	86
	Girls	36	76	86
	Total	73	157	172
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42 (49)	90 (90)	99 (91)
	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	38.2
	National	39.0

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		n/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	43	58	101
	Average point score per candidate	15.6	17.4	16.6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	35	54	89	8	5	13
	Average point score per candidate	16.1	17.7	17	13.5	10.8	12.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	15
Black – other	5
Indian	141
Pakistani	17
Bangladeshi	11
Chinese	5
White	933
Any other minority ethnic group	30

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage	1	
Black – other		
Indian	4	
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	66	4
Other minority ethnic groups	1	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	32
Total aggregate hours worked per week	700

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	21.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	3553470
Total expenditure	3537455
Expenditure per pupil	2922
Balance brought forward from previous year	3491
Balance carried forward to next year	19506

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	30.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	37.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5
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	1225
Number of questionnaires returned	162

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	53	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	49	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	53	10	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	54	18	2	0
The teaching is good.	24	68	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	43	11	1	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	34	2	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	36	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	48	13	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	51	40	4	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	48	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	52	6	2	14

Other issues raised by parents

The headteacher is an excellent communicator. The sixth formers are very good models for younger pupils and are very involved in the school. Behaviour problems in Year 8 lessons are caused by a small minority of pupils who disrupt the learning of others.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently good. All lessons are well planned and include a good balance of activities.
- Preparation for the requirements of national tests at the end of Year 9 is very good. The 2001 results were well above the national average.
- Relationships are very good. Pupils feel valued as learners and as individuals, and they care for and support each other as a result. Classes are calm and harmonious; pupils mix freely across ability, gender and cultural divides

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE English language declined markedly in 2001. They were lower than the results gained by the same pupils in English literature, especially in the case of boys.
- Although marking is frequent and of satisfactory quality, teachers rarely set pupils precise individual targets for improving the skills they need to match examination criteria.
- Pupils invariably speak too quietly in class discussion and many good ideas are lost as a result. Teachers do not encourage pupils to speak loudly enough, nor do they ask sufficient follow up questions which demand quick and exact answers to justify opinion or show understanding

118. Results in the national tests taken by Year 9 pupils in 2001 were well above the national average and very high when compared to those in similar schools. They have risen sharply in the last three years, and have been consistently above those achieved by the same pupils in mathematics and science. Teacher assessments have been accurate. Boys and girls have performed equally well. The attainment of pupils presently in Year 9 is above average, representing good achievement, especially in written skills, from their average standards when they started in Year 7.
119. English GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average and in stark contrast to the above average results of the previous year. Results in English literature, taken by a higher proportion of pupils than in many schools, represented satisfactory achievement considering those pupils' Year 9 results. Pupils, particularly boys, did significantly worse in English language than in their other subjects. Significant factors in this underachievement were difficulties in finding appropriate replacements for teachers who left, and the tactical mistake of giving too much importance to coursework to the detriment of examination preparation. The standards of pupils currently in Year 11 are at or above national averages and rising as the staffing issues which affected some of them in year 10 are being compensated for now. Their achievement is good this year, and satisfactory overall.
120. The evidence of pupils' work in lessons and books shows that in Years 7 to 9 they make particularly good progress in studying literature, media, and persuasive language. They quickly learn the value of group discussion to share and broaden ideas and to make expression more precise. Listening skills are very good. Most pupils become adept at writing in a range of styles such as reports, diary entries, letters, and writing in role as a character. Many are less secure with extended personal writing, and with taking a full part in class discussion.
121. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining pupils make confident generalizations, such as 'Characters in Gothic horror are often found to be peculiar; they commonly display impulsive behaviour', which are well supported by reference to the text. Many pupils are less successful in varying sentence, punctuation and structure according to the effects they wish to achieve. This can result in over-writing in imaginative

pieces and over-lengthy pedestrian explanation in literature. Redrafting, with the encouragement to use computers for final presentation of some pieces, is particularly helpful to lower attaining pupils. Class discussion remains a general weakness.

122. Pupils with English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs, both make good progress. The former are given strong encouragement to join in discussion, which most do, and are carefully guided in how to recognise and use spelling patterns. Pupils with special educational needs receive regular good quality support because of the sensitive approach of class teachers and the expertise of classroom assistants. This enables them to remain involved in class study and to contribute in question and answer sessions, for example when Year 9 mixed ability pupils were discussing plot and character in a set scene from 'Macbeth'.
123. Teaching is consistently good in all years. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, and some very good teaching took place. Pupils learn to see literature in a historical context because teachers have good knowledge of writers and their times. Lessons are carefully planned, often with more or clearer information to help lower attainers. Pupils have a very good engagement with the topic of a lesson because teachers always explain what is to be learnt, and plan a range of activities so that no task becomes a chore. Pupils, some of whom are potentially difficult, are very well managed so that the need to correct or reprimand is extremely rare, and the energies of both pupil and teacher can be committed to work. In a Year 10 lower ability set, the teacher switched tasks frequently but ensured that all pupils understood the links between them so that pupils saw a sequence of skills. In a Year 11 lesson on war poets, pupils quickly accessed both language and themes because the teacher asked quick, probing questions about Owen's 'Disabled' to which simple answers were inappropriate.
124. Pupils' learning is good overall. They listen and concentrate well in class discussion but, in general, they speak too quietly and only address the teacher. Class discussion can then become dull and predictable: a slow summary of ideas rather than a stimulating debate about them. This was the case in Year 7 lessons about the ballad 'The Highwayman' and 'Animal Rights'. In both, promising lesson starts were not fully used and vague class discussion resulted in both teachers and pupils losing sight of the particular objectives of the lesson. In direct contrast, group and pair discussion are frequently and well used, and pupils learn well from such work. A Year 11 class talked confidently and perceptively about the effects of individual word choices in poetry, the more able quick to see the underlying moral and social messages. Strategies to tackle timed examination tasks are well taught, especially in Years 8 and 9. Marking is satisfactory. It is regular and accurate, but too rarely gives pupils precise guidance about the next skills to be learnt so that they can demonstrate improved standards. This is especially the case in more sophisticated language skills and was a factor in the weaker 2001 GCSE language results.
125. Pupils' attitudes, notable for their consistency across classes and year groups, are good. They behave very well and are mature and cooperative in class because teachers make clear what is expected. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are strong. This results in a great sense of calm, courtesy, and respect in lessons. Pupils change tasks with the minimum of fuss, and are always willing to listen. No sub-groups or sub-cultures exist within classes nor are any stereotyped assumptions made about boys and girls. However, too many pupils are inclined to accept, sometimes too unthinkingly, any ideas put forward by the teacher. Additionally, a minority do not learn the habit of completing homework well in Years 7 to 9, and consequently do not respond sufficiently to the challenge of coursework at GCSE.
126. Improvement since the previous report has been satisfactory, when a number of then recently introduced initiatives were praised. Over the ensuing years these have been refined and embedded, resulting in significant improvements in public examination results by pupils in Year 9 and in Year 11 up to 2000. There has been strong leadership and well-organised management. Good resources are well used; assessment systems are thorough and used well to inform how the curriculum develops. Staff are working very hard together and show the enthusiasm and ability to take on delegated responsibilities. The potential for the department to improve further is good.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Teachers plan effectively which helps pupils learn
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good
- The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and 3-part lessons are helping pupils to learn

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in GCSE examinations is too low.
- Inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework hinder progress

127. Pupils join the school with broadly average attainment in mathematics. In 2001, the results of the tests at the end of Year 9 were broadly average compared to schools nationally. They were above the average for similar schools. The attainments of boys and girls were broadly similar. Pupils' performance in mathematics was similar to that in science but lower than in English. Since the last inspection results have shown an upward trend in line with the national trend.
128. The standard attained by pupils currently in Year 9 is in line with the national expectation. They have strengths in aspects of algebra where higher attaining pupils draw graphs of quadratics, average attaining pupils draw graphs of a straight line and lower attaining pupils solve simple equations. They also do well in number work with higher attaining pupils finding the lowest common multiple when adding and subtracting fractions, average attaining pupils finding the highest common factor and lower attaining pupils finding factor pairs. Pupils have few opportunities to develop their investigative skills. Pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7 is satisfactory.
129. GCSE results have risen since the last inspection. In 2001, they were broadly average when compared with the national results. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below that for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-G grades was above the national average. Boys performed better than girls. Pupils performed less well in mathematics than in their other subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was less than in the previous year. The proportion of the cohort entered for the examination was similar to that nationally.
130. The standard attained by pupils at the end of Year 11 is in line with the national expectation. They maintain their strengths in algebra with higher attaining pupils finding the gradients of curves, average attaining pupils solving inequalities and lower attaining pupils exploring sequences. Higher attaining pupils consider rational and irrational numbers while other pupils become familiar with fractions, decimals and percentages. Pupils have limited opportunities to use ICT to enhance their learning in mathematics. They develop their investigative skills through coursework activities. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.
131. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Where there is additional adult support this helps their learning and they make good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are enabled to make similar progress to their peers.
132. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages but with more good lessons observed in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Teachers plan effectively by building on pupils' previous learning experiences, as in a Year 7 lesson for lower attaining pupils where the teacher built on pupils' knowledge of tables to find factors of numbers. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils, as in a Year 11 lesson

on multiplying out brackets in algebra, and this helps them to remain focused. The tasks chosen are suitably motivating. In a Year 11 lesson for low attaining pupils, they analysed data relating to the national lottery and this helped to engage their interest. Teachers generally have high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils respond accordingly. Pupils are told how long they have to complete a task and this helps them to concentrate as in a Year 7 lesson on triangle numbers. There are inconsistencies across the department in the setting and marking of homework.

133. As a result of the satisfactory teaching, pupils' learning is also satisfactory. Pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding when teaching is well planned and focused; for example, high attaining pupils in Year 10 learned to find the mean of grouped frequency data and to use appropriate notation. Pupils work at a good rate and mostly concentrate well and remain on task. Where work is repetitious and not sufficiently challenging pupils make unsatisfactory progress in their learning. Pupils learn to work systematically, for example, when finding factors. Pupils have opportunities to develop their literacy skills for example by explaining triangle numbers in their own words in Year 7. Key words for each lesson are written on the board. Pupils make little use of the library for their work in mathematics. Lower attaining pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 use a computerised integrated learning system to reinforce and extend their number work in mathematics. This is effective and helps to improve standards
134. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. The quality of relationships is a strength. Pupils behave well because teachers create a calm atmosphere which is conducive to learning. Pupils work well in pairs, as in a Year 10 lesson on percentages for average attaining pupils.
135. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Staffing difficulties which previously affected pupils' learning have now been resolved. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and 3-part lessons are having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The setting arrangements in each year contribute to learning by enabling teachers to plan for a narrower range of ability than would otherwise have been the case. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Pupils' numeracy skills are now better developed and there is no longer an over-reliance on calculators. Attainment is broadly the same and there has been an increased time allocation for mathematics.

SCIENCE

Overall, the provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- The majority of teaching is good, with teachers maintaining good class control and preparing lessons well.
- Staff are suitably qualified and enthusiastic.

Areas for improvement:

- The higher attaining pupils need to be challenged with more extending work in Years 7 to 9.
- More use should be made of ICT.
- Some pupils show unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, especially in Year 8.

136. The attainment of pupils in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 2001 was close to the national level, with about two-thirds gaining a level 5 or above. Boys' and girls' results were similar. The number of pupils who gained a level 6 or above was lower than the national figure. Compared with similar schools overall results were average. When compared to the other core subjects, pupils do less well in science than they do in English, but they achieve similar levels in mathematics. Considering their average levels of attainment on entry to Year 7, these results indicate just satisfactory achievement.
137. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 overall and are attaining standards similar to national expectations by the end of Year 9. Year 7 pupils were able to describe the food types that provide energy

and could recall the mechanisms of breathing. Higher attaining pupils, at the end of Key Stage 3, could plan a scientific investigation to determine how changes in concentration might affect the rate of chemical reaction. At times, however, higher attaining pupils did not achieve as highly as they could, as they were not challenged sufficiently by the tasks set.

