

INSPECTION REPORT

WILMINGTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Dartford

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118875

Headteacher: Mr Brian Titterington

Reporting inspector: Dr Paula Haes
16042

Dates of inspection: 10 – 13 December 2001

Inspection number: 243388

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Boys

School address: Common Lane
Wilmington
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: K Evans

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

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9958	Tim Page	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development. Attendance How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys is a maintained, selective, foundation school for boys aged 11-18 within the Kent Local Education Authority. There are 756 boys including 160 in the sixth form. In the last decade, the school has more than doubled in size but remains smaller than the average for secondary schools. The sixth form has increased in size by 50 per cent in the last four years and is average for other sixth forms. Admission at the age of 11 is according to the school's own admissions procedure. After a long period during which the school did not receive applications from many of the highest attaining pupils in the locality, the level of attainment on entry is rising until, in 2001, it was average for boys' grammar schools. Pupils come to the school from a wide geographical area and many use the special coaches which serve the three secondary schools in the area. The school shares a site with another secondary school and there is some limited sharing of facilities.

Four per cent of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language, higher than in most schools, but no pupil is at an early stage of acquiring English. Ninety-two per cent of pupils are white. Six per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is well below the national average. Only one pupil has a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals, 12, is well below the national average as a proportion of the school's roll.

Of the students leaving Year 11 in 2001, 97 per cent went on to study in college or school, two per cent went into employment and one per cent into training. Of the students leaving Year 13 in 2001, 60 per cent went on to higher education, 34 per cent entered employment and five per cent went on to further education, with one per cent unaccounted for.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys provides a satisfactory level of education. Standards of attainment in work in the main school are well above average and improving in English and mathematics at the age of 14. Standards of teaching and learning are good throughout the school with a high percentage of very good or outstanding teaching and learning at all levels. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with particularly clear educational direction evident in the development of the sixth form. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- There is a large proportion of very good and outstanding teaching across the school
- Students reach high levels of attainment
- Students' behaviour is very good and their attitudes to learning are good
- The school supports the personal development of students well
- The financial administration is very good

What could be improved

- Some aspects of teaching and learning are still in need of development
- There is insufficient use of computers to support students' learning
- Managers need to develop further their skills of planning longer term development and achieving their priorities
- The provision for spiritual education is still unsatisfactory and little is done to encourage the appreciation of other cultures

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in 1997, it has made satisfactory progress. There has been a steady increase the percentage of higher grades in the national tests at the end of Year 9, with a marked rise in English and mathematics in 2001. At GCSE, the average result for students has improved at a rate above the national trend, as has the proportion of the highest grades, A*/A. At A-level the results have improved, and in 2000 were above average for maintained schools, with a steady rise in the proportion of the highest grades, A/B. The unsatisfactory teaching identified at the last inspection has been virtually eliminated. Most is at least good and a significant minority is very good or outstanding. The management of students' behaviour in the classroom is now a strength of the teaching, as is the marking of work. Satisfactory progress has been made on all other issues identified in the report as needing attention.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A	A*	A*	E*	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	N/A		

Results in 2001 in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science were very high and in the top five per cent of all schools. Since the last inspection results in these tests have risen at a rate faster than the national trend. Pupils' results in English were in line with other grammar schools. In mathematics, they were well below and in science far below. However, the attainment of boys on entry has not, until 2001 been typical of grammar schools but much below the norm. Attainment in lessons seen in Year 9 during the inspection was well above average in English, mathematics and science.

Results at GCSE are very high compared with the national average for all types of state school, and have been improving in recent years at a rate faster than the national. The proportion of A*/A grades has increased. Compared with similar schools, however, the results in 2001 were far below average for grammar schools, for the reasons outlined above, but also because of disappointing achievement by around a dozen students. However, when

their results at the age of 14 are taken into account, students' progress was very good compared with similar schools. Boys' best results at GCSE are in history, business studies, general studies and English language. Compared with the performance of all boys nationally, students gain significantly better results in their English literature and French examinations than might be expected of boys. Their worst results are in art, chemistry and combined science.

National comparisons for the school's overall A-level results in 2001 were not available at the time of writing, but in recent years results have been in line with the national average and have improved since the last inspection. Results in design and technology, physics and biology are well above average and have improved. Results in sport are above average.

Standards of attainment in the classroom are rising across the school. Standards in the sixth form are above average in design and technology and in physics. Standards in literacy are generally satisfactory and in number skills they are good. The skills of information and communication technology across the subjects are underdeveloped.

Achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment is satisfactory on the whole, and, in the sixth form, achievement is very good in design and technology and computer studies, and good in English and French. There is no difference in the rate of longer-term progress made by students from different ethnic backgrounds or by those who have been identified as having special educational needs. The longer-term progress of the highest attaining pupils is limited by some restricted teaching methods and resources, and by the lack of sufficient opportunity for extended work.

The school sets realistic targets for the average points score at GCSE, and, in 2001, exceeded these. The proportion of students gaining five or more higher grades fell well short of the target for the reasons outlined above.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students demonstrate a strong interest in their work in class and persevere with set tasks. Their keenness is demonstrated by their involvement in a very wide range of activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students are very courteous and considerate. Behaviour in lessons is very good and there are no permanent exclusions
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students support each other well and generally show maturity in relationships. They are confident and ready to engage in discussions, both academic and social.
Attendance	Very good. The attendance rate is well above average and there are no unauthorised absences.

Students maintain interest in their lessons, even when the teaching lacks variety. They are always willing to answer questions in class.

Some students do not always complete their homework or present it as well as they could. Some students, particularly in the sixth form, do not always arrive to lessons or tutor periods on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching and learning in English are good overall, and in mathematics and science they are satisfactory. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are very good in design and technology and good in English, computer studies, physics, art and French.

The teaching of number skills is good, with opportunities for practice used well across the subjects. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory, but some teachers do not develop the computer skills of their students sufficiently, either in lessons or by encouraging the use of computers for homework.

Across the school, teachers' knowledge of their subjects is strong and they manage the boys well, so that learning is not hindered by bad behaviour. Many teachers convey their enthusiasm for their subject very well, and develop reasoning and understanding by skilful sessions of question and answer.

Some teachers do not plan their lessons in sufficient depth to ensure that they use a variety of activities and resources. As a result, students gain knowledge and skills at a relatively slow pace and are not fully involved in their learning. In the sixth form in some subjects, teachers do not make full use of longer-term assignments or encourage research to develop the independent study skills of students.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11, with a wide range of subjects on offer. The range of extra-curricular activities on offer is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The small number of students with special educational needs are well supported.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language are fluent in English and make satisfactory progress. The very small number who are not fluent receive individual attention and make good progress.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. The school provides well for pupils' moral and social development. The provision for spiritual development is still unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes satisfactory arrangements for ensuring the welfare of students.