138. The number of pupils obtaining a GCSE grade of A*-C was below the national level in 2001. At the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils took double certification GCSE with some higher attaining pupils taking the three separate sciences. Overall the proportion of pupils who obtained a grade A*-C in these examinations was 36 percent compared with a national figure of 50 percent. This was a disappointment to the department as results had been rising over the past few years and was previously close to the national figure. Analysis of the results has identified that the problems of recruiting suitable full-time staff played a significant part in the GCSE outcomes.
139. Achievement over time in the GCSE courses is satisfactory considering the pupils' capabilities, but they are now making good progress considering their relative underachievement in Key Stage 3 - which was caused principally by staffing difficulties in the past. Attainment is similar to national expectations now. Pupils in Year 10 could name and describe the components in blood. By the end of the key stage, the pupils were able to describe the structure of nerve cells and their role in the central nervous system in a detailed manner.
140. Good relationships exist between pupils and staff, especially in Key Stage 4. Most pupils, especially those with higher prior attainment, behave well and work hard in science. Older pupils have the best attitude to the subject. They are keen to enter into class discussions, have the confidence to answer questions and use their oracy skills constructively. Pupils work in a safe and enthusiastic manner when performing practical work. Most pupils, especially girls, show a good attitude to written work, producing notes and diagrams of a good standard. A significant minority of pupils in Year 8 showed unsatisfactory attitudes to work in class, when weaknesses in teaching led to a lack of control and structure.
141. Teaching and learning in science was satisfactory in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory overall. Staff are suitably qualified and plan lessons well. In about half the lessons observed, the teaching was good or better, with a small proportion of excellent practice where pupils concentrated very hard and were eager to succeed. In the few instances of unsatisfactory teaching that were observed, the classroom control was not strong and pace was insufficient or inappropriate tasks were set. The most successful lessons were those where good lesson planning included a structure that ensured sufficient pace linked with effective class control. One very effective lesson on mirrors, in Year 9, had good pace, pupils were fully involved and classroom relationships were excellent. Homework is structured and an integral part of lesson plans but some pupils are reluctant to complete the work set.
142. Pupils are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end of topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis. The setted structure in Years 9 to 11 allows teachers to plan work that is suitable and extending for all abilities. The mixed ability grouping in Years 7 and 8 poses a different challenge to teachers. Activities and resources are not always planned sufficiently for the wide range of pupils, especially the higher attainers. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported in science with additional staffing and make good progress. Those for whom English is an additional language are supported in making similar progress to the majority in their groups. The more able pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity of following all three sciences to GCSE. Many opportunities are provided throughout the key stages for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills, both in written work and class discussions. The use of computers is not widespread in science and access to whole class facilities is not easy. The department makes insufficient use of data-logging units.
143. The management of the department is good. The regular monitoring of the science staff has helped raise standards in teaching and learning. The majority of points raised in the previous inspection have been

addressed and improvement has been good. This includes the introduction of a range of investigation opportunities for pupils within lessons plans. The assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is now good though analysis of attainment in the various pupil categories needs further development.

144. The department has sufficient resources and a team of support staff, who are efficient and well organised, to ensure the equipment and resources ordered are present at the start of lessons. The department is well placed to undertake future developments in the raising of pupils' standards.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Excellent management, in particular the monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning.
- Teaching and learning, being good in years 7-9 and very good in examination groups.
- Outstanding knowledge and understanding of teachers, their high expectations of pupils and their lesson planning.
- Very effective systems to track and pupils' achievements and make on-going assessments of their work.

Areas for improvement

- Access to ICT

145. The results of the 2001 teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 were similar to those reported nationally. The standard of work produced by pupils currently in Year 9 is, overall, in line with expected standards. However, significant numbers of pupils are working at levels above, or well above, the levels expected for their age.
146. Standards in art and design are below expectation on entry to the school. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well by the age of 16. Pupils in the present Year 9 have a working knowledge of different media and materials and how they can be used in different ways. For example, in a Year 9 class, pupils looked at different styles of lettering and package designs and transferred these to the three-dimensional models they had made from paper reinforced with glue. This project, based on the idea of camouflage, provided a wealth of experiences and skill development that pupils could learn from and adapt to other work in the future. High levels of skill were evident in pupils' work, such as colour matching, controlling and selecting media, and making on-going critical decisions. The sample of work provided by the school illustrated the extent of the progress being made as pupils moved from Year 7 to Year 9. All pupils achieve well through Key Stage 3, including pupils with special educational needs, those with learning difficulties and the few boys who present challenging behaviour.
147. GCSE examination results have improved significantly. They were above average at the time of the last inspection and very high in 2001. The very high point score reflects the numbers of pupils who attained the highest A* and A grades - which was twice the national average. Pupils achieved very well in art, better than in most of their other examinations. Attainment in art shows a rising trend. Few boys chose art as a GCSE subject but those that did performed less well than the girls, as is the case nationally. From the evidence gathered, in lessons, looking at portfolios of work and in talking to pupils about their work, standards in the current Year 11 are also very high. Pupils' achievement is excellent. The research and investigation shows in-depth explanations of the decisions pupils make as they work. In one class a variety of media was used to explore the theme of '21st Century'. Several pupils chose to use the events in New York, September 11th as the focus for their work, responding to the images with great sensitivity but questioning, exploring and researching ethical and moral dilemmas. The range of activities and the scope for experimentation and personal responses are proving to be powerful motivators and in turn positively contribute to higher achievements and standards. Pupils with special needs and pupils with particular gifts and talents achieve outstanding results given their starting points.

148. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 – 11. This is a considerable improvement on the last inspection where teaching in Key Stage 3 had weaknesses and pupils’ attitudes were unsatisfactory. Teachers have outstanding subject expertise, used very imaginatively to plan stimulating activities and give pupils first-hand experiences. Each teacher has their own sketchbook, completes the work they set for pupils and uses this to model or demonstrate particular skills and techniques. This is an invaluable teaching aid that sets very high standards and provides pupils with concrete evidence of different techniques. This strategy is highly effective. In Years 7-9 the very high level of technical skill that pupils have acquired, together with the developing skills for independent learning, provide excellent preparation for the GCSE course. A further strength of the very good teaching is the use teachers make of National Curriculum levels to assess pupils’ work and set targets for the next stage of their learning. Teaching and learning intensions are routinely shared with pupils and have a clear focus in teachers’ lesson plans. In most lessons, skilful questioning builds on pupils’ knowledge of key words and concepts and consolidates their understanding. Teachers strictly carry out school procedures for the start and end of lessons resulting, for the most part, in well-managed and orderly behaviour. A small number of younger pupils are still learning these routines and occasionally they lose concentration or forget to bring in homework.
149. The emphasis on sketchbooks is a crucial element of the curriculum that helps pupils organise information and ideas in ways that are sequentially developed and visually exciting. Some books are excellent. Pupils are justly proud of them. This work makes a significant contribution to the growing enthusiasm and very positive attitudes to the subject and the high standards of work that many pupils produce. Much work has been done to reinforce and improve standards of literacy across the school and art teachers have rigorously taken this on-board. When pupils write, when they talk about their own work and the artwork of others, they demonstrate high standards of literacy. All teachers use, and encourage pupils to use, an accurate and specific language when they respond to questions and make notes.
150. Management of the subject is excellent, with very good emphasis on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and progress since the last inspection very good. High quality documentation gives newly qualified teachers a very good structure for planning lessons and assessing pupils’ work. Computers are used mainly outside lessons, for gathering information about artists’ work. Access to computer suites is restricted by the demand from other subjects. Although the curriculum plan includes appropriate tasks for developing pupils’ computer skills there is insufficient hardware available to put these plans into action. The library is well stocked with reference books.
151. The department has a significant impact on pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils’ work is exhibited around the school and in the local tube station. The work of the department contributes positively to pupils’ attitudes to learning and to the quality of the environment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good individual support for pupils and this enables all pupils to make progress in lessons.
- Particularly good work in food and textiles.
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers which creates a good learning atmosphere in the classroom

Areas for improvement

- The skills of specialist teachers are not used effectively to raise the achievement of pupils in Year 7 and 8.
- The process used for designing is underdeveloped with pupils in Years 7 to 9 and this limits their ability to work independently.
- The process of setting subject specific targets to improve the work of individual pupils is underdeveloped.

152. GCSE results were above the national average in 2000, but dropped below this in 2001. Girls outperformed boys and results were strongest in food technology. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 were above average but the work of 14-year-olds seen during the inspection did not match this level and was average overall. Standards among pupils joining the school are broadly average, and overall achievement at 14 and at GCSE is satisfactory.
153. Standards overall are average at the end of Year 9 across a range of activities, including making and designing products in food, resistant materials, textiles, graphics, and electronics. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 follow the guidance provided by the teachers well, and generally respond well to the worksheets and information provided in lessons. They are improving their range of drawing skills and beginning to apply them well in the specialist areas within design and technology. The use of information and communication technology is increasing. A good example of using control technology was seen in Year 8, where pupils produced hand held maze games using computer-aided design and computer aided manufacturing. ICT is less well used to improve the quality and presentation of work of pupils in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in this key stage make less progress in planning and designing their products than in making. Opportunities are also limited for pupils to analyse existing products to evaluate the range of materials, features and processes that are used in them, before they design products of their own. As a result, achievement is satisfactory at this stage of their work in the subject.
154. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average overall. Pupils following the GCSE courses show a good range of research and investigation skills. They produce good quality coursework, are familiar with the process of designing and planning and show the stages of how their products have been developed. There is less emphasis however on analysing existing products and showing how they have used the information to make their own designs better. For example, in two Year 11 lessons pupils were designing storage products or lighting products. Their overall design work was good but pupils made less use of the information they gathered on existing products. They had devoted a good percentage of their time to research and then made little use of the ideas they collected. Better examples of analysis were seen in a food lesson where pupils were analysing and tasting deserts. They used skills and ideas to develop their own ideas, based on the products they analysed and tested. Achievement was of sound quality among all pupils, with accurate and well-developed plans from higher-attaining pupils. The work from middle and lower-attaining pupils met the requirements of the courses well. The proportion of pupils not entered for the GCSE examination was higher than is seen normally, as a result of the school's alternative programme in Key Stage 4.
155. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in both key stages. Teachers usually structure lessons well and provide clear objectives to guide and support pupils in their work. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and pupils accept their guidance with confidence. However in Years 7 and 8, where teachers are required to teach outside their specialist area, they are less secure in their knowledge and this leads to some just satisfactory or unsatisfactory learning. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, receive good personal support from teachers, and as a result, they are able to achieve levels in line with their abilities, although a few uninterested pupils worked too slowly and achieved too little in lessons. Teachers use a good range of strategies to enable pupils to develop skills in literacy, including the development of technical vocabulary associated with the subject. They prepare a good level of resources, which enable pupils, including those with special educational needs, to structure their writing effectively. This is having a positive effect on the pupils' competence in literacy.
156. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught to use ICT to support their work when processing and presenting data. They use this mainly when conducting surveys about the products they design. However, this is not a strong feature of the work of middle and lower-attaining pupils. Pupils studying food technology use computers well to calculate the nutritional value of food, to evaluate the products they make, and to present the results in the form of charts and graphs. Pupils develop good skills in numeracy as they measure and mark out materials and process information when calculating values in food and resistant materials. There is good use of spreadsheets. Teachers try to include all pupils in the learning activities but a small minority take little interest in their work.

157. Leadership of the department is good and management systems are satisfactory. The head of department co-ordinates the work of the department well, maintaining good working relationships. The design and technology staff work hard to maintain high levels of efficiency. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly but teachers have insufficient opportunities to observe others teaching and to share the variety of strategies used in the subject. An effective assessment system is well linked to work in class and National Curriculum levels but data is not used as well to set specific targets for individuals or to ensure that work challenges pupils of all attainment levels. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory as standards are now in line with the national average and resources have been improved to meet the requirements of the subject. A good level and quality of technician support makes a positive contribution to the organisation of the department.

DRAMA

Provision in drama is **very good**

Strengths

- High expectations of the teachers and enthusiasm for the subject by the pupils.
- Very good teaching based on good subject knowledge and pupil management.
- Excellent relationships which encourage pupils' independence and personal development.
- The excellent contribution made by drama to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in the school

Areas for improvement

- None

158. GCSE results in drama have improved since the last inspection and in 2001 were the highest for five years. Results were above the national average with 78 percent gaining a grade A*-C. More girls than boys were entered for drama and they gained higher grades than boys, as is the case nationally. Pupils did better in drama than most of their other subjects. The number opting for the subject is increasing.
159. In lessons, the standards attained by 14 year-olds are above the national expectation for this age. Pupils know and use many dramatic techniques to convey both abstract ideas and specific incidents. They work at a fast pace to portray convincing characters in situations which they create individually and in groups. Most are confident in evaluating their own work and the work of others in the class. This is the result of clear lesson objectives and sensitive teacher criticism and praise. The higher attainers develop a good critical vocabulary and sustain their arguments well.
160. Standards of 16 year-old pupils in lessons were well above expectations for their age. Pupils in Year 11 make a very good effort, both intellectually and practically. They are keen to try new approaches for themselves, and, with encouragement from the teachers, many have the confidence to be experimental. They demonstrate a very good understanding of the basic techniques of drama and develop sequences of role-play and improvisation in which the higher attainers show a refined grasp of the dynamics of speech and movement. They know what makes a character credible, and how to avoid stereotypes. They speak confidently about their work, evaluating it and improving it through practice. The higher attainers write at length about performances. With an emphasis on good drafting and editing by the teachers, and help with structure for the low attainers, all pupils are writing with increasing success.
161. Pupils' achievement in drama is very good through both key stages. In Year 7, they make steady progress acting short sequences, using dialogue, mime and still images to build up to a group performance. In one

Year 7 lesson, pupils convincingly acted their characters on a ship that was about to be wrecked. They learned and included short lines from Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' with excellent dramatic effect. As they move to Year 8, pupils encounter a wider range of styles, including 'physical theatre' in which they use their bodies to represent inanimate objects. Dramatic awareness increases in Year 9 when pupils are more involved in directing as well as performing. In Year 10, pupils concentrate on abstract concepts, and this leads to more sophisticated techniques of presentation and role-play. For example, a Year 10 class developing scenes in which a girl was disabled in an accident, were sensitive to the changes in mood that would be felt, and explored ways of showing emotion whilst saying something different. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, because the teachers are aware of their difficulties, whether in learning or behaviour, and adapt work accordingly. Pupils whose first language is not English acquire confidence in speaking and listening as the teachers provide the stimulus and interest to encourage the use of English in the lessons.