Although the quality of assemblies have improved, too many opportunities for spiritual development are lost in subjects and in tutor time. There is little celebration of cultural diversity. The procedures for assessment are now satisfactory and senior staff make good use of the information but this is not the case in all subjects. Some teachers are not sufficiently aware of the individual needs and potential of the students. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good across the school. Teachers offer good personal support to students, but some teachers and tutors do not always support academic progress as well as they could.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. Senior staff have set a strong lead in steering the sixth form to success and providing a range of opportunities to suit students' needs.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors have worked hard to ensure that the school has grown, accommodation has improved, and standards have risen. There is no daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Within some departments, the monitoring of teaching and the action taken to remedy weaknesses lack rigour.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school's spending has been linked to its priorities, particularly in accommodation.

Some heads of department lack the skills of planning the longer-term development of their subjects. Accommodation is mostly adequate, still has some weaknesses especially in art. Resources are generally adequate but could be much richer in some subjects. Financial administration is very good and the school constantly seeks best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teaching is good and their children make good progress as a result The staff are approachable and deal swiftly with problems The school expects hard work so that students achieve as well as they should. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents would like more information about the progress of their children There is not always the right amount of homework.

Inspectors agree on the whole with the positive views of parents. Teaching is good overall and students make good progress in lessons. Staff are very kind and supportive. The

majority of staff demand hard work from students, so that most boys achieve their potential.

Inspectors found that there is sufficiently regular reporting to parents about students' progress. Some of the reports could give more detailed information. There is a sufficient quantity of homework. Some homework could be more demanding or extend over a longer period to develop students' research and independent learning skills.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is similar in size to those in other schools and has increased five-fold over the last decade. There are currently 160 male students, all of whom are studying for AS or A-levels. Few students leave the school at the end of Year 11. A few students join from other schools each year. The composition of the sixth form is therefore similar to the main school in terms of ethnic groupings and economic background. All students entering the sixth form need a minimum of five GCSEs at grades A*-C; attainment on entry is therefore average for sixth forms in schools offering only A and AS-level examinations.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The school provides a satisfactory education for its students. Standards of attainment are as expected nationally and the achievement of the majority of students is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good and students acquire knowledge, skills and understanding well in lessons. Results in the sixth form are in line with the national average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The school meets the wider needs of students very well through its extensive programme of enrichment. The leadership and management are satisfactory and the sixth form is now cost-effective.

Strengths

- There is some very good and some outstanding teaching
- Students show interest in their school life and have very positive attitudes to learning in the classroom.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Some teachers do not involve students actively in their learning or use opportunities well for extended projects and research work
- There is insufficient use of information and communication technology in students' work
- Academic progress is not followed up rigorously enough so that individual targets can be set.

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	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Physics	Good. Results and attainment are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good.
Design and technology	Good. A-level results are well above average and achievement is very good. Teaching and learning are very good and the subject is very well led.

Business studies	Satisfactory. Standards of attainment and achievement are in line with expectations. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Computer studies	Satisfactory. Standards of attainment are in line with expectations and progress, often from a very low base, is very good, especially in Year 12. Teaching and learning are good.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Standards of attainment are as expected and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. The subject is well led.
History	Satisfactory. Standards of attainment are in line with expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
English	Good. Results are average and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are consistently good and the department is managed very well.
French	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with expectations and improving. Teaching and learning are good and students' attitudes very good. The department is well led.

In other subjects, work was sampled. In economics, government and politics and German, teaching and learning were satisfactory, with particularly good use made of question and answer sessions to consolidate students' understanding and knowledge. In both the chemistry lessons observed, teaching and learning were very good, with teachers displaying a very good command of their subject. In music technology too, the teacher's expertise was put to good use and students learnt well. Teaching and learning were also good in biology, with another good session of questions, and in geography, where the lesson was well planned, with a variety of activities and clear explanations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students' personal development is supported by good moral and social education. The systems for assessing students' progress are satisfactory, although more use could be made of the information to set individual targets.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. Financial administration is very good and the sixth form has been built up successfully. The school ensures that students from all backgrounds have equal opportunities. The monitoring of teaching and its follow-up are not sufficiently systematic in all subjects.

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">• The good teaching and being challenged to do their best• They enjoy being in the sixth form• The information about courses is clear, accurate and helpful• The courses are suited to their talents and career aspirations• The encouragement to study and research topics independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about future careers• The amount of information about their progress• Personal support

Inspectors agree with most of the students' positive views, but feel that independent research could be promoted more widely. Whilst information on higher education courses is good, students' knowledge of employment opportunities could be refreshed in the sixth form. Inspectors judge that the information about progress is inconsistent. Personal support is in their opinion strong, when compared with what is offered nationally.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

There is a large proportion of very good and outstanding teaching across the school

1. The quality of teaching and of students' learning in lessons is good across the school and has vastly improved since the last inspection. Nearly all unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated and the amount of very good or outstanding teaching has almost doubled. The quality of teaching was very good or outstanding in a significant minority of lessons seen, at least good in most lessons and at least satisfactory in all lessons bar one at Key Stage 3. The quality of learning matches closely the quality of teaching.
2. Teachers' mastery of their subjects is a special strength and the majority of teachers are able to convey knowledge, skills and understanding very clearly, so that students' learning is rapid and purposeful. As subject specialists of high quality many teachers convey an enthusiasm for what they are teaching, which is infectious. In a Year 10 English lesson for example, the teacher had very good knowledge, not only of the text of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', but also of the way in which camera techniques and music may be used to bring out and reinforce textual meaning. In religious education in Year 9, the teacher displayed a sensitive and extensive knowledge of world religions, which had clearly enriched students' understanding, as was evident in their well-informed replies to the teacher's questions.
3. Many teachers make high demands upon their classes so that the majority of students achieve to their full potential. In a Year 8 German lesson, the teacher used German for most of the time and the pace of the lesson was very brisk, with some innovative techniques to increase motivation. As a result, students' listening skills were very well developed and they acquired knowledge fast. At the same time, there were high expectations of accuracy, so that work was not only rapid but careful.
4. Question and answer sessions probe understanding and encourage boys to explore key concepts in greater depth and develop their reasoning skills. In a Year 12 history lesson, for example, the teacher posed stimulating and demanding questions to promote a very good class discussion, which not only deepened students' understanding of the relationship between the Nazi party and the Roman Catholic Church, but also included relevant comparisons with other historical periods.
5. The management of behaviour in the classroom is very good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. The school has undertaken an extensive programme of training in discipline within the classroom, led by senior staff. Relationships are relaxed but productive and any potential behaviour problem is quickly nipped in the bud.

Students' behaviour is very good and their attitudes to learning are good

6. Students' behaviour and attitudes in the classroom are never less than satisfactory. In the overwhelming majority of lessons seen they were at least good. In one in ten lessons, behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. Most students enter the school with well-established positive behaviour and attitudes, but these are developed further by the skilful way in which the lessons are managed by teachers and by a strong programme of education in social and moral values.
7. In the classroom, students are attentive and thoughtful in their approach to lessons.

They work very hard and concentrate very well. Their listening skills are very well developed: this enables them to make progress in their lessons by actively taking meaningful notes. When lessons are conducted by the teacher at a brisk pace, boys respond with a very rapid rate of learning. In the sixth form, students particularly enjoy in-depth sessions of question and answer. They reflect well on issues and express their views with confidence. Students are very ready to discuss their views in the programme of personal education and they clearly benefit from this. They take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer and thoroughly appreciate and enjoy them. In the process students develop further their involvement with others, their self-confidence and social skills.

8. Behaviour around the school is consistent and courteous. The boys conduct themselves with great self-control and maturity, and deserve the trust the school shows them. They are polite and helpful both to each other and to visitors. There is a remarkable absence of any oppressive behaviour. Boys are fully aware of the impact of their behaviour on others and strive to be supportive, whether it be in an informal context or in the more formal systems set up by the school: the 'befriender' system, for example.
9. Attendance is well above average. There is no unauthorised absence and there have been no permanent exclusions in the last year.

Students reach high levels of attainment

10. Standards of attainment are often very high. The results in the three core subjects in national tests at the age of 14 were very high in 2001 and in the top five per cent of results nationally. Although the attainment of pupils on entry has, until this year, been below the norm for grammar schools, nevertheless in the English tests in 2001, the results were average for grammar schools. In an English lesson in Year 9, boys demonstrated standards of attainment which were well above average: they had a very good grasp of Dickens' use of language, imagery and phrasing to create atmosphere. In a mathematics lesson in Year 7, students' mastery of two-dimensional drawings of three-dimensional shapes was well above average. In science in Year 7, students showed a very good understanding of such biological concepts as 'habitat', 'the food chain' and 'adaptations'.
11. Results at GCSE are very high compared with the national average. In a Year 10 English lesson, all students were reaching the highest levels of attainment. They were creative in their thinking with a well-developed ability to read texts for meaning, and to analyse and evaluate the ideas in 'Macbeth'.
12. In A-level design and technology, physics and biology, results are well above average. In a Year 12 physics lesson, students showed a good grasp of the scientific principles underlying the optical reading of a CD. In a Year 13 lesson in design and technology, students displayed a very good knowledge of a range of mechanisms and electronic circuitry. Their skills of working in wood and metal were well above average.

The school supports the personal development of students well

13. Staff are very approachable, so that students feel there are a number of adults to whom they can take any problems. The pastoral system is strong in alleviating personal problems and students particularly appreciate the work of the heads of year. Teachers visit the many feeder schools, so that contact begins with individual students before they enter the school. The student planners are used by many teachers as an important tool for communicating with parents in order to help address any difficulties students may have. Parents are extremely appreciative of the high level of support offered to students by the school.
14. Further support for personal development is given through the strong programme of personal and social education, (PSHE), which is well planned and delivered. In the sixth form, a PSHE lesson explored very well the conflict between culture and morality. Another promoted the skills of action planning and setting precise personal targets, based on a review of one's own individual academic progress. General studies lessons across the school help pupils to distinguish between right and wrong and enhance their awareness of civic society. Students are offered many opportunities for taking responsibility around the school and, in these roles, they are encouraged to develop their social skills and a sense of moral responsibility. The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, including sport, music, debating and a wide range of visits, helps to promote personal development and the strong streak of self-confidence evident in the majority of students.

The financial administration is very good

15. Financial management and administration are very good. Pupils, parents, and staff are regularly consulted about improvements and governors consider their views when establishing spending priorities. Three quotations are sought for anything other than minor expenditure and economy is always weighed against service and quality. Governors take external advice on the allocation of costs for facilities shared with other schools, such as grounds maintenance and utilities, and these are reviewed regularly. A recent examination of the school's accounts by the local education authority found them to be ' of a high standard'.
16. The sixth form is funded by a fair budget allocation and is not being subsidised by the main school. It is viable overall. There are some subjects where the take up is small, for example German and art, but the school does not wish to undermine the wider appeal of the sixth form. Nevertheless, the school keeps all courses under review and is challenging itself to improve cost effectiveness further by developing more courses jointly with other schools and colleges.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Some aspects of teaching are still in need of development

17. Whilst a large proportion of the teaching is very good or outstanding, and the quality of teaching has improved dramatically since the last inspection, there are still some areas which require development.

18. Some teachers do not make sufficient demands upon students and do not exploit every boy's potential. Teachers' attitudes to punctuality to lessons and the completion of homework can be too relaxed. In some lessons, there is little variety of activities or resources, so that students are not fully involved in their learning and are too passive. Some teachers do not use the opportunities for the consolidation of learning and the development of social skills provided by working in groups or pairs. The exercises set are sometimes limited and mundane, offering too little scope for students' own creativity in such active skills as extended writing or research. Some teachers do not make extensive use of modern technology, such as overhead projectors, let alone computers, in the preparation and presentation of their material. Although the school has bought many new textbooks, in some departments other resources are limited. These aspects are particularly under-developed in mathematics, business studies and history in the sixth form where teaching is only satisfactory.
19. Many examples of stimulating and effective teaching exist in the school, but this good practice is not yet fully shared.

There is insufficient use of computers to support students' learning

20. The resources of information and communication technology (ICT) are not yet fully used across the subjects. Since the last inspection, there has been extensive training for teachers in ICT and a substantial amount of equipment has been purchased. There is now more, but still insufficient, use of these resources. The students' skills in ICT are promoted in the main school by separate lessons in the subject and by a short course at GCSE. However, across the curriculum, too little use is made of ICT for research and for the presentation of work, the word processing of homework and projects, for example, or the use of spreadsheets for the creation of bar charts and graphs. This is particularly unfortunate in the sixth form, where the scope for the use of ICT is so broad.

Managers need to develop further their skills of planning longer-term development and achieving their priorities

21. Since the last inspection, heads of department have been given training in management skills. These skills have improved in the last four years, as is indicated by the improvement in the quality of teaching within departments and the rise in attainment. New heads of department continue to receive training but several existing middle managers are in need of refreshment.
22. Both at senior and middle management level, there is still some way to go in developing the skills of longer term planning. The management of the school has been forced to concentrate in the last decade on priorities of accommodation, recruitment and funding. There is now the opportunity to focus planning more directly on the further raising of achievement and on striving for excellence in teaching across the subjects. The system of monitoring the quality of teaching and the action taken to remedy weaknesses is not always rigorous. Not all teachers are using the vast amount of information provided by the school to set productive targets for individual pupils. There is a need within the school to ensure that all policies are implemented consistently by all staff and that all staff are held to account for the successful achievement of the school's educational priorities.