162. Pupils' attitudes to drama and their behaviour are very good. They enjoy the practical aspect of the subject, work well in groups and enjoy the challenge of planning and presenting an idea. In response to the well-organised teaching, they are disciplined and focused on their work. Their self-esteem and confidence result from the excellent relationships that pertain.
163. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the school. Teachers are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and work well as a team to support non-specialists and teachers in training. Teachers' skilful questioning and the progressively challenging activities in lessons reveal high expectations for attainment. Lesson planning, which includes recently developed criteria for assessment, is effective so pupils know what they are learning and how well they are doing. The teachers manage the lessons very well, allowing pupils to develop their own ideas. An element of daring and independence is encouraged. The department makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in the school. This is evident in lessons, where pupils tackle and reflect on emotional topics, in the lunchtime club, in visits to the theatre and performances in school.
164. A new scheme of work is becoming more finely tuned as it is tried and tested in Years 7, 8 and 9. The GCSE syllabus is suited to the pupils. Accommodation in the well-equipped drama studio is very good, but the second drama space is too small for larger classes.
165. The new management of the department is very good with clear direction and leadership. Many new initiatives have been taken for which review will soon be appropriate. The department has improved very well since the last inspection and strengths have been maintained.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good quality teaching and learning;
- Well above average attainment and very good achievement of pupils
- Good leadership and management of the department with very good documentation.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of fieldwork in Years 7 to 9
- More informative assessment of work in Years 7 to 9, so that pupils know what to do to improve
- ICT not used enough in teaching and limited opportunities for pupils to practise numerical skills

166. Pupils join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are average. In 2001, the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above national expectations and over two thirds of pupils reached

the expected standard, a quarter of pupils achieving higher levels. The difference between the performance of boys and girls was less than that reported nationally.

167. GCSE results have improved consistently since the last inspection and, in 2001, were significantly higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades, A and A*, was much higher than that recorded nationally. The performance of boys was well above the national expectation and matched that of the girls which was also above their national average. Pupils did better in geography than in most other subjects in the school.
168. The work of pupils in Year 9 seen during the inspection reflected the 2001 teacher assessments. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. They are able to apply a developing range of skills in their studies of places and themes. For example, Year 9 pupils made good use of their ICT skills as they interrogated a web-site and completed a fact file on Japan. Year 7 pupils were able to develop their subject skills as they interpreted pictures and used geographical sentences to describe issues. The work of Year 8 pupils reflected a good understanding of the problems of finding safe water as they examined reasons why water is so important to people's lives.
169. In Years 10 and 11, pupils who have chosen to study geography achieve very well and the overall standard of work is well above the national average. In studying ecosystems, pupils in Years 10 showed a good knowledge and understanding of advanced terms which they used with confidence. They drew upon work covered in science to describe and explain nutrient and energy transfer and the concept of balance. A Year 11 group showed very good locational skills as they mapped the world's forests. Their ability to recall work covered in Year 7 enabled them to make comparisons between the different trees and natural processes. While both groups contained pupils of widely ranging abilities and background, all made good progress because the work was matched to the needs of individuals and support, in the form of writing frames and lists of connectives, were provided for those with limited literacy skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because teachers are aware of their individual requirements and adjust the teaching and learning accordingly.
170. The teaching and learning of geography are good and, in Years 10 and 11, very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and effective classroom/pupil management skills. They also have a clear understanding of the National Curriculum, examination requirements and what pupils need to do to succeed. This makes their teaching particularly effective at all stages. Their high expectations of pupils, in terms of both work and behaviour, are made very clear. The teaching places an emphasis on pupils' understanding of process. Challenging questioning at the beginning and end of each lesson checked understanding and linked the work with that done previously. As a result of the interest generated by the teaching, pupils are able to sustain their concentration and complete a considerable amount of work during lessons. Their attitudes and behaviour are good in both key stages.
171. The consistent emphasis on developing literacy skills, for example the use of key words, was a feature of all lessons. This helps pupils to use geographical vocabulary more confidently when answering questions and in their writing. The use of writing frames, together with the frequent help provided by staff, supports improved and extended writing. However, pupils have fewer opportunities to apply their numerical skills through the interpretation of data and drawing graphs. For example, in previously completed work by Year 11 pupils, no values of flow rates or time lags were given in analysing a flood hydro-graph. The contribution of ICT to learning and the opportunities for pupils to practise their skills are not sufficiently developed. Many opportunities have yet to be exploited. Very little opportunity is provided at Key Stage 3 for pupils to carry out fieldwork exercises, through which they could develop the skills of collection and interpretation of data.
172. A relative weakness in teaching is that the assessment of some pupils' work in Key Stage 3 provides too little guidance on how they might improve their work. Assessment at Key Stage 4 is very good. Otherwise, marking is regular and teachers keep good records.

173. Geography is managed well. The improvement in standards, achieved since the last report, stems from good teamwork and increased monitoring. The school responded very positively to the issues raised in the last report. The increased time allocated has allowed better coverage of National Curriculum requirements at an appropriate depth, though the use of lengthy double periods in Key Stage 4 does have a negative impact on the teaching and learning. Reliable data is being used increasingly to set targets, predict attainment, to monitor the progress of pupils and, with the observation of lessons, to evaluate teaching. The schemes of work have been revised in order to meet statutory requirements and improve standards. The resources provided are good and effectively managed. The accommodation has also been improved since the last report and all rooms are suitably decorated with pupils' work and additional resources. The head of department has clear priorities and a commitment to improvement that is shared by the team.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm of teachers.
- Very good contribution of the subject to literacy.
- Very good inclusion of all pupils.
- Very good leadership and management, which has secured very good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils to translate their good achievement in lessons into above average GCSE results.
- Opportunities for pupils to improve and practise numeracy skills during history lessons.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils' knowledge of their own achievement and what they need to do to improve.

174. In 2001, teachers assessed their pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 as above average. The department's own analysis of these assessments showed slight overestimation, indicating that actual standards were still above average, but only slightly so.
175. The current standard of work of Year 9 pupils, seen during the inspection, was also slightly above average. Pupils in Year 7 quickly begin to move forward in their knowledge, understanding and skills. This was shown in a lesson in which there was particularly strong learning of the key features of mediaeval village life and the vocabulary to describe this. By Year 9, pupils know the significant events and understand the key features of a range of periods and societies. For example, they can describe how slavery developed and explain how it was linked to the economic system of the eighteenth century. Many are beginning to ask their own questions, such as why so many slaves came from Africa and why there was such a demand for them in the West Indies and America. The majority of pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
176. Results in GCSE were average in 2001. This was equally so for boys and girls. However, boys did well at the highest grades, securing an above average proportion at A*. The standards of current Year 11 pupils are above average and the good achievement seen in Key Stage 3 continues through Key Stage 4. In a Year 11 lesson, the majority of pupils could evaluate and compare sources about Nazi Germany for their usefulness and reliability. They were able to describe changes that the Nazis made to the education system and explain their reasons and effects. In previous years, most pupils have found it difficult to translate above average standards in lessons into independent performance in examinations. The department is fully aware of this and has introduced improvements aimed at helping its pupils to be more successful. These include a stronger emphasis on writing skills, better monitoring and target setting and a change of syllabus. The 2001 results were an improvement on both the previous year and the last inspection, when they were below average. This indicates that the steps taken by the department are

beginning to have the desired effect. The department's analysis shows that in 2001 it had a higher than average proportion of pupils of lower prior attainment, who achieved well in the examination.

177. There is no significant overall variation in the achievement of boys and girls, pupils of different levels of prior attainment, or those from different ethnic backgrounds.
178. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. The department is staffed by well-qualified and experienced teachers who have extensive expertise and involvement in the subject. Because of this, learning has good depth and most pupils share the enthusiasm of their teachers. Most lessons get off to a brisk start, with good opportunities for pupils to refer back to what they have previously learned. Good learning objectives are shared with pupils, so that they have a clear idea of what they need to achieve during the lesson. A variety of well-chosen tasks usually works well in ensuring that pace and effort are maintained. Teachers provide thoughtfully selected sources, which enable pupils to practise and improve their evidence skills. Pupils respond well to good opportunities to work together in pairs and groups and work is provided to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the most able within the group. Partly due to the teachers' skill in ensuring all are involved and partly due to the willingness of pupils to work well together and support each other, the extent to which all are included in learning is a considerable strength. Good marking, particularly in Years 10 and 11, provides clear guidance on how well pupils have done and what they need to do to improve. Many pupils up to Year 9 are not making full use of this information however, being unclear about their achievement and specific improvement targets. In oral work, teachers sometimes do too much for pupils, providing them with answers, rather than challenging them to provide their own.
179. The subject provides very good opportunities for pupils to use and improve their skills in literacy. Pupils often read aloud and good emphasis is placed on learning and using specialist vocabulary. Writing frames are often used as a means of providing support for less literate pupils and for increasing the challenge for the higher attainers. Opportunities to use computers in history are good. They are best in Years 7 to 9, where most units of work include planned computer-based activities. The department is aware that opportunities need to be more fully embedded in the planning for Years 10 and 11. The department recognises that, although pupils currently have satisfactory opportunities to practise their numeracy skills during history lessons, there is scope for improvement. To this end, a member of the department is working with the mathematics department.
180. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has vigorously sought improvement, with the result that this has been very good since the last inspection, with all significant points identified being vigorously tackled. Consequently, attainment at GCSE and overall achievement have improved. The level and quality of resources, which were unsatisfactory, are now good. There is better use of group and paired work. Higher attainers are now well provided for and achieve as well as other pupils. The time allocation for the subject in Years 7 to 9, which was unsatisfactory, has improved and is now satisfactory. In addition, the many strengths that were identified in the last report, for example, in the quality of teaching and the attitudes and behaviour of pupils, have been maintained well. There is a very good awareness of what still needs to be improved and a very strong shared commitment and capability within the department to secure this.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good relationships between teachers and students.
- Curriculum planning ensures that pupils cover a broad range of skills in ICT lessons.
- The new ICT network provides a good learning resource for all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Planning appropriate tasks to challenge very able pupils and to support those with special educational needs.
- Sharper subject specific targets are needed to help pupils improve.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT skills in some subjects.

181. Pupils cover a good range of basic skills in specialist ICT lessons in Year 8. In Years 7 and 9, pupils develop their skills in other subjects across the curriculum. As a result, standards are broadly in line with the national average levels at the age of 14. The above average teacher assessment of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 did not match the average standards of work seen during the inspection.
182. By the end of Year 9, all pupils, including those with special needs, achieve competence in the basic ICT skills of desktop publishing, using the Internet, spreadsheets, databases and a range of electronic resources such as scanners and digital cameras. Lower-attaining pupils cover a good range of basic techniques with good individual support from teachers. Higher-attaining pupils work rapidly and gain a very good grasp of the work and software they use, though pupils whose skills are well above those of the rest of the class do not receive sufficiently challenging work to move them forward. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise the range of skills they cover and as a result show less confidence in application of these skills when they are required to work independently. This results in satisfactory achievement from Years 7 to 9. A small minority of pupils do not focus their attention closely enough on their work, and needed to have additional support from the teacher to enable them to complete work.
183. The GCSE short course results in 2000 were well below the national average. In 2001, those following the course were not entered for the examination, as a result of the limited lesson time they were given to complete the course. Pupils in the current Year 11, who want to add to their school certification in ICT from the Year 10 course, can opt into a short-course GCSE. To do this they must use out-of-lesson time to reinforce the work already completed in Year 10.
184. Pupils currently following the GCSE information technology short course research and present their work to a satisfactory level. Coursework folders contain evidence of pupils using a good range of ICT skills but time is limited for completion of all aspects of the coursework to a standard good enough to gain an average GCSE grade. They cover skills in using databases, desktop publishing and spreadsheets to process and present data. Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of numeracy, which enables them to use spreadsheets and apply the appropriate formulae to calculate and present the data they process. All pupils learn to use electronic resources such as scanners, digital cameras and the Internet to gather information and present this as part of their coursework. In Year 10, for example, pupils were designing a system for a leisure centre to improve the way information is managed when members enroll. They identified how ICT could improve the management and used ICT to design the enrolment forms. In class, pupils explain their work well using a good range of technical vocabulary, which they apply accurately.
185. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory in both key stages and some good lessons were seen. Where the teaching is good or better, teachers plan and prepare work well, set clear learning goals and provide a good structure to lessons. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and they are well prepared for lessons. This means pupils gain good individual, specialist support. Teachers use questions well to evaluate how pupils have understood and retained the information covered. They promote a wide range of technical vocabulary which pupils use effectively when they talk about their work in class. This helps pupils with below-average reading skills to secure a wide and relevant vocabulary. Pupils also read from a range of text, using books, CD ROMs and the Internet for research. Schemes of work however, provide limited guidance for teachers on employing a wide enough range of strategies to plan work suited to the individual needs of pupils. This limits the progress of gifted and talented pupils, and of some of the pupils who have special educational needs. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and include them effectively in learning activities. However, teachers place insufficient emphasis on marking and the process of setting subject specific targets to help pupils to improve their skills further.

186. The contribution of other subjects to pupils' ICT skills is satisfactory overall, and is growing. Some instances of good use were seen, for example in design and technology where pupils use specialist programs to control objects and use computer aided design for products such as hand held maze games. In English, ICT is well planned and pupils use the computer to produce newsletters and leaflets. For example, Year 8 pupils produced leaflets on the subject of bullying. Most subjects contribute to pupils' ICT skills development in some way, such as data logging in science, spreadsheets in mathematics, a virtual tour of the Middle Ages in history and use of the Internet, CD ROMs or e-mail in geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. Access to computers is not always possible for classes and ICT skills are not used often enough in subjects for pupils to develop confidence in using these skills more independently. As a result, they do not use ICT well to raise the level of their work in other subjects.
187. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning is done on a regular basis. However, teachers have too few opportunities to observe each other's work, and to share the most effective techniques. The school now has an above average number of computers per pupil. Good support from the technician has a very positive impact on learning, and he is beginning to contribute to teaching. As a result of the improvement in attainment and increase in the provision of computer resources, the progress of the subject since the last inspection is satisfactory and the department is in a position to make further improvements.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall the provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and linguistic skills are very good.
- Accommodation and resources are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Identify specific language targets and develop effective learning strategies to ensure long term gains in pupils' skills and knowledge, and improve GCSE standards.
- Ensure that the use of English in some lessons is reduced to an acceptable minimum.
- Develop more spontaneous use of the foreign language, particularly by younger pupils.

188. When they arrive in Year 7, some pupils know the French for numbers, days, months and colours and can say a few things about themselves. Many pupils have less knowledge than this and a few no experience of the subject at all. The results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were average and higher than in the previous year. Girls achieved higher standards than boys. In French lessons seen in Key Stage 3 standards were broadly in line with national expectations. A scrutiny of pupils' written work confirmed this. Standards in German were also broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement considering their starting points.
189. Many pupils in Key Stage 3 make good progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In a Year 7 French class, pupils understood all instructions and comments in French when supported by clear mime and gesture. In a Year 8 French top set the teacher challenged pupils' listening skills by conducting the whole lesson in French spoken at a fairly brisk pace. Many pupils repeat words and phrases with good pronunciation and intonation and they also read out loud fluently. Some higher attainers in French in Year 8 brainstormed vocabulary related to expressing opinions and could reply confidently with good accents to questions in the foreign language and practise short dialogues in pairs. Very occasionally pupils use the language spontaneously to make simple requests in French, such as asking for paper or a pen. Such spontaneous and natural use of the foreign language as a normal means of classroom communication is not

common, however. Higher attaining pupils acquire satisfactory reading and writing skills by Year 9. They use dictionaries to look up the meaning of unknown words and can write, with the aid of writing frames, short texts containing present and past tenses. Average and lower attainers experience some difficulty understanding written texts. They write simple opinions and give reasons and have some awareness of basic grammatical patterns. Many average attainers copy vocabulary, sentences and short dialogues fairly accurately and write short paragraphs when given sufficient support. Lower attainers sometimes have difficulty copying words and phrases accurately.

190. Results in French GCSE in 2001 were below national expectations and results in German were very low. In 2001, 41 percent of pupils attained A*-C in French and 30 percent in German. The attainment observed in French lessons was in line with national expectations in the top sets. In a Year 10 French class, some pupils could perform a telephone role-play with accuracy and fluency. In the German top set in Year 11 attainment was below average. The pronunciation of some pupils was poor and many were very unsure of basic grammatical patterns. The listening and speaking of pupils in the other German set in Year 11, however, was average. They could invite each other to take part in certain activities with a degree of fluency.
191. From a scrutiny of pupils' written work in Key Stage 4 French and German, it was clear that the attainment of most higher attainers is in line with national expectations. The attainment of middle and lower attainers, however, is below national expectation. Overall standards are below average.
192. During lessons in Key Stage 4 many pupils show satisfactory achievement in French and some in German, but this progress is not subsequently consolidated out of school. So not enough progress is made over time to enable them to gain the higher grades at GCSE. Learning strategies are not effective in improving pupils' retention and recall, to ensure long-term gains in skills and knowledge. Over time achievement has been unsatisfactory.
193. The teaching and learning of French and German observed during the inspection was good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers generally speak exclusively in French or German to develop pupils' listening skills. All lessons are well prepared and nearly always delivered briskly and enthusiastically with good use of home-produced or published resources, which motivate pupils to work well. Good use is made of deadlines to motivate pupils and keep them on task. Nearly all lessons are well matched to the needs and interests of pupils and teachers frequently change materials and tasks to ensure that all language skills are practised. The progress of pupils is carefully monitored in lessons which ensures that they move forward satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make progress because the staff understand their needs and make appropriate provision. Relationships in lessons are very good. The very best lessons are delivered with skill, enthusiasm and humour and consist of a wide selection of tasks and activities. Good use is made of the overhead projector, cassette recorder, video recorder and resource sheets. Sometimes computers are also used to enhance learning. Occasionally teaching is less dynamic and the use of the foreign language is not promoted to the full. Work scrutiny shows that some boys are careless in their written work. It is often not presented well nor completed and they do not always do corrections. Work of this unsatisfactory quality is not followed up sufficiently and so overall standards are lower than they should be.
194. Pupils' behaviour is good and several are enthusiastic language learners, who show good levels of concentration in lessons, contribute orally, settle down to work quickly and remain on task. Boys in some lessons make particularly good oral contributions. A small number of pupils do not have a good attitude to language learning and lack the study skills to learn efficiently. They do not always complete learning homeworks and written assignments.
195. Trips to France ensure that the department makes a good contribution to the cultural development of some pupils. The management and leadership of the department are effective. The language teachers work very well together which is helping to raise standards of teaching and learning. Resources and accommodation

are very good. Most pupils are aware of and understand National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades they are likely to attain.

196. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved in Key Stage 3 and teacher assessments are now in line with the national average. The use of assessment data to track pupil progress is beginning to be more effective. Attainment in GCSE in both French and German is not yet high enough however, because of the lack of work outside of lessons, although achievement in lessons is satisfactory.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standard of pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The involvement of pupils in productions and performances.

Areas for improvement

- Resources for teaching and learning in years 7, 8 and 9.
- Opportunities for using ICT in Years 10 and 11.

197. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is slightly below what is expected for their ages. Most pupils in the current Year 9 have achieved National Curriculum Level 4 and several are working at Level 5. Although little information is available about pupils' attainment on entry to the school, evidence from early project work in Year 7 would suggest that attainment on entry is generally low. Overall the inspection evidence shows that pupils' achievement throughout Years 7 – 9 is satisfactory.
198. The number of pupils studying music for GCSE in Years 10 and 11 was low at the time of the last report. Since then numbers have increased. They are still not high enough to be able to read any real significance into the trend of the results. Since the last report the number of pupils achieving a pass at grade C or higher has been generally in line with national expectations. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average indicating good achievement.
199. The standard of teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned but the order in which units are presented within the schemes of work is not always of most benefit to pupils, particularly in Year 7. The pupils' ability to invent their own tunes, within a given framework, was very much inhibited by poor keyboard skills. More rigour is needed in developing useful keyboard technique. Some of the worksheets being used in Key Stage 3 are outdated in both content and visual presentation.
200. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good, with the teachers being very securely in command of the material being used. This resulted in pupils' effective learning. A Year 10 group, working within a new topic of graphic notation, responded very well to the teacher's demonstrations and the open question "Is there a right or a wrong way?"
201. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and was a clear factor when pupils' achievement was good in lessons. In a Year 9 class which was studying 'Variations', pupils responded well to the teacher's explanations and demonstrations of different variation techniques. One group showed considerable initiative in a variation performance which used two keys at once. During practical work, which was the principal component of all the lessons observed, teachers moved around from pupil to pupil monitoring

progress and giving help where it was required. Pupils responded well to praise and encouragement and performances often improved significantly after the teacher had worked with a pupil. Lessons are purposeful and start with good explanation of the aims of that lesson. Teachers use a question and answer technique to remind pupils of the last lesson's work. The pupils make intelligent responses and show that they have remembered well. Written work is usually well presented.

202. Pupils are generally attentive and alert and the relationship between teachers and pupils is almost always good. In one Year 8 class, poor behaviour by a small minority of pupils was disruptive to the lesson and progress was limited but, otherwise, attitudes and behaviour in Years 7, 8 and 9 are satisfactory. The pupils in Key Stage 4 show great interest in their work and pupils of all levels of ability achieve well. Several pupils are very able on instruments, demonstrating very mature attitudes and approaches to composition and performance, for example on guitar.
203. Most pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in music because they are well integrated in lessons. In all classes observed, pupils with English as an additional language made good progress.
204. Marking of pupils' work is undertaken thoroughly and regularly. Assessments of practical performance work are carried out at the end of each project. The schemes for assessing pupils' progress are currently under review with the aim of making the process more helpful for future planning.
205. A rather small number of pupils learn instruments; they are however enthusiastic about the teaching that they receive and the high attainment in, for example, lower strings and brass is a clear indication of the success of the teaching. Instrumental teaching is by members of the local education authority's music service team but the school makes its own arrangements for percussion teaching, which is very popular. Many pupils take part in the musical activities of the school. During the period of the inspection all activity was directed towards the imminent production of the musical 'Grease'. It is clear that it is being supported by a great many pupils and it is an indication of the achievement of pupils that the accompaniment has been arranged for a band by one of the sixth form students.
206. Improvements since the last report are generally satisfactory although some issues have not been fully addressed. Uncertainties over management in the recent past have now been resolved and the process of further improvement is underway. Behaviour is now satisfactory overall in Years 7, 8 and 9 and pupils show an interest and enthusiasm for music. Over the three years of Key Stage 3, adequate time is allocated for the delivery of National Curriculum requirements in music. Assessment procedures within Key Stage 3 are generally satisfactory now and under ongoing review. A weakness remains in the use of ICT as a tool for composition in Key Stage 4. Although facilities in the computer rooms allow a limited use of music programs, there is still no resource for using keyboards with a digital interface. Departmental development plans indicate that this deficiency is recognized. The acquisition of a number of new, and larger, keyboards for Years 10 and 11, as well as tuned and untuned percussion for Key Stage 3, has enhanced resources for pupils. They are used with enthusiasm and expertise by the pupils.
207. A new head of department was appointed for the start of this school year. It is clear that the new post holder has clear vision regarding the immediate needs of the department and the departmental development plan addresses many of the issues which require review. The implementation of the development plan has financial implications but for the department to make progress new resources are required. The department is being led effectively.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and clear documentation which ensures consistency
- Very good knowledge and understanding of the teachers
- Good use of progressions which enable pupils to acquire and develop skills
- Good monitoring and target setting at GCSE
- Inclusion of all pupils in all opportunities for physical education

Areas for improvement

- Structure and use of long 100-minute lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3
- Interpreting National Curriculum levels for different activities to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve
- Dedicated teaching space for examination classes

208. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above the national average for pupils achieving level 5 and above. The evidence of the inspection suggests that these were over-estimated and that overall the standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is close to the national average. In some activities for some pupils the standard of attainment is above average. For example, boys in hockey showed a good level of control and skill, both in practices and in a game situation. They had a good awareness of using space to create open play.
209. GCSE results in 2001 were above the national average for A* to C passes but in previous years results had been well above the national average. The 2001 results came about despite close monitoring and target setting by the department and appear to have been due more to a lack of consistent effort on the part of the pupils than a lack of support from the teachers.
210. The evidence from lesson observation and from scrutiny of written work in the GCSE course shows that a good proportion of the present cohort of pupils have a standard of attainment in the theory aspects of the course above the national average. It was not possible to see a representative sample of practical work in Key Stage 4. Based on discussion with pupils and staff, it is likely that some pupils in some activities, particularly those taking GCSE, will have a good level of performance. However, this group is only a small percentage of the total cohort and overall the standard of attainment in this key stage is at the national average.
211. Achievement in both key stages is generally good. Girls in basketball were building on sound basic skills and beginning to achieve a good level of play in a game, showing a competent level of skill in sending and receiving the ball accurately. In hockey, boys were developing more advanced skills such as reverse stick techniques, and were seen to put these skills to good use under pressure in a game.
212. Pupils with special educational needs were enabled to achieve as well as their peers through sensitive handling by teachers, who have a good awareness of their needs. In a football lesson, the teacher quietly made adaptations in the task so that pupils with co-ordination difficulties could achieve success in a particular skill.
213. Pupils respond well to their physical education. They are enthusiastic and well motivated and on the whole are able to maintain their concentration throughout a lesson. There were instances, however, when the length of a double lesson, (1 hour and 40 minutes), was too much for some pupils to sustain their focus and maintain an acceptable level of behaviour. Attitudes to each other were generally good. Examples were seen of pupils quietly helping one another to learn a skill, for example how to turn the stick over to achieve a reverse stick pass.
214. The teaching seen during the inspection was good overall in both key stages, and occasionally it was very good or excellent. A significant strength of the teaching was the very good knowledge and understanding of the teachers of the different activities. Their use of progressive practices to enable pupils to acquire

skills and then steadily improve on them resulted in good learning. Good relationships are also a key factor in the success of the teaching. Lesson structure is consistent throughout the department and this ensures that pupils approach their lessons with confidence, knowing what to expect. This feeling of security has a significant impact on their ability and willingness to learn. Teachers' knowledge of the needs of their pupils with special educational needs and their sensitive handling of potentially challenging situations enables these pupils to learn well and continue to achieve alongside their peers.