The provision for spiritual education is still unsatisfactory and little is done to encourage the appreciation of other cultures

23. The provision for spiritual education has improved since the last inspection. Although the school still does not provide a daily act of worship for all students, more assemblies are held and some of these have an element of spirituality. The spiritual content of educational provision has been increased by the development of a short course in religious education for all students at GCSE, and by elements within the general studies programme. However, within other subjects, many opportunities are lost for students to reflect on the important issues of life and to be aware of themselves as human beings. Despite the rich ethnic diversity present in the school, across the subjects there is little celebration of other cultures.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

24. To raise further students' standards of attainment and the quality of education provided, the governors, headteacher and senior management should:
- (1) ensure that all teachers possess a wide range of effective teaching strategies to match the needs of all students and can draw on a rich stock of resources;
(Paragraphs 17-19, 46-47)
 - (2) continue to provide computer hardware and software and increase teachers' knowledge and use of applications in the different subjects, both in lessons and for homework;
(Paragraphs 20, 52)
 - (3) promote further management skills at all levels, including the monitoring of teaching and development planning, to ensure that policies are implemented consistently and all staff are held accountable for students' attainment and progress;
(Paragraphs 21-22, 31, 77-79)
 - (4) improve the provision for spiritual education and the appreciation of cultural diversity by exploiting all the available opportunities, both in lessons and outside.
(Paragraphs 23, 63)

Sixth form

- (5) ensure that all teachers possess the techniques which will lead to more active learning by students, both in lessons and in independent study and research;
(Paragraph 46, 47)
- (6) encourage more extensive use of information and communication technology within the classroom and in students' homework;
(Paragraph 52)
- (7) improve within departments the use of the information provided by assessment, in order to gear teaching more closely to the needs of students and to set individual targets for progress.
(Paragraph 67)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	23
	Sixth form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	2	5	9	6	1	0	0
Percentage	9	22	39	26	4	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	12	21	12	0	0	0
Percentage	6	25	44	25	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7-11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than 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	596	160
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12	0

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	38	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	118	0	118

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	117	117	116
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	117	117	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (98)	99 (98)	98 (96)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	93 (69)	97 (95)	82 (73)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	118	118	116
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	118	118	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (99)	100 (100)	98 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	92 (85)	99 (97)	62 (82)
	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	116	0	116

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	103	115	115
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	103	115	115
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	88.8 (92.3)	99.1 (99.1)	99.1 (99.1)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	59.9
	National	39

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	0	68

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
National	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	2
Indian	34
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	9
White	689
Any other minority ethnic group	13

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	
Black – African heritage	1	
Black – other	0	
Indian	1	
Pakistani	0	
Bangladeshi	0	
Chinese	0	
White	14	
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)	42.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	263

Deployment of teachers Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y13

Key Stage 3	27.1
Key Stage 4	21.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2418895
Total expenditure	2409606
Expenditure per pupil	3226
Balance brought forward from previous year	87988
Balance carried forward to next year	97277

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	29.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	757
Number of questionnaires returned	378

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	52	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	49	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	59	5	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	55	13	3	2
The teaching is good.	36	57	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	55	15	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	42	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	56	9	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	46	47	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	48	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	52	5	2	6

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

25. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are in line with those expected nationally. Given their levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form, students are achieving to a satisfactory level in the majority of subjects, and standards are rising. Few students fail to complete their courses of study. The school sets itself ambitious targets in the sixth form, based on students' prior levels of attainment, with a healthy dimension of ambition. In the year 2001, the school failed to reach the target for the average points score at A-level.
26. Examination results at A-level in 2000, the most recent year for which overall national comparisons are available, were slightly above average for all maintained schools and in line with those for all schools and colleges, including independent schools. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations maintained these levels overall, with an increase in the higher grade A and B from 22 to 27 per cent. In the new AS-level examinations in 2001, 85 per cent of students gained grades A to E overall but the numbers entering for each subject are too small to make national comparisons. Overall, results have improved since the last inspection. The 2001 A-level results showed that students achieved appropriately given their GCSE results.
27. Results in the 2000 A-level examinations were well above average in sport, a substantial improvement, and above average in business studies, English and general studies. Results were well below the national average in art, biology, French, geography, history and government and politics. In the year 2001, results improved in the majority of subjects, with the most dramatic rises in design and technology, in which the results for the 13 candidates were well above average. Results in physics and biology were also well above average and an improvement on previous years. There were small declines in business studies, general studies, graphic applications and mathematics. Students generally obtain better results in government and politics, art and design and technology than in the other subjects that they study, but there are no subjects in which they do significantly worse.
28. The standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with those expected nationally. Standards of attainment are above average in design and technology and physics and average in all other subjects. In design and technology in Year 12, students have benefited from a visit to the Tate Modern Gallery and created good electronic devices to guide visitors around the gallery. In physics in Year 12, students have a good understanding of wave theory and their attainment is boosted by frequent opportunities for expressing principles in their own words.
29. Oral communication skills are satisfactory. Students are articulate and confident when speaking. In English, students in Year 13 make impressive presentations to the whole class, using the overhead projector efficiently. Students in other subjects engage in discussion and, when given the opportunity, collaborate very well in small group work – as seen in English and French. Written work is usually satisfactory. Students vary their style according to the tasks. In Year 12, students in physics wrote a report for a newspaper, from a non-scientific point of view, on how a CD works. This extended their thinking as they reflected on their choice of language. Students write well about the work of craftsmen and designers, as part of their design and technology work. The standards of accuracy in written work are good. Students express ideas clearly, though

sometimes spelling is inconsistent and the vocabulary chosen is too colloquial for the purpose.

30. Numeracy skills are good. Students are given frequent opportunities to develop these further in mathematics and science, for example. In physics, students are confident in transposing formulae using standard form with negative indices, and in information and communication technology data bases are well used. In business studies, students create graphs and bar charts with confidence to support their written work.
31. Information and communication technology is under-employed to support teaching and learning. It is rarely used in the majority of subjects in the sixth form, though it is a feature of design and technology work. Appropriate technology, such as synthesisers, is used in music, and digital cameras are employed in art, so that computer skills in these areas are much better developed.
32. Independent learning and research skills are developed to a high standard in English and French, but in many subjects there are too few opportunities for students to show initiative and to take a greater responsibility for their own learning. Students are often too reliant on the teacher and this particularly holds back the potential of the higher-attainers.
33. Given their prior attainment, students achieve as well as can be expected overall. Achievement is very good in design and technology and in computer studies, and good in English and French, when one takes into account the standards attained before entry to the sixth form. Achievement in computer studies is enhanced by the teacher's very clear explanations of processes, applications and technical terms.
34. Students identified as having special educational needs and those having English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, particularly when they receive one-to-one support.
35. The more able students generally make satisfactory progress within lessons. However, the absence of sufficient opportunity in several subjects to pursue independent research or complete longer term assignments slows the progress of this group of students. Their progress is impeded also by restricted access to information and communication technology within school, and lack of encouragement to use computers for their study and presentation of their work outside school.
36. The range of courses on offer and the good teaching mean that students are generally well placed to fulfil their aspirations. However, they would benefit from a careers programme of the same high quality as that offered in the main school.
37. Standards of attainment have risen since the last report with better results at A and AS-level and an increase in the proportion of higher grades in the majority of subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

38. Attitudes are good, overall. Students are confident and articulate by the time that they enter the sixth form; most have high aspirations and are focused on achieving their goals. They are keen to be involved in the life of the school; many provide very good support for Year 7 and Year 8 students through the 'befriender' scheme, and assist in lunchtime organisation. Others take an active role in managing their own sixth form centre through the sixth form council. Whilst students take part in extra-curricular activities, many comment that their time is limited because studies take priority.

Although attendance is very good, there is a significant minority of students who are late for lessons.