215. Assessment is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 but pupils are not aware of what they need to do to improve their National Curriculum levels in the different activities. In Key Stage 4, the monitoring and target setting for pupils taking the GCSE option is good and leads to good achievement.
216. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and a good range of extra curricular opportunities extends and enhances the timetabled curriculum. These offer good opportunities for higher attainers to extend their expertise further and for lower attainers to improve.
217. The leadership and management of the department are good. The monitoring of the work of the department and the delivery of the curriculum is well documented and targeted and has clearly had a good impact on raising standards and giving the department consistency of practice. Documentation on the whole is very good. It is comprehensive, clear, well written and helpful. The exceptions are the literacy policy, which is still in the process of development and does not reflect the good practice which actually exists, and a numeracy policy which has yet to be written.
218. The accommodation overall is good although the fields are poorly drained and this restricts their use at times. No specific teaching space is provided for examination classes in physical education so there is no permanent base for displays or storage of materials, which inhibits development of the subject.
219. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have improved. Attainment is now average and achievements are often good. A good proportion of boys are attaining above average standards in specific activities, notably hockey. Health and safety procedures are followed throughout all sessions. Marking and target setting in GCSE are rigorous and enable pupils to make good progress. Improvements since the last inspection are therefore good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are improving in Years 10 and 11
- Pupils of all backgrounds are fully included in teaching and learning
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11

Areas for improvement

- Attainment of some pupils in Years 7 to 9 is too low as work is not matched to their needs
- Pupils do not have a good enough idea about the standards they are attaining in the subject in relation to the Agreed Syllabus

220. Overall, the standards of attainment in Key Stage 3 and that of the pupils currently in Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. However, pupils are not aware of their attainment in relation to these measures. Pupils' written work reflects the emphasis placed upon the development of their literacy skills, though the tasks set do not meet the needs of all pupils. For example, in Year 7, the

evidence of previously completed work shows lower attaining pupils to be making better progress than others as the work set better matched their needs. Pupils in Year 9 responded very positively to a video on Buddhism. In answering questions they showed a good factual knowledge of the topic and their written work was accurate and well presented. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory.

221. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-G was in line with the national average, half of these achieving the higher grades A*-C. Where pupils discuss religious and ethical topics, standards of attainment in class debate are very good. In lessons, all pupils were able to contribute their ideas. Year 11 pupils gave careful consideration to the relationship between prejudice and discrimination. They achieved a secure understanding of these terms and listened attentively to the views of others as implications were discussed. Standards have improved since the last inspection, in part as a result of the increased time available in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievement is good at this stage, considering their previous levels of attainment.
222. The attainment of a group of pupils preparing for the GCSE examination in 2002 was at the level expected at this stage. They were able to recall facts and provide effective definitions of terms. Their written work is good. They have compiled useful notes and provide accurate written answers.
223. Developing pupils' literacy skills is a clear priority of the teaching in all years. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils broaden their vocabulary and teachers repeatedly check their understanding of words. Spelling and punctuation are corrected in marking. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud and to make use of the school library. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make very good progress in developing speaking and listening skills. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported effectively and make good progress. Opportunities for pupils to apply and practise their number skills in this subject are underdeveloped. They are encouraged to use computers to research homework tasks. When Year 7 pupils interrogated a CD ROM to complete a fact-file on Christianity, all had the skills necessary to complete the task.
224. Lessons were well planned and this ensured that pupils were aware of what they needed to do; as a result all made progress. Teachers have a good knowledge of the special needs of individual pupils and, when alternative resources and tasks are provided, higher and lower attaining pupils make good progress. Too often the work set, especially in Years 7 and 8, failed to extend the most able.
225. Pupils enjoy and value their lessons and so behaviour is good overall. The very positive response of the older pupils is a significant strength. All benefit from the supportive relationships that exist between pupils and with their teachers. As a result they are willing to make contributions and to listen to, value and respect the views of others. This was clear when the Year 10 group studying moral and ethical issues worked in pairs to discuss the impact on people at different times and in different cultures. By such means the teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
226. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Non-specialist teachers of the subject receive very good support from the head of department. They also enrich the teaching by using information from their own specialist area, as in a Year 11 lesson when the teacher used her knowledge of psychology to introduce the topic and stimulate discussion. They share a level of interest in the subject and this motivates the pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly and feedback encourages their efforts but does not provide sufficient information as to how they might achieve improvement. Clear guidelines as to behaviour have been established that enable very effective debates and meaningful reflection to take place, a further improvement since the last report. The quality of lesson planning ensures the most effective use of the increased time available to the subject. Lessons proceed at a good pace though a wider range of methods and tasks in Years 7 to 9 would further increase interest levels.
227. The curriculum complies with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus and the examination boards. The re-organisation of the curriculum and the extra time allocated to the subject since the last report has had a beneficial effect on teaching and learning.

228. Parents' comments, written in exercise books, show that those of different faith groups support the teaching of the subject. Through the study of different religious beliefs and practices, pupils gain an appreciation of the views of others that ensures the inclusion of all pupils.
229. Since the last report specialist rooms have been provided within the main building and accommodation is now good. The classrooms and corridors are enhanced by the display of pupils' work and information on the topics being taught. The resources provided are good and a useful stock of artifacts has been assembled.
230. The recently appointed head of department provides good leadership and the department is managed effectively as part of the PSHE faculty. The teachers share a commitment to the further development of the subject. The school responded very positively to the issues raised in the last report and has achieved very good improvement.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England

(AS examination data for 2001 was for too small a student sample to warrant inclusion in the table)

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	27	78	87	22	43	4.1	5.8
Chemistry	9	100	90	38	43	6.5	5.9
Biology	11	100	88	45	34	6.5	5.3
Physics	8	100	88	38	40	6	5.7
Design and technology	8	100	91	25	30	6	5.4
Business Studies	23	96	92	48	32	6.1	5.5
Economics	14	100	89	62	36	7.1	5.5
ICT	14	100	86	21	23	5.4	4.6
Art	11	100	96	91	46	8.9	6.6
Drama and Theatre Studies	8	100	n/a	25	n/a	5	n/a
Geography	10	90	92	60	38	6.8	5.7
History	13	100	88	69	35	8.0	5.5
Government and politics	10	100	n/a	40	n/a	6.4	n/a
Sociology	22	91	86	41	35	5.3	5.3
Psychology	18	78	n/a	44	n/a	5.7	n/a
English Literature	21	100	95	33	37	6.7	5.9
French	7	100	89	43	38	7.4	5.6
German	4	100	91	25	40	4.5	5.8

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England

Business	14	64	57	7	n/a	n/a	n/a
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and biology. The school also teaches chemistry and physics, which were sampled.

In 2001, nine students took the chemistry A Level and eight took physics. In both subjects, results were above average, with all passing and a third gaining A/B grades. The physics students achieved well, with better grades than those predicted on the basis of their earlier attainment at GCSE and doing better than in their other subjects. However, the chemistry results were less good than those predicted on the basis of the students' earlier attainment.

One lesson each was seen in chemistry and physics, both in Year 12. In both lessons, teaching and learning were good and the response of students was very good. In the chemistry lesson, teaching was enthusiastic, supportive and knowledgeable. Students had a wide range of attainment, but were confident and willing enough to enter into discussion, while investigating chemical reactions. The physics lesson, in which star formation was studied, was well planned to help students meet examination requirements and teaching was well pitched to meet the various levels of attainment within the group. Learning was enhanced by very good relationships between students and the teacher.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **just satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have a good and confident knowledge of mathematics.
- Students are positive about the subject and work well together.

Areas for improvement

- Targets for students need to stem from regular monitoring of their performance and to be sharply focused on learning goals.
- Some students are under-qualified for the courses they are studying and struggle to understand.
- Management needs to focus on changes that will improve standards

231. The inspection covered the AS and A-level courses offered by the school, and focused on A-level. A-level students undertake three modules of pure mathematics, two of statistics or mechanics and one of discrete mathematics. In addition, the re-sit GCSE course for those who did not gain grade C in Year 11 was inspected. The key skills qualification is co-ordinated outside the mathematics department, although relevant application of number work is highlighted in mathematics lessons.
232. Results at AS and A-level in 2001 were well below the national average and out of line with the students' performances in other subjects. This represents underachievement, even given the below average standards of students when they started the course. Over recent years, A-level results have been low. Those students who re-sat GCSE in 2001 improved their grades, but only about one third gained A* - C grades.
233. Standards currently are below average with satisfactory progress being made. The standard of work seen in lessons indicates that students are successful with basic concepts. Some are building on insecure foundations, however, so their progress is slow. Students are very willing to collaborate and to discuss new ideas. In a Year 12 lesson, students discussed the meaning of an algorithm and important features in experimental design. However, in Year 13 final revision lessons for a pure mathematics module examination, some students were inaccurate in their recall of trigonometry and their graphing of functions. Male and female students achieve equally in lessons as do students from different ethnic backgrounds. Achievement over time is unsatisfactory because progress has been too slow and demand too low in the

past. The school is aware of the weaknesses in sixth form teaching, learning and standards in mathematics and is addressing them.

234. Teaching observed was satisfactory overall with some elements of good practice. Lesson objectives are clearly stated. Teachers used a range of methods and approaches. They have good subject knowledge and a sound awareness of examination technique and marking. The majority of lessons are well structured with variety of activities for the students. For example, a good Year 12 lesson included the teacher's introduction, productive group discussions about the solutions to problems, and a whole class plenary to clarify new ideas. Sometimes teaching has weaknesses such as unclear questioning, too much lecturing from the front, or failure to check that all students are listening. This results in too slow progress and insufficient learning. At these times expectations of the students are not high enough. Learning is generally satisfactory, however. Students are attentive and responsive to their teaching. In Year 13, they recognised the failings in their answers to an A-level question on sketching a graph and how this would be penalised by an examiner. Sometimes the pace of learning is slow or time is wasted in copying notes from the board. In an otherwise satisfactory GCSE lesson, learning was affected because some students had not brought their calculators.
235. Students are set long-term targets for their achievement. A group of A-level students said that their target was to improve by one grade on their predicted grade. Short-term target setting and review, based on careful analysis of students' performance and focused on specific learning goals, are not carried out as effectively, which restricts students' progress towards their objectives.
236. Some of the textbooks used for AS and A-level mathematics are rather old and not well matched to the new modules, for which specific texts have been published. Staff would also benefit from having texts from other specifications to extend the range of examples used in their teaching.
237. The management of sixth form mathematics in the recent past has been particularly challenging because of staffing shortages and the direction has been unclear. Staffing in the department is now good, although the effects of this background are inevitably taking some time to work through. A priority is to make decisions about students' entry qualifications for AS and A-level courses, so that their aspirations can be realistic. A member of the mathematics department now has responsibility for the sixth form provision. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory but the new stability puts the department in a good position to improve standards, if leadership proves to be positive and effective.

SCIENCES

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Staff are well qualified, experienced and have a good knowledge of the subject.
- The attitude of the students is very good.
- There are very good relationships between the staff and students.
- The syllabus is suitable and lessons are well prepared

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of computers and other ICT
- Some teaching materials are not well suited to the wide range of student attainment.

238. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were above the national level and had been similar for the previous three years. The vast majority of students who took the examination gained a pass grade and 72

percent were in the range A-C. When compared to their GCSE results, over half the students did better than expected. Some students with lower GCSE grades did very well.

239. Year 13 students produce work that is above average. The majority of these students are achieving at or above the level expected when compared to their GCSE grades. In the lessons seen, the students were attentive and completed all the tasks set. They were able to explain, in full and with confidence, the role of sugars in energy transfers in a whole class discussion. The students were also able to recall the stages of protein breakdown leading to urea production.
240. Year 12 students had only just started their course but were finding the transition from GCSE easy to cope with. The majority of students were confident to contribute in class and were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject. An example of this was seen when these students described the theory behind the concept of optimum temperatures for enzymes.
241. The teaching in biology was good and encouraged the students' positive approach to learning. Teachers maintained students' interest by demonstrating a clear enthusiasm for the subject linked with a good subject knowledge and experience. They were able to involve most of the students in well-organised class discussions. This gave the students the opportunity to demonstrate what they understood. However, some students were either reluctant or unable to join in with these discussions and the teacher did not always remedy this. Practical sessions were carried out in a careful and safe manner. Although a wide range of teaching styles is employed within biology, insufficient use is made of ICT, particularly computers, for simulation and revision exercises.
242. The marking of homework and other assessment tasks is detailed with constructive comments and grades. The students appreciate the high quality of assessment and are aware of their potential and their targets. They feel well supported in biology where the teachers are willing to offer extra help to any student who requests assistance. The students were also very complimentary of the week's residential fieldwork course held each year. The syllabus is suitable for students but some of the course materials and texts are not well matched to the wide range of their prior attainment.
243. The attitude of students in biology is very good and enhances their learning. Their written work is complete and of a high standard. In class, the students were attentive, polite and confident in contributing to class discussions. This was particularly noticeable in Year 13 where students demonstrated a very mature attitude. All teachers enjoy a very good relationship with the students and this gave rise to a general overall feeling of cooperation.
244. The management of the department is good and improvement since the last inspection has been sound. The department now has a group of experienced and enthusiastic teachers who are in a position to raise achievement further.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focused on the resistant materials design and technology A-level course. The school also teaches a textiles course, which was sampled.

In the textiles lesson observed the students were learning to plan a textiles manufacturing process. Standards were similar to national expectations of A-level and pupils were making good progress, achieving well. Teaching was good. Discussions between the students and teacher were productive with good in-depth questioning. The teacher provided good ideas to guide the students in their design process, before they planned the production of their own individual products. The lesson was drawn together well with effective homework set. Students' attitudes were positive.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- AS and A-level results in product design are above the national average.
- Students have good opportunities to use ICT.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Students gain good individual support from their teachers

Areas for improvement

- Student's skills in analysing existing products and using the information to extend the development of their own ideas.
- The opportunities to study design and technology for students who are not suited to an A-level

245. The A-level results in the product design course in 2000 were just below the national average, but increased significantly in 2001. The AS-level results in 2001 and the standard of work seen during the inspection are above the standard expected of students at this stage nationally.
246. The results reflect the department's recent work to raise standards. Students' achievement is good. The quality of the work produced by students following design and technology courses is now of a high standard. Students show good skills in analysing tasks in detail and gathering research from a range of sources. Their graphics skills are highly developed, and the standard of presentation of their coursework is very good. Some students use specialist design software to raise the accuracy and quality of their design skills. Their ability to analyse a range of products and then use the information to inform their own design ideas are less well developed. As a result, students provide less information on the limitations of other products or how they have used the information they gained during the research stage to improve particular features of existing products. The design process is well used to show each stage of their design work. Students consider both standard production processes as well as considering the mass production possibilities of the products they produce. Modeling techniques are well used to test and improve each prototype during the development stage. Students show a good level of depth to their work. Both drawings and plans are well annotated, and students explain the development of ideas well.
247. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 is good overall. Teachers place good emphasis on the development of more advanced skills in designing, making and large-scale manufacturing. Lessons are well structured, with a mixture of teaching the whole group and working with students individually. Lessons set clear objectives for designing and students' learning is well linked to their individual needs. Teachers plan well for students to extend their knowledge and skills. This was seen in a project where they were required to design and make a padlock having had less experience of working with metal. Teachers focused on developing students' skills in working with metal as well as increasing the quality of the planning, designing and manufacturing processes.
248. Students' ability to follow the design process has enabled them to work more independently, using their teachers mainly as guides and mentors. This has resulted in teachers being able to give support on a more individual basis. The good relationships between students and their teachers have a positive impact on their learning. Students take their work seriously and are keen to do well. As a result they discuss their work in depth with their teachers, and readily take on board the help and guidance they are given. Students feel that they receive a good level of help and support from their teachers. The coursework is closely linked to the examination mark scheme, and teachers encourage students to use the mark scheme as a guide when they are supporting and assessing ongoing studies. This ensures that all the important aspects of the examination courses are covered.
249. During lessons, students showed confidence in using a variety of ICT skills, such as computer-aided design to produce 2D and 3D drawings and plans. Teachers encourage this and concentrate on students increasing their skills to produce more advanced work. Students have used computer aided manufacturing

resources to plan and produce products as well as the Internet to research information. The majority of students use ICT well to process and present data from market research work, and to increase the quality of the overall presentation of their work. Lower-attaining students have made less use of specialised graphics software to support their design ideas.

250. Students apply a good level of numeracy skills, handling and processing numerical data as well as applying accurate measurements and estimations to both design and manufacturing processes. They work to scale when developing prototypes and when using computer-aided design. They are familiar with a wide variety of technical terms associated with the subject, and apply these accurately in their written work. Writing skills are used effectively in their individual work.
251. The management of the subject at sixth form level is good. The head of department has focused on raising standards. Schemes of work are linked to the work in class. Systems to monitor the achievement of students following all courses are good. Regular tutorials enable students to discuss their progress with their teachers and focus on the areas for improvement. This has had a positive impact on learning, enabling students to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses as they progress with coursework. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The A-level and AS-level courses are now well established with an increasing number of students taking them, though limited opportunities are on offer for students who are not suited to A-level courses. Results have improved to above the national average and teaching and learning are also good.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection in this area was A/AS-level business studies. The AS/A-level economics course was sampled. The school also teaches business as an advanced vocational (AVCE) course and as a GNVQ (Intermediate). Both of these were sampled.

In 2001, fourteen students secured well above average results in economics A-level, with all passing and more than half gaining A/B. Their achievement was good in comparison to their standards at the start of the course. Two lessons were seen during the inspection, a Year 12 lesson, which was good and a very good Year 13 lesson. In the Year 12 lesson, in which students considered the costs and benefits of the building of a major road, knowledgeable teaching was effective in stimulating good thought and discussion from students. As a result, they made good progress in their understanding of the issues involved. In the Year 13 lesson, very knowledgeable teaching was highly effective in enabling students to learn about the place of Britain in the global economy and in helping them to use what they have learned to do well in the examination.

Thirteen students gained above average results in a post-16 vocational business qualification. Two Year 12 lessons were seen, one in the Intermediate GNVQ course and one in the AVCE. In the very good Intermediate lesson, in which students planned a business, there was a strong emphasis on independent research, using the Internet. Because of the endeavour of the students and the quality of support given by the teacher, the group made very good progress. The Advanced lesson, in which students learned about franchises, was well planned to provide appropriate work for the wide mix of attainment in the group. While teaching was good, some students persevered less well than others, so making less effective use of the learning opportunities provided. Therefore, learning was only satisfactory in the lessons seen.

A-LEVEL BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **good**

Strengths

- Examination results are high when compared with national averages and those of similar schools.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.

- Management and leadership of the department are good.
- Response of students to the teaching is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistency in the information provided to students as to how they can improve, in some modules.
- Insufficient opportunities for real business links.
- Insufficient opportunities for students to use and develop their ICT skills.

252. The business department does well for its sixth form students. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were above average, the proportion of A and B grades being significantly higher than that recorded nationally. This represents a marked improvement since the last inspection. While there have been variations from year to year the trend is one of continuing improvement. Results over previous years show no consistent difference between the attainment of male and female students. Similarly good results were achieved in the AS-level examinations. Very few students fail to complete the courses. The achievement of students was good as they did better than expected in relation to their GCSE grades.
253. The standards of work seen in lessons and in students' folders are also above average. In Year 13, the majority of students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. Their written work is of a high standard and reflects the very effective teaching of literacy skills. For example, teachers provide precise explanation so students use terms and conventions confidently and accurately. They are challenged to apply their knowledge and understanding; as when they evaluated the effectiveness of advertising against criteria drawn from marketing theory. Their responses to direct questioning and during the ensuing discussion showed their ability to recall information.
254. Students in Year 12 have made good progress in the comparatively short time they have followed this course. Teachers exploit opportunities to develop key skills. The frequent use of statistical methods provides many opportunities for students to practise their numerical competencies, for example as they identified adverse and favourable variance when analysing budgets. Teachers provide good support in easing students' transition from GCSE to the advanced course. For example, a lesson introducing the importance of a theoretical framework in evaluating the role of people in organisations had been structured as a series of sequential steps. Students have a good understanding of the modules covered so far and are working at the expected level.
255. The teaching was always good and usually very good. As a result, learning was very good. The teachers' enthusiasm and secure subject knowledge was evident in all lessons and reflected in the positive response of students. The resources, methods and techniques used met student needs and, over time, have contributed to their ability to work independently. Students are aware of the learning objectives. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of students who respond to this challenge. The lessons proceeded at a brisk pace. Teachers worked to ensure the effective inclusion of all as, in both years, the groups contain students with very different levels of prior attainment. While making very good use of the library, students are encouraged to draw on a range of web-sites in order to glean the most up-to-date information. However, more opportunities for students to practice their ICT skills should be provided.
256. The marking of students' work is generally of a high standard across the department, though there is some inconsistency. In certain modules, for example Year 13 'Accounting', students had not been given sufficient guidance as to how they might achieve further improvement. The department is making increasing use of target setting and the subsequent review of student progress.
257. Students learn very well. They listen carefully, work diligently and show a pride in their work. Teachers provide support so that the less confident are able to contribute to discussions. As a result, in a Year 13 lesson, all were able to contribute their views on the ethics of advertising. When Year 12 students experienced difficulty in identifying the negative and positive impact of variance the teacher was on-hand

to provide guidance and advice. The relationships between students and teachers are very positive. The progress of a small number of students is hampered by their erratic attendance.

258. The management and leadership of the business department are very effective. The recently appointed head of department is committed to improvement by building upon what has already been achieved. The very good arrangements made for the curriculum underpin the high quality of topic and lesson planning observed. Further efforts should be made to embed the work more firmly in business practice, for example, by extending links through the 'Hillingdon Education Business Partnership'. The team of specialist teachers shares a commitment to further improvement and the priorities for development are clear. The monitoring of teaching by the head of department and her line manager is effective. This management of performance is sensitive to the training needs of the individual and the demands of departmental improvement. The department responded positively to the last report, dealing with all the issues raised.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The inspection focused on AS/A-level ICT, which is the only subject taught in this area.

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

Strengths

- Above average results and current standards.
- Good achievement.
- Effective teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment which provides more guidance on how improvements could be achieved
- Using the good records to monitor students' progress more closely

259. Results in ICT in 2001 were above the national average. This was an improvement from 2000 which was the first time that the course had been examined at A-level. Compared to their attainment at the start of the course, their achievement was good. The standards of students currently in Year 13 are similar to those of the previous cohort, that is they are above average. These students are also achieving well. At the end of Year 12, two thirds of these students reached standards in the AS examination which were at or above those predicted by the GCSE examination results.
260. In two-thirds of the lessons observed during the inspection, students were working on their coursework projects and the direct impact of teaching was therefore restricted. From a scrutiny of completed work it was clear that teaching had covered the requirements of the course through a variety of interesting scenarios. These had captured the imagination of the majority of students. For example, those in Year 13 had carefully researched the organisations they were using as clients for their project and many of these had a strong family connection. The work had meaning for the students and this encouraged their commitment and their subsequent learning. Students were helped, by careful teacher planning and preparation, to develop useful files of notes, guidance and completed assessments which aid revision. The high quality of the presentation and completeness of these demonstrates the care and effort the students put into their work.
261. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and up to date. Teaching is effective and enables students, who have not followed an examination course in the subject at GCSE, to succeed in the sixth form. Homework tasks are regularly set and these reflect the style of examination questions which students will meet at the end of their course. Marking is accurate and students are able to compare their answers with response sheets which they can access through the school's network system. Good preparation by the teachers has led to

this accumulating wealth of information being readily available to support students in their learning. When work is returned to students, advice is given, when appropriate, on how it could be improved. A lack of consistency between teachers, however, means that not all work has written guidance and comments on how to improve, to remind and support students when they refer to their recorded work later in the course.

262. Students work hard and concentrate in lessons and the project work in particular helps them to develop independence in their learning. Some of the extended writing tasks they are given to do encourages the development of their literacy skills and, through a focus on the implications of the availability of information and communication technology, contributes to students' social and moral development. They enjoy the subject and feel supported. However their attitudes to learning outside the classroom are more varied. Some students complete homework tasks on time and automatically correct any errors while others need to be continually pressed to complete and provide work.
263. The joint co-ordinators of the subject are both relatively new. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory while the management is good. Careful records of students' attainment are developed but they are not yet used sufficiently to monitor and evaluate an individual student's progress and to provide focused targets for improvement. The current examination course was introduced prior to either co-ordinator's appointment. The weak results in 2000 were carefully analysed and specific weaknesses in the way the course had been taught were identified. The greatly improved results in 2001 show the effectiveness of the remedial action taken. Teachers are taking opportunities to confirm their understanding of examination requirements through their own professional development. It is inappropriate to make a judgement about improvement since the previous inspection as, at that time, the course was not part of the school curriculum.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focused on AS/A-level sport studies. The school also offers a sports leadership (CSLA) certificate course, which was sampled. In the lesson seen, two groups of students organised rugby and netball training. Students leading the activities did not show authority or leadership with great confidence and missed out some important elements of training. In feeding back to the students, the teacher appropriately identified points for improvement and helped the students to gain confidence by making special mention of the good points in their work. The lesson was satisfactory overall.