39. Behaviour is generally very good in lessons and around the school. Students apply themselves well in study periods and work sensibly when unsupervised.
40. Students form constructive relationships amongst themselves and with most adults. They respond positively to the strong programme of moral and social education they are offered. In lessons, however, there are many missed opportunities for teamwork and pair work, in which students can learn to support each other, co-operate, share and take the lead, skills which will help them in their working life later on.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

41. The quality of teaching in lessons is good overall. The progress made by students in lesson is generally good. In all lessons observed, teaching and learning were at least satisfactory, in most at least good and in a significant minority either very good or outstanding. The quality of teaching in the sixth form has improved considerably since the last inspection. All unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated and the amount of good, very good and outstanding teaching has nearly doubled.
42. Teaching and learning are very good in design and technology, good in English, computer studies, physics, art and French, and satisfactory in mathematics, business studies and history.
43. The great strength of the teaching is the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects. For example, in English in Year 13, teachers displayed excellent knowledge of the style and meaning of metaphysical poetry, which they imparted to their students.
44. Teachers are very skilled at conducting sessions of searching questions and answers, to ensure that students have acquired knowledge and understanding well. This was evident in business studies on the topics of the market cycle and the financing of the health service. Teachers continued to probe the understanding of students to ensure that their grasp of concepts was logical and secure. Understanding is tested in design and technology, when students give presentations to their peers and have to reflect on, and respond to, questions from other students. In French, teachers use their good knowledge of the language to pose questions which extend students' language and thinking skills.
45. In several subjects, teachers structure lessons to provide opportunities for group and pair work, in English for example. The opportunities offered by pair and group work for consolidating material and developing the skills of team work are not, however, always fully exploited. Students in all lessons learn well during the many opportunities for class discussion. In history, for example, students followed up their research into relationships between the Nazis and the Roman Catholic Church by a wide-ranging class discussion, in which arguments were put forward based on carefully selected evidence.
46. In some lessons, teachers do not plan in enough detail to ensure a variety of activities. In such cases the lesson is dominated by lecturing from the teacher so that students take excessive amounts of notes without being fully engaged with the material. In some mathematics lessons, teachers do not always involve students actively enough or build on their initiative. In business studies, although students make their own notes, they are not guided by the teacher to do so in a structured, and efficient way. In history, the

copying of notes from overhead transparencies does not stretch the students.

47. The resources used to present and practise material are not, in all lessons, sufficiently varied to maintain high levels of motivation in students. Nor do the ways of presenting material always make the most effective use of students' time. In many subjects, there are too few opportunities for research and independent learning. The completion of homework is not always followed up effectively; in mathematics, in Year 12, for example, the homework of the middle and lower-attainers is not always completed and there is little evidence of independent learning. Even in business studies, there is insufficient use of real work settings, either outside school or simulated within school.
48. The teaching of pupils identified as having special educational needs is sensitive and effective, particularly when there is individual support. Regular contact is made between teachers and the parents of these students. There are no students in the sixth form who require the very good additional support offered to younger pupils acquiring English as an additional language. Teachers ensure that students from different ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into lessons.
49. The areas for improvement in the teaching outlined above slow the longer term progress of students of all levels of ability. However, by their nature, they particularly affect the learning of the higher-attainers, who could acquire knowledge and skills in much greater depth if their full potential was exploited.
50. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. Most subjects teach oral communication skills well through the many opportunities for class discussion and debate. The use of technical terms is promoted well in these discussions, but sometimes there is insufficient emphasis on the appropriate use of standard English, in business studies, for example. In music technology, key words are displayed to help students use technical language successfully. The music teacher demands high standards of accuracy in written work, as do teachers in computer studies; writing is scrutinised for errors in English. Generally the skills of note making are taught well, supported by students' good listening skills.
51. The teaching of number skills is generally good. Opportunities to use number are built into the syllabus for business studies, for example, with extensive practice in the creation of bar charts and graphs.
52. Teachers generally use information and communication technology too little in their lessons. Too little learning in the different subjects is executed on computers and not all teachers encourage the use of computers for the completion of homework and the presentation of written work, even graphs and charts. Until recently, students' access to computers was limited, but not all teachers use fully the opportunities now available.

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

53. The breadth and balance of the sixth form curriculum are satisfactory. A high proportion of students from each Year 11 remain at school, to pursue their studies to AS and A-level. Students are required to obtain at least 5 A*-C grades for entry to the sixth form and the courses are appropriate for the majority of students.
54. The students are offered considerable choice in their selection of A-level subjects. Time is devoted in Year 11 to ensuring that each student has access to effective advice about careers and the range of subjects relevant to their interests. The school, works very closely with neighbouring schools and colleges, so that students wishing to pursue subjects which the school does not provide, can be made aware of the alternatives available in the area. The school does not as yet offer vocational courses, but has plans to provide these through joint arrangements with neighbouring sixth forms.
55. The school has broadened its range of A-level subjects by including business studies, and also general studies. The latter was introduced because of the interest shown by students, and it is now a main subject for students in the sixth form. It is effectively organised and includes the components of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The school therefore meets statutory requirements for the provision of religious education. General studies lessons provide an open forum in which students can take part in a mature debate about a number of topical issues. Students can also take part in physical education lessons, and repeat their GCSE examinations in the core subjects of English language and mathematics in order to improve their grades.
56. The sixth form curriculum is enhanced by the personal, social and health education programme, (PSHE). This is closely linked to general studies and religious education, and covers an extensive range of topics relevant to the lives of the students. These include personal health, drugs abuse, and driver safety, and the curriculum is often enriched by visiting speakers, and by students becoming involved in the wider community. For example, studies on health and poverty have led not only to students raising money for related charities but, through 'World Challenge', have also introduced students to a front line role in an overseas aid project in Belize, with another planned in Kenya next year.
57. A significant minority of students expressed concerns about careers education and guidance. By the time students enter the sixth form they have received good quality, comprehensive careers advice, undertaken work experience, and been given the opportunity for careers service interviews. However, in the sixth form and especially in Year 13, careers advice is heavily weighted towards university admission. Some students feel that they are not made sufficiently aware of career options after A-levels, or after the completion of degree courses. Work experience is not currently undertaken in all subject areas.
58. The school's curriculum makes very good provision for enrichment activities. There is a very extensive range of activities in physical education, and this includes competitive fixtures with other schools. Further enrichment occurs through drama productions, debating competitions, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Young Enterprise, and a wide range of visits linked to A-level subjects. There are also a number of visiting speakers both within subjects and also on topics of more general interest, such as those linked to health issues, and to the general studies course. There are also very good links with the local community. These enhance the opportunities available when

students in Year 12 take part in two weeks of work experience.