SPORTS STUDIES

The quality of provision for sports studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Subject is well managed and thoroughly prepared.
- Use of a variety of teaching strategies enables the students to be actively involved.
- The teaching overall is good, resulting in good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Assessments and monitoring of work, with clear and specific targets, in written form.
- Greater access to ICT for research.
- A dedicated teaching space to enable permanent displays and storage of materials.

264. The present Year 13 is the first group to follow this course and it is not possible, therefore, to make national comparisons. Their results at AS level were well above their predicted grades, with about half the group attaining A or B grades.

265. The standards of work seen were generally above average. Most of the students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results and the students who entered the course without having taken GCSE are achieving as well as the others. Year 13 students showed good transfer of learning when applying knowledge from their course on biomechanics to assist their understanding in physiology. In a lesson on the psychology of sport, students in Year 12 showed a good level of understanding and perception when discussing different types of motivation.
266. In their written work, the students show a good level of literacy and good understanding in the different aspects of the course. Their work is clearly presented and shows a good depth of thought and consideration of issues such as the effects of transfer of learning on performance.
267. Teaching is good overall in the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of the course are good and they prepare their lessons thoroughly. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and teachers have high expectations of the students' ability to understand and articulate complex areas of work. Teachers use a variety of inter-active strategies which aid student learning and ensure full involvement. This has a very positive impact on the way students are achieving on this course.
268. Written work is checked and marked regularly but feedback is usually given orally. Targets are set but not written down so students have no point of reference. This is a weakness.
269. An example was seen during the inspection of some independent work, researched by Year 12 students. It was well done but they had found it difficult to access computers in school to carry out the task. The lack of a space dedicated to physical education teaching means that display cannot be used effectively. The students' views about the course were very positive. They clearly enjoyed the challenge of the different aspects and appreciated the way in which the teachers were always willing to give them extra time to help and support them.
270. The subject is well led and managed. There is a commitment to thorough preparation and to using a variety of teaching strategies to make the course as interesting as possible. This is leading to very effective learning.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not offer courses in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on art and design and theatre studies.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Examinations results are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are outstanding.
- Students are highly motivated and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Some written and spoken responses by students show a high level of critical analysis.

Areas for improvement

- The opportunities to use computers.

271. The trend in attainment shows that in recent years standards in A-level examinations have been consistently well above average. In 2000 and 2001, well over half the entry attained a grade A. In 2001, the average point score was very high compared with the national average and students' attainment in other subjects. All students entered gained A-E grades and most either A or B grades. There are no significant differences between the attainment of male and female students. In 2001, females outnumbered males 10-1. The overall results show very high standards and very good achievement relevant to students' starting points on entry into the sixth form. On average, all students gain a grade above their results in other examinations.
272. Results in A/S examinations in 2001 show a significant proportion of students attained the higher A and B grades. Some students achieved very well indeed and a very high proportion did better than predicted.
273. Students who join the sixth form course have attained above average GCSE results. The work by Year 12 students has increased depth and references to artists' work are more thoroughly researched. Students look more deeply for connections and influences and are able to refer to these when they talk about their work. They progressively build on their skills, knowledge and understanding through the course.
274. Standards of work by students currently in Year 13 are similar to previous years, mainly well above average. The sample of work provided by the school and the work seen in lessons shows very good achievement by individual students including a small number with learning difficulties who are making excellent progress. Most students are maintaining a good rate of improvement and are on track to exceed their targets. Those with gifts and talents work hard, are highly committed and are making excellent progress. Male and female students achieve equally well. The standard of analytical and critical investigation is very high in both written dissertations and practical work. Students explain themselves confidently and their work demonstrates considerable imagination and creative problem solving. Students who join the school from other local schools work hard to match the standard of work by students who took their GCSE examinations in Northwood. A high proportion go on to art-related degree and pre-degree courses in higher education, and are prepared well for the next stage of their learning.
275. Sketchbooks are a considerable strength and their use underpins these very high standards. Recent changes to the syllabus have led to a greater emphasis being placed on written, contextual studies than had been the case in the past. This approach has not in anyway detracted from the practical work but added greater intellectual rigour.
276. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have outstanding subject knowledge and expertise and very high expectations. A feature of the very good teaching is the use teachers make of assessment data to track the progress of individual students and plan future lessons and learning goals. The teaching seen during the week of the inspection was very strong. Teachers' lessons were very well structured and learning objectives were shared with students. The pace of lessons was brisk but with sufficient time at the end of the lesson to review the learning in relation to past and future work. The team of teachers responsible for the advanced courses is able to offer a wide range of specialist skills. Once the planned-for computers are installed, the chance to combine the more traditional art and design disciplines with computer-generated imagery will increase the range of skills considerably. Currently computers are used by students in their study periods and at home, and mainly for research. Students are taught to understand the examination requirements and critically apply them to their work. With this information they are able to use their time outside of lessons constructively and purposefully.
277. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Standards in examinations have improved and the numbers opting for the course have increased. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. There is very effective teamwork and newly qualified teachers are given high quality support and guidance. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is excellent. The accommodation,

which includes designated studio space for sixth former students, and the quality and range of books and other resources are good.

278. The department is ably supported by a technician who helps in the day-to-day work of the department. The artwork displayed around the school and in the local underground station is excellent and does much to promote the school and the work of the department.

DRAMA AND THEATRE STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in drama and theatre studies is **very good**

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, an imaginative approach and teach very well.
- Relationships are excellent.
- Students are highly motivated to succeed.
- Students present excellent role models to younger pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Improving students' written evaluations of texts and performances

279. Standards in drama and theatre studies are above average. Although numbers at A-level are too low to make valid national comparisons, results have been variable since the last inspection. Of the ten students who took AS-level in 2001, the first year in which students were entered for the subject, six gained grades A or B and all passed. Some students started their course with relatively modest previous attainment. However, these AS results indicate that levels of achievement were very good and better than predicted. Over half are continuing with the course to A-level.
280. Standards of students' attainment in lessons confirm an overall above average picture. Whilst all students confidently discuss performance, their written responses lack a tight structure and are less clear about impact and effect. With a firm foundation of dramatic conventions, they make a good creative effort in discussing the staging of particular scenes. For example, in work on 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle', students in Year 12 explored Brechtian acting styles and ways of conveying emotion when suppressed in the dialogue. Year 13 students showed good knowledge and understanding when comparing the styles of Brecht and Stanislavski. Using a previously unseen extract from 'The Crucible', which two students sight-read very well, the class moved easily from text to performance and progressively built up emotional involvement in the characters. The majority of students show imaginative and sensitive voice and movement in their performing.
281. Students have very positive attitudes to their work. They show a concentrated and serious effort. They are highly motivated to succeed. The quality of relationships is a particular strength. In their performance work and their involvement in drama club, they present excellent role models to younger pupils.
282. Teaching is very good in both Years 12 and 13. The teacher's very good subject knowledge enables questions to be explored in depth and high challenges to be presented in an imaginative and interesting way. Lessons are well structured with progressive dramatic sequences which allow for independence and initiative in the students. Teacher intervention is sufficient to guide lower attainers whilst leaving more open questions to higher attainers, so that all students' learning is extended. Time is made for students to reflect on and evaluate each other's work in a supportive atmosphere. Their progress is effectively monitored.

283. Leadership provides a clear educational direction and very high expectations. A new syllabus has been introduced with a more practical bias and this is currently being evaluated. Improvement since the last inspection is very good and the number of students taking the subject has increased considerably.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on history, psychology and sociology. The school's AS/A-level courses in geography and government and politics were sampled.

In 2001, ten students achieved well in securing well above average results in geography A-level, with more than half gaining A/B grades. One lesson was seen, in which Year 12 students learned about the conflicts that arise in connection with green belt development and the interest groups that become involved. A video was used to demonstrate these well and the teacher appropriately paused this for discussion on a number of occasions. Although the planned focus and activities were good, there was some overestimation of what could be achieved in the time available, so teaching and learning were satisfactory.

The government and politics course is popular, with ten students achieving well to gain above average A-level results in 2001. Two lessons were seen, one in each year. The teaching, learning and response of the students were very good in both. The Year 12 lesson was very well planned to enable the students to learn about the legislative processes relating to private member' bills, to understand the issues involved and to learn and use appropriate terminology. In the Year 13 lesson, in which students studied Labour Party policy on law and order, very good use was made of the time available. Very good subject knowledge and thoughtful provision of source material strongly supported students in both learning the main elements of policy and analysing these for strengths and weaknesses.

HISTORY

The quality of provision in history is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Very high A-level results, very good achievement and well above average current standards.
- Very good teaching and learning, strongly supported by the subject knowledge of teachers and the response of students.
- Very good leadership and management, highly effective in maintaining the subject among the strongest in the school

Areas for improvement

- None

284. Standards in the GCE A-level examination in 2001 were very high, in the top five percent in the country. In most of the recent years, the results in the subject have been among the best in the school. In 2001 this was emphatically so. The achievement of the students was very good, when compared with performance in other subjects and their previous performance in GCSE. This was particularly so for the female students. All students gained a pass grade and achievement of the highest grades was particularly high.
285. The standard of current students' work is well above average. Year 13 students are achieving very well in terms of predictions based on their GCSE results. They are continuing to improve, indicating that it is not beyond them to match last year's results. In a lesson in which they studied the role of propaganda in Nazi Germany, almost all showed very high levels of knowledge and understanding, forming sophisticated conclusions and skillfully and quickly selecting evidence to support these in presentations to other students. Their command of specialist vocabulary, including German terms, was very strong. Students in Year 12 are already showing that they are moving forward strongly from their standards at the start of the course.

In a lesson, the great majority were able to interpret employment statistics to investigate government policies on the role of women in Nazi Germany and evaluate how successful these were.

286. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. They are strengthened by teachers' very good subject knowledge and involvement with the topics that are taught. Lessons have highly relevant objectives that are clearly communicated to students, so they are fully aware of what they need to achieve in lessons. Questions are probing and challenging, requiring students to justify their conclusions and improve their answers when necessary. Humour, shared between teachers and students, is a frequent ingredient of the very good relationships that exist. Teachers maintain a very good balance between their own input and what they require from students, which strongly supports their independence. On a very small number of occasions, opportunities are missed to deepen the discussion by, for example, considering evidence that conflicts with the view being stated. Students of both genders and all ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in contributing to lessons. Marking, which clearly identifies to students how well they doing and what they need to do to improve, is often complemented by discussion with teachers. In one Year 13 lesson, this happened informally, while the class was waiting to start the lesson.
287. The response of students to their work is very good. They share their teachers' strong interest in the subject and are keen to discuss their progress. In one lesson, response was excellent. In this Year 13 lesson, extra depth was provided by students being able to refer to their experiences on a field visit to Berlin, when interpreting evidence about the relationship between Nazi propaganda and its art and architecture. During a discussion that took place as part of the inspection, students were highly appreciative of the helpful support and approachability of their teachers.
288. The leadership and management of history in the sixth form are very good indeed, ensuring the continuation of the subject as one of the strongest in the school. Although no specific criteria for improvement in the sixth form were provided in the last report, identified strengths have been maintained, or further improved upon. A-level results, which were above average, are now very high and achievement and teaching remain very good. Students continue to develop very good analytical skills. The quality of their discussion remains a strength in most lessons, although students in one Year 13 lesson, while answering questions, were less willing to develop their responses into extended discussion.

SOCIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Year 13 standards of work are above average and students' achievement is good.
- Good teaching results in effective learning.
- Students are enthusiastic in their learning and make good progress.
- Good recording and monitoring systems for the assessment of students

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planned opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills in lessons.

289. In 2001, the proportion of students achieving A and B grade passes at A-level was above the national average and students' points score was average. Prior to 2001 the proportion of students achieving higher grade passes had been declining, reaching a low point in 2000. Comparisons between females and males are not possible because of small numbers. In 2001, 50 per cent of students achieved B grade passes at GCE AS-level sociology but none an A grade. Most have gone on to follow the A-level course this academic year.

290. Standards of work seen in Year 13 were above average. This represents good achievement since the start of Year 12 – none have studied GCSE sociology prior to taking the AS-level in Year 12. Students consider arguments from different theoretical perspectives and make their own considered judgements. For example, in analysing patterns of gender in crime statistics they compare and contrast differing sociological research perspectives that have been used. Students’ research skills are securely developed and all have completed an individual research project as part of the syllabus requirements.
291. Year 12 students have made a good start to the AS course and are coming to grips with the various theoretical sociological perspectives as applied to the study of the family and, more recently, education. In one very good lesson, they were developing their knowledge and understanding of different sociological perspectives as regards educational achievement in schools, for example, labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy theories.
292. In both years, students’ communication skills are good and their application of number, for example, in the analysis of statistics, is secure. Year 12 students have made effective use of ICT in preparing a short project on the history of education but opportunities to develop ICT skills further in lessons are limited.
293. Overall, the teaching of sociology is good and results in effective learning. Well-planned and structured lessons, with a variety of activities, challenge the full range of ability well. Students are actively involved in their own learning through, for example, the teachers’ effective use of pair and small group tasks. Good quality schemes of work guide teacher’s planning in order that the demands of the syllabus are fully met. The teachers’ enthusiasm, experience and very good understanding of the subject matter successfully motivate students in lessons. Good use is made of relevant and contemporary as well as more established sociological evidence and research. Effective use of questioning extends students’ intellectual capacities and engages them well in discussion, drawing on their own experiences as well as the sociological perspectives they have learned. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, this encouraged students to apply the use of labelling theory and the work of Willis when discussing educational achievement. Teachers value students’ oral contributions and this is successfully developing their confidence in lessons. They are also skilful in directing questions to students, thus ensuring they all have input into the lesson. Effective reference is made by teachers to appropriate sociological research and different theoretical perspectives – this deepens students’ knowledge and understanding further and develops their sociological thinking.
294. As a result of the good quality teaching, students show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Evidence from a scrutiny of a sample of their work and discussions with students, shows that the majority reads around the subject and are using available resources with developing confidence. Students show insight in lesson discussions; they express their own ideas confidently as well as listening and respecting the beliefs and views of others. This, along with the high expectations of teachers, helps promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons.
295. The head of department provides effective leadership and management with a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching even further and ultimately raising the quality of students’ achievement as well, particularly in attaining the higher grades. Indicative also of this are the good quality procedures in place for the monitoring and assessment of students’ subject performance. No specific focus was placed on sociology in the last inspection report.

PSYCHOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour of students assist their pace of learning.

- A-level results are improving as a consequence of very good leadership and management of the subject

Areas for improvement

- Better target-setting.
- Greater planned use of ICT for deepening subject knowledge and developing problem solving skills.

296. Results in the 2001 GCE A-level examinations were above the national average when measured by the proportion of students gaining A and B grades. This represents an improvement on the previous year when they were around the national average. These results indicate good achievement considering the level of attainment of students beginning their sixth form studies. The relatively small number of candidates entered in these two years do not allow for meaningful comparisons of the performance of boys and girls. Psychology is an increasingly popular subject choice within the school.
297. No candidates were entered for the AS-level examination in 2000. Entries for 2001 were made, but no comparable data for other schools was available at the time of the inspection. Well over a third of the students entered achieved either an A or B grade.
298. In the work seen during the inspection, standards which students achieve by the end of Year 13 are above the national average. They can discuss key themes such as cognitive development with confidence and can balance opinion and evidence well, for example in exploring aspects of abnormality. Knowledge and understanding in the area of physiology is less secure and students observed that this module is very challenging for non-biologists. Recording skills are of a generally good standard. Written work shows a knowledge of vocabulary and concepts which is at least good and often very good, for example in work dealing with social and emotional development. Understanding and knowledge of cited key studies, for example those concerned with attachment theory, is good for middle and higher attaining students.
299. During Year 12, students settle well to an unfamiliar subject and their abilities to produce extended writing progress quickly. This is in part a consequence of the careful teaching of key skills, especially in the areas of communication and problem solving. The department uses good quality subject induction materials which also serve to promote successful learning strategies and these are well appreciated by those students interviewed. Students of higher attainment are able to produce good quality answers to 'short' questions, for example in work on the principal characteristics of perception, even within early modules of the course.
300. The quality of teaching is very good and impacts very well on student learning. Lessons are very well planned with clear and detailed objectives, for example in work being undertaken on experimental design. These are well explained and teachers check that they are appropriately understood early in proceedings. This enables students to be confident in identifying what they need to do to improve and to tackle assignments effectively within each module. Teachers present the subject in an animated manner which is accessible by students of all abilities. Lessons are conducted at a good pace with humour and a shared awareness that there are no 'passengers'. Careful questioning and well-structured plenaries ensure that all students are fully included in class activities. Students report positively on access to staff within and outside lessons and this clearly acts as a motivator for them.
301. There is a very good focus on encouraging students of middle and higher attainment to develop independent learning skills, for example on research within core modules using journals, some of which they are encouraged to subscribe to. This stimulates interest among students in deepening their learning and contributes to improving standards. Curriculum enrichment is limited to update conferences and more attention could be given to exposing students to applied aspects of psychology through closer community links, including work experience.

302. The marking of work is prompt and written comment is informative. Records of student performance are well kept and reflect the fact that teachers know their students well. However the practice of written targets set within modules is underdeveloped and students are consequently less aware of their progress over shorter time scales.
303. Attitudes to the study of psychology are very good and have a positive effect on both the pace and depth of learning. All those interviewed expressed their enjoyment in the subject and have higher education and vocational aspirations in psychology. Students concentrate well and are very willing to work collaboratively. They recognise the importance of learning from each other and perform well in group-work exercises. Respect is shown for the opinion of others and this has helped oral skills and the recognition that understanding in psychology is developed through debate and awareness of a range of perspectives. Students have very positive views of the subject and consider staff to be both knowledgeable about and supportive of their learning needs.
304. Leadership and management are very good, with a clear vision for the development of the subject. This is well informed in terms of the priorities which need to be addressed. Assessment arrangements are of good quality and performance data is shared with students and parents. The department has worked hard to refine schemes of work and ensure that topics reflect not only external accreditation requirements but also the learning needs of students. They are comprehensive in scope and include research ethics and cultural comparisons. However, there is insufficient emphasis on the applied use of ICT, for example in analysing aggregate data and in experimental and research design. Students are less aware of the potential of ICT for developing their knowledge of the subject, for example in searching appropriate websites.
305. The match of teachers to the curriculum which is presently offered is very good. Resources are well selected and of good quality with up-to-date texts. Those available in the learning resource centre are limited but are modern and relevant to the current curriculum being followed by students.
306. The subject was not separately reported on in the last inspection. On the basis of evidence held by the school, progress since that time has been satisfactory

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focused on English and French. The school also offers AS/A Level German, which was sampled. Four students took the German A-level in 2001, all of whom passed, although overall achievement was lower than expected. The lesson observed in Year 12 was very good and the lesson in Year 13 was satisfactory. The teachers conducted lessons entirely in German to the great benefit of students' oral fluency and listening comprehension. Some students had a good knowledge of complex aspects of German grammar and a good command of vocabulary relating to the topics of alternative forms of energy and food technology. Students made very good progress in listening, speaking and reading. A scrutiny of students' course work revealed very good standards in written work.

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- 2001 English literature results were above the national average.
- There is consistently good teaching, with many imaginative approaches which help to bring both texts and writers' ideas to life.

- Students have very good attitudes to study, being appreciative of their teachers' efforts and willing to work hard in a range of activities.
- The social, cultural and historical background to literature is well taught so that students understand the context to the texts being studied.

Areas for improvement

- In the last two years students have tended to do less well in English than in their other examinations.
- In discussion, both teachers and students need to make more use of quick and probing debate to increase the level of challenge to students' views.
- Students need to be taught to use precise reference and quotation with more ease and familiarity

307. Some 50 students take an English course in the sixth form. AS and A-level courses are offered in English literature. Retention rates are good.
308. Standards achieved in the GCE AS and A-level examinations are good but variable. In three of the last four years all students gained a pass grade, and the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B was above national average. The weakest results followed a year when significant staffing changes resulted in teachers inexperienced at A-level having to take groups over at short notice. In 2001, English literature results were above the national average. Although students tended to do better in their other subjects, their English results represented good achievement from GCSE qualifications. The number of pupils who re-sit English language GCSE is too small for any comparative judgement to be significant.
309. Current standards, observed during the inspection, match those of the 2001 results. In English literature, students' attainment is above average. In both discussion and writing they show good insight into the key ideas and themes within texts, and the historical and social contexts within which writers worked. They are adept at understanding and articulating the precise implications behind language being studied, so that ambiguity and naïve expression are rare. Wider reading and research are willingly undertaken so that well balanced, if rather orthodox, views are developed. Standards in the GCSE re-sit group are below national average. Students had joined the course with grades D or E at GCSE. In the lesson observed, whilst they willingly took notes, discussion was slow to develop and they did not see it as a normal method. When reading other than literal or factual texts students struggled to understand meaning, and were further hindered by a limited technical vocabulary. Terms such as 'stanza' and 'paragraph' were confused; 'metaphor' and 'emphasis' were not understood.
310. The achievement of AS and A-level students is good and they show a good approach to learning. They are very appreciative of and responsive to teachers' efforts to enliven the course without sacrificing the necessary academic rigour. An AS class responded very well when given group tasks in a lesson on 'Hamlet'. They showed the ability to assess the weaknesses in a character, reference them, and present a justification by devising an appropriate soliloquy or court defence. Most students follow up suggestions about further areas for study and research and are willing to share their findings with the rest of the group. A strength is their readiness to work together in varied ways, such as drama interpretation, seminar and hot-seating. The latter was well used by AS students to interrogate Chaucer's Wife of Bath about the consistency or hypocrisy of her views. Good cross references within the text, to the Bible, and to 14th century conventions and beliefs were introduced by students.
311. Teaching is good. Teachers not only know their subject but show concern that students should gain understanding and appreciation of the methods and messages relevant to writers so that knowledge, enjoyment, and sensitivity combine. As a result students work very hard, and their involvement in lessons is very good, stimulated by a well-planned range of teaching approaches. A year 13 group gained and presented new insights into Owen's war poetry by preparing a dramatic version of 'Dulce et Decorum Est' which they then had to justify. Students are encouraged to express their reactions and opinions as a means to sharing perceptions. In this way they learn to consider alternative viewpoints and balance evidence. In one example, an A-level group listened to each other's pair presentations of diary, letter or

poem study as background to an understanding of the thinking behind Great War attitudes. Too often, however, students are reluctant to challenge the views of those they respect, which results in some lack of depth and precision in their thinking. Teachers could remedy this by modelling how to challenge an opinion without attacking the person. Similarly whilst the skills of referencing texts, including quotations, are well taught and conscientiously used, it is rare for students to integrate close references quickly and pointedly into debate.

312. Marking of written work is of very good quality: thorough, informative, pointing to where improvements could be made. The evaluation of the many oral-based tasks in lessons is not so constructively critical or demanding. Students are clear about their present performance standards in English literature but do not fully realise the intrinsic link between quality of thought and spoken/written expression.
313. Good resources, including video and overhead projector, are readily available and well used by both staff and students. Leadership of the course is good, and effective coordination ensures that staff expertise is used to best effect and that good ideas are shared. Results and the reasons behind them are well evaluated annually, and there is a healthy philosophy of self-awareness and self-criticism which is leading the desire to raise standards further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good - teachers' subject knowledge and linguistic skills are very good.
- Very good use is made of up-to-date authentic materials, including material on the Internet.
- Teachers use French effectively as the normal means of classroom interaction.
- Relationships are very good.

Areas for improvement

- More use should be made of ICT to enhance learning in lessons.

314. The results at A-level in 2001 were very good. All students passed, nearly half with A grades. Numbers were too small, however, to draw any significant comparisons with national figures. The results in AS-level in 2001 were average with a spread of higher and lower grades.
315. Students in the current Year 13 are attaining standards above expectation overall. Teachers conduct lessons exclusively in French and make good use of recorded material using the language laboratory. Consequently standards of speaking and listening are above average. Pronunciation and intonation are generally very good. Students can brainstorm their ideas on topics successfully and most speak with confidence and express their opinions clearly on a wide range of topics including contentious current issues, such as racism and environmental problems. Students have good reading comprehension skills. They are able to understand the gist and extract details from a wide range of texts. Students produce a wide variety of written work ranging from topic-based vocabulary lists, notes and grammar exercises to extended essays, assignments and presentations on topics ranging from the nuclear family to film reviews. Higher attainers are very accurate and use a range of structures with appropriate general and specialist vocabulary and expressions. The highest attainers consistently use correct grammatical forms.

316. Evidence from standards observed in lessons and in students' files shows that all students achieve well and the highest attainers make very good progress. They quickly learn new vocabulary and structures. They make good use of reference works to check meanings or select vocabulary.
317. The teaching of French in the sixth form is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge and linguistic skills are very good. They prepare lessons well and lesson aims are clear and appropriate. Teachers provide students with good strategies to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Lessons are varied and activities, contemporary topics and interesting materials motivate students to achieve their best. Very good use is made of up-to-date authentic listening and reading resources some of which is taken from the Internet. Teachers also make good use of the overhead projector and the language laboratory although greater use could be made of computer technology in lessons. Lessons are brisk and challenging and have tight deadlines to ensure that students work quickly to produce high quality work. Teachers praise students for their efforts and correct mistakes constructively which helps students to make good progress.
318. Relationships are very good. Students are serious, attentive, enthusiastic and willing in lessons. They ask questions for clarification and seek help if they do not understand, which ensures that they make very good gains in their learning.
319. Leadership of the subject is good and teachers adopt a common approach to teaching. The head of department observes all members of the department teach as part of performance management. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Accommodation and resources are very good. The department also benefits from the services of a French 'assistante'. Both this and the work placements and exchanges which some students do in France help to develop students' oral fluency.