59. Experience of AS-level courses and the examinations in 2000/1 has increased the care which the school gives at the beginning of Year 12 to matching individual timetable commitments to students' attainment. This includes making provision for students who are gifted and talented, and also those with special educational needs. If necessary, the school provides additional learning support so that those with special educational needs are able to access their preferred choices. For instance, a student with language difficulties is given support in chemistry lessons.
60. The lack of separate lessons in key skills means that the provision is patchy. It is the students following mathematics and science courses who are more likely to improve their skills in numeracy, for example. However, several other subjects do offer opportunities for developing number skills so that the provision is good, on the whole. Provision for literacy is satisfactory. In physics, for instance, students were required to write an article explaining the principles behind a CD to a non-scientist. In general studies, teachers provide opportunities for students to develop their oral and written literacy. However, in some subjects, technical terms are not reinforced systematically, so that, for example in physics, in a lesson on theories of light, key words like 'antimony' and 'photomultiplier' caused difficulty for some students. In business studies, some of the technical terms are not as well understood by some groups of students as by others. There is only slow progress in the integration of the skills of information and communication technology into the different A and AS level courses.
61. The opportunities in the sixth form for social and moral development are good. Within some subjects, the use of paired and group work helps students to learn from one another, and to develop their social skills. The general studies curriculum is particularly valuable in this respect, with discussions about topics such as the law, the impact of drugs on society, and the conflict between science and religion. In design and technology, there are group evaluations and a team approach to problem solving. Students also learn how to undertake assessment of their own progress through the general studies course, and how to develop personal targets for improving standards.
62. The overall provision for the development of cultural and multicultural appreciation is satisfactory, though there is no whole-school approach to this important aspect of the curriculum. Students' experiences depend largely, therefore, on their choice of subjects. Cultural awareness is developed through a number of courses such as those in art, where it is enhanced by visits such as those to the Tate Modern and other galleries. There is also consideration of the contribution made by artists such as Picasso. In the graphics course, students consider the impact of twentieth century design on our lives, including the design of the modern home. There is insufficient preparation, however, for students to live in a multicultural society, with few examples of other cultures evident around the school, or included in the range of subjects.
63. There are insufficient opportunities for students' spiritual development, and provision is therefore unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. There are occasions in lessons when there is time to reflect. For instance, in a physics lesson, Year 12 students pondered how light and other electromagnetic radiation travel through space. Students in design and technology wonder at the molecular nature of the surface of metals. There is also improved provision for religious education within general studies. Overall, however, there is still insufficient opportunity provided for all students for reflection. There is not a daily act of collective worship for all students, and the time which could be used for reflection about world events, for instance, available most days with the tutor, is often wasted.

64. Overall, since the last inspection, the school has made only satisfactory progress in the development of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

65. At the time of the last inspection, the school had a comprehensive assessment policy related to A-level requirements and this has since been developed appropriately. Marking is now much better than at the last inspection. It is generally thorough and includes suggestions for ways of improving standards.
66. At senior management level, the assessment of students' academic performance is strong, and is used well to plan the curriculum. The performance of the different subjects at A-level is recorded and compared. Subjects that are under-performing are investigated and strategies devised for improvement. Senior managers are also very good at providing support for individual students who are assessed as under-performing, and at setting them individual targets.
67. However, at departmental level, practice is inconsistent. The arrangements for assessing progress are clear and manageable and some departments use the information thus gained well. In design and technology, work is marked against clear criteria which are shared between teachers and with students. The results are displayed in student files. However, other departments do not use the wealth of information which comes from senior level, or from their own marking, to analyse weaknesses in the work of individual students and to plan their lessons so that problems are remedied and individual targets are set.
68. Parents and students are kept informed of assessments through annual written reports and a parents' evening, as well as through termly interim reports. The latter identify any discrepancies between the predicted grades based on students' potential and their current performance. The full reports generally provide clear information about students' attainment on the courses. However, some subject comments are merely descriptive and do not evaluate progress. Suggestions for targets are, in some subjects, too general and do not relate to individual areas for improvement.

Support and guidance

69. The school's procedures for ensuring students' welfare and safety are satisfactory. Departmental risk assessments are conducted regularly and these are effective in highlighting safety concerns, although the annual check of electrical and other equipment is behind schedule. Many very relevant welfare issues are addressed in the school's personal, social, and health education, (PSHE), programme. These include driver safety, drugs, cancer, mental health, unprotected sex, and HIV/Aids. The school has a clear policy concerning oppressive behaviour, and incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively.
70. Induction to the sixth form is well organised and forms part of an ongoing process which begins in Year 9. Students are well aware of sixth form entry requirements and parents are invited to be involved in their sons' choices of A-level courses by attending an open meeting in Year 11. Teachers are available to give further advice on the day of the GCSE results, and another day is reserved at the start of the first sixth form term to resolve problems, reconsider options, and guide students towards courses that best

match their skills.

71. Educational support is satisfactory. Students' work is regularly assessed and constructively marked. Some individual mentoring sessions focus on overcoming weaknesses and establishing targets. However, feedback is not always clear and the school acknowledges that this is an area that requires improvement. Attainment is also supported by good attendance, which the school promotes and monitors well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

72. Parents' views of the school are very positive. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that their sons are expected to work hard and achieve their best. Parents would feel very comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. The biggest areas of concern highlighted by a small minority of parents included the amount of homework, and information about progress. Inspectors agree with the positive comments. They believe that homework is generally sufficient, although there could be more extended writing and project work to promote achievement. The information provided to parents is inconsistent and some of the reports do not contain enough helpful information.
73. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting were particularly pleased with the progress made by all students, their attitudes and values, and the welcome that the school extends to them. The timing of students' annual reports was questioned, as concerns could not be followed up immediately, due to the summer holidays.
74. The views of sixth form students are also positive. The school selected a sample of students for interview, and others held informal conversations with inspectors and were observed in lessons. In addition, all sixth formers were given the opportunity to respond to a students' questionnaire. Almost all students agreed that they were well taught and challenged, that they enjoyed being in the sixth form, and that they received helpful advice which had guided them towards appropriate A-level courses. Students were chiefly concerned at a perceived lack of advice about careers after school or university. They also found the interim report confusing and generally felt they could be informed more fully about their progress. They would welcome more support with personal problems when necessary. Inspectors agree with the positive views of students. They agree that students' knowledge of employment opportunities could be emphasised more in the sixth form. Inspectors judged that the information on progress could be clearer and more specific to the individual. The personal support offered to students, especially by senior staff, was deemed to be strong, although the causes of lateness to school and lessons were not always investigated. However, in some departments, monitoring and the action taken to remedy weaknesses could be more formal and consistent.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

75. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory, with some good aspects. Over the last decade, the school has had a clear vision of how the sixth form should develop and has taken action to achieve its goals. The range of courses on offer has been developed well both through inside resources and by good consortium arrangements with other local institutions. The school has proved to be responsive to the aspirations of students and parents alike. The need to provide equal opportunities for students from all backgrounds has been recognised. Over the years, senior managers and the governing body have not lost sight of the fact that the success of the sixth form is heavily dependent on raising the quality of education provided in the main school and they have succeeded in this. Standards of attainment have improved steadily in the sixth form, both in the classroom and in external examinations.
76. The school's well-defined aims and values are strongly reflected in the work of the sixth form, especially the school motto of 'Not only for ourselves but for the community'. Opportunities for responsibility promote the self-confidence of students. A strong programme of personal and social education and extra-curricular activities ensures that students develop into mature and well-rounded individuals.
77. The system for monitoring and evaluating teaching is established in the sixth form. Every teacher is observed teaching at least twice a year and the success of the monitoring and the subsequent professional support and development can be measured by the substantial improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Much attention has been focused on ensuring that teachers keep up-to-date with the many syllabus changes, in the sixth form. Professional development could now focus usefully on developing a wider range of teaching strategies, in order to raise students' attainment further, and involve them more actively in their own learning.
78. The performance of students is monitored effectively by senior management, though less so by some departments. Senior managers analyse the results within departments very carefully to ascertain whether students are performing as well as they should, based on their attainment on entry to the sixth form. They then offer mentoring to support academic progress. Overall, students perform as well as might be expected in external examinations, but some subjects are still not making full use of all the information available to them on the potential of the individual students within their groups. The subject leaders do not always ensure that the teachers in their departments employ ways of working or set homework which will fully stretch all the students, particularly the more able. Not all subjects are consistent in demanding the completion of tasks or good presentation of work, aided by computers. Within the tutor groups, the academic progress of individuals could sometimes be followed up more rigorously, particularly with those students whose progress is slowed down by lack of punctuality to lessons. The development of middle management skills, particularly how managers can ensure that all teachers and tutors feel accountable for the attainment and progress of students, would help to relieve this problem, and avoid the underachievement of some groups of students.
79. The planning for the longer-term development of the sixth form is satisfactory, particularly in the area of curriculum. However, with many problems behind them, the school could now focus its planning more clearly on the priorities of raising attainment. There is insufficient focus in the school development plan on the monitoring of teaching,

the improvement of teaching strategies, the use of assessment data, or the setting of individual student targets. As these priorities are not obvious in the school development plan, they are less likely to be reflected in the departmental plans. The quality of leadership and management in some subjects is, however, very good in English, and in design and technology, for example. In the planning for the development of English, the focus is very clearly on raising attainment and the quality of teaching.

80. Financial management and administration are very good. Pupils, parents, and staff are regularly consulted about improvements and governors consider their views when establishing spending priorities. Three quotations are sought for anything other than minor expenditure and economy is always weighted against service and quality. Governors take external advice on the allocation of costs for facilities shared with other schools, such as grounds maintenance and utilities, and these are reviewed regularly. A recent examination of the school's accounts by the local education authority found them to be 'of high standard'.
81. The sixth form is funded by a fair budget allocation and is not being subsidised by the main school. It is viable overall. There are some subjects where the take-up is small, for example German and art, but the school does not wish to undermine the wider appeal of the sixth form. Nevertheless, the school keeps all courses under review and is challenging itself to improve cost effectiveness further by developing more courses jointly with other schools and colleges.

Resources

82. Staffing, accommodation and resources in the sixth form are generally adequate and used satisfactorily. The school has had some difficulty in recruiting new staff to replace those who move on, largely for promotion, but the situation will be fully rectified by January 2002. There is still a number of part-time staff, and the difficulties of management and organisation this poses for certain departments have yet to be fully resolved by the heads of department concerned. The accommodation is adequate. The school has used a large proportion of its income in the last decade on improving accommodation, but much of it is still only temporary, though serviceable. Accommodation problems for art and design have still to be solved. Sixth form students have a quiet working room as well as the common room area, which is very well used. The library has a good variety of books, magazines and newspapers including many useful to the sixth form. They are kept up-to-date by suggestions from staff, students and the librarian. However, in French, there is little provision for independent reading. The library is open five days per week and sixth form students have access at any time.
83. Material resources are generally adequate, although in some subjects, they lack variety and richness. The school uses the available resources satisfactorily on the whole. The provision of computers is much improved since the last inspection. However, they are not always used as fully as possible in every subject.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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
Mathematics	2	0	62	0	15	0	1.51
Physics	4	25	52	0	4	0.25	0.90
Design and technology	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	1	n/a
Business studies	2	100	76	0	12	3	1.69
Computing	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	2	n/a
Geography	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	1	n/a
Government and politics	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	2	n/a
Music	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	3	n/a

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	11	73	87	27	43	4.55	5.80
Chemistry	3	33	90	33	43	3.33	5.90
Biology	5	100	88	20	34	5.60	5.25
Physics	7	100	88	43	40	6.86	5.67
Design and technology	13	100	91	62	30	7.69	5.38
Graphical applications	14	93	88	7	22	3.29	4.74
Business studies	21	95	92	19	32	5.52	5.50
Economics	4	100	89	50	36	6.50	5.52
Computer studies	3	100	86	25	23	6.00	4.62
Physical education	8	88	92	50	25	5.50	5.09
Art and design	6	83	96	17	46	5.33	6.57
Geography	8	100	92	25	38	5.25	5.75
History	21	81	88	19	35	4.48	5.45
Government and politics	17	88	87	18	34	3.88	5.30
English literature	21	100	95	19	37	5.33	5.91
French	4	75	89	25	38	2	5.59

German	4	100	92	0	40	4	5.81
General studies	67	94	85	7	30	4.39	4.91

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The good knowledge and understanding of the teachers leads to clear exposition and explanation of concepts.
- Good attitudes of students.
- Schemes of work are detailed and reviewed regularly.

Areas for improvement

- The 2001 AS level results were disappointing: no students gained grades A or B.
- Teachers do not always provide a range of activities and this leads to students becoming less involved in lessons.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology.
- The monitoring and evaluation of students' progress are not well enough based on what is known about their potential.

86. In the 2001 examination, results were below average in A-level mathematics. Results tend to fluctuate and in 2001 were lower than in 2000, but the overall trend is broadly in line with the national trend. There has been an improvement in results since the last inspection, when the results at A-level were well below average. The 2001 AS-level results were disappointing with no students obtaining A or B grades. The students' performance in mathematics is in line with their other subjects.

87. On the evidence of the work seen during the inspection the standards that students attain by the end of Year 13 are broadly in line with expectations and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Standards are currently better than the most recent examination results because the small number of students are more able. Attainment in pure mathematics and mechanics is higher than in statistics. In pure mathematics, students can decompose an algebraic fraction by splitting it into partial fractions. In statistics, although students have a sound understanding of both binomial and Poisson distributions, they have greater difficulty in applying the Poisson distribution. This improves after practice.

88. Standards at the end of Year 12 are broadly in line with expectations and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. The majority of students have a good understanding of Newton's second law and can apply it to solving problems. In statistics, although students can calculate mode and median, their understanding and application of standard deviation are weaker, partly due to a lack of rigour in the presentation and structure of answers. Students' responses to their teachers' questions show sound understanding. Students are successfully extending their GCSE work into new areas, for example, in pure mathematics: they solve simultaneous equations when one function is quadratic and solve quadratic functions by completing the square.

89. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and students from all backgrounds learn satisfactorily. The best feature of the teaching is the good knowledge and understanding of teachers. Subject content is accurate and is planned and prepared effectively. This is used to good effect when questioning the students, but is even more evident when the teacher answers questions asked by the students. The teachers' understanding of the subject is such that they can explain principles clearly and use symbols effectively, for example in a statistics lesson. The explanations are clear, so that they do not need to be repeated. This also promotes the students' confidence in, and respect for, their teachers. However, there are missed opportunities to challenge students' thinking and to develop their capacity for independent study and research. Although teaching methods are sound, and in the better lessons students are generally asked probing questions which develop good thinking skills, this is not always the case. There are instances where the lecturing approach makes too little demand on students' initiative, and there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons.
90. Students respond well to the questioning and this enhances their learning. Students are attentive in lessons and show an interest in the subject. The teachers conduct lessons at a sound pace, resulting in satisfactory gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Students are generally alert throughout the lesson and a good level of concentration is maintained. They participate well when responding to questions and make articulate suggestions.
91. Effective use is made of homework to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work is good. There is a good programme of regular formal assessments that allows teachers to see how students are progressing over time so that they can give effective support for those experiencing difficulties.
92. Sound leadership and efficient management are rooted in effective consultation and collaboration with a team that has a mix of both experienced and recently qualified teachers. The procedures for assessing students' progress as they go through the sixth form are satisfactory. There are regular tests and the results are standardised. However, the results are not analysed sufficiently or compared with prior attainment, so that individual targets can be set. Information and communications technology and other resources are not used sufficiently in the teaching and learning of mathematics.
93. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has been maintained and the results at A-level have improved.

SCIENCES

94. The focus was on physics, but biology and chemistry were also sampled. In biology, examination results in 2001 were above the national average overall, showing a considerable improvement on results in the previous three years. The achievement of this group of students since taking their GCSE examinations was broadly in line with expectations. Results in the AS examinations in 2001 were satisfactory, though no student obtained a grade A. The number of students taking the subject has decreased in the last three years, but has increased in the current Year 12. In both the lessons observed, teaching was good. Teachers make extensive use of questions in order to challenge students' thinking, but the response from students is often rather muted. Nevertheless, because teachers have a good command of their subject, and persist in their expectation that students should contribute to the development of the lesson, learning is generally good.

95. In chemistry, it is difficult to compare examination results in 2001 with national figures because of the very low entry. Results in the 2001 AS examinations were satisfactory: all students obtained a pass grade but no student obtained a grade A. The number of students taking chemistry had become very low, but numbers are now increasing again. In both the lessons observed, teaching was very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subject, and communicate this to students. Students respond accordingly, and readily volunteer to contribute to the lesson. In one lesson, this led to students gaining real confidence in predicting the movement of electrons during polymerisation. A sense of teamwork, and of mutual respect between students and teacher, was evident in the class.

PHYSICS

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

Strengths

- Results at A-level in each of the last three years have been above the national average.
- Teaching is good overall, and never less than satisfactory.
- Students generally have a very positive attitude to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of resources.
- The use of computers in the AS and A-level courses.
- The monitoring of students' folders, and the quality of presentation of students' work.

97. A-level results in 2001 were well above average. A high proportion of students obtained grade A, and all students gained a pass grade. Results were also above national averages in each of the three previous years. Last year, a high proportion of students dropped the subject during Year 12, but overall results at AS-level in 2001 were satisfactory. In relation to their results at GCSE, the achievement of most students is satisfactory.
98. The standards of work of current students are mostly better than expected nationally in Year 12 and in line with expectations in Year 13. In Year 13, students do not demonstrate such a strong sense of dedication to their work. In one of the Year 13 lessons, students were reluctant to respond to the prompts from their teacher, largely because they were not well prepared for the lesson, and lacked confidence with the subject.
99. Students in Year 12 demonstrate a more academic approach to their work, and they are achieving well. They have made a successful transition from GCSE to AS-level work. They listen attentively to their teachers, and often ask questions about their work. In one lesson, they showed understanding about the properties of waves, and the principle of superposition. They showed interest in a demonstration of how a CD operates, and wrote an article in their own words for a non-scientist to read. This exercise helped to consolidate their understanding of the work. In the other Year 12 lesson, students discussed the evidence for both the corpuscular and wave theories of light. Here also their understanding was consolidated by having to write answers in their own words about how each theory is supported by observations.
100. Teaching is good overall, and very good in some lessons. The planning of lessons is thorough, and teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Teachers attempt to involve students in the work by using questions which challenge

them to think, and which require insight to answer fully. Students are provided with opportunities to discuss their work in groups, and to contribute to class discussions, for example about how far both the historical and the up-to-date evidence support modern theories. Students in Year 12 generally respond positively to the range of activities used to improve their understanding. In a minority of lessons, the structure of the lesson is too dominated by the teacher, leaving too little opportunity for students to use their initiative, and to learn by doing and by thinking. On occasions, insufficient praise is used: the result of this is that some students show a lack of confidence in the subject, and they do not then respond readily.

101. The written tasks set for students are pitched at the appropriate level: they require students to consider the implications of their work in class, and they also test their understanding of the topic. The marking of this work is regular, and in most cases there are constructive comments to help students to improve. Not enough emphasis is placed on the importance of clear presentation of the work, such as notes and graphs, so that books and folders build up into useful documents for revision.
102. Students' learning is also good, though less consistently so in Year 13. Most students report that they enjoy the work, were ready for the additional challenge provided by the sixth form course, and feel that they are succeeding. Students repeating Year 12 show maturity, and obviously have gained confidence in their approach to work. Written responses to questions are usually thorough, but students have more difficulty in their oral responses in class when attempting to explain clearly the principles of the work. They usually listen carefully to their teachers, and to one another, as part of their learning. They occasionally have difficulty with the reading of more complicated words, but the practice of referring to good quality textbooks for homework and in class helps to improve their skills.
103. Students' literacy skills are therefore variable, but improvement is encouraged by the teaching strategies used in physics. Numeracy is good, and there are many opportunities to use formulae. Students are confident when changing the subject of a formula, and in the use of calculators. Computers are used regularly for research, but are little used in class for recording or analysing data.
104. The overall leadership and management of the physics department are satisfactory, resulting in a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. A new course for AS and A-level has been adopted which relates the work more clearly to students' everyday experiences, and which should further improve motivation. Although textbooks are of good quality, there are some shortages of equipment, including computer hardware. Regular testing takes place, but students' individual targets for improvement are not always established from test scores. The improvement which students make between GCSE and AS and A-level examinations is also satisfactory, and a target for the department is to improve this measure of 'value added'.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and Technology

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management.
- Very good teaching, learning and achievement.
- Well above average A-level results in 2001.
- Very good use of CAD/CAM facilities.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation arrangements.
- Standards in GCE A/S level examination.
- Links with art for cultural education.

106. Lessons observed in design and technology included resistant materials, graphics, design studies, electronics and mechanisms. Students taking AS and A-level talked enthusiastically about their work in progress. Year 12 and 13 folders of work and models were studied. Numbers taking the subject have increased in recent years and the range of activities undertaken has been modified in response to the last inspection report.

107. The A-level examination results in 2001 were well above average. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade. The proportion gaining the higher grades was well above average. In relation to their GCSE grades all students did better than expected. These students achieved significantly well when compared with their other school subjects. In the AS-level examination, results in 2001 were below average. Students were not prepared for answering all questions and the timing of the examination proved too early in the course.

108. The standard of work of current Year 12 and 13 students is better than expected nationally in mechanisms, electronics and graphics. In Year 13, students are doing well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Students are tackling challenging assignments and have the tenacity to stick with a problem and solve it. Work is very well presented and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) for graphics, the analysis of data and the design and modification of electrical circuitry. Year 12 students have benefited from a visit to the Tate Modern gallery. In their designs and models for electronic devices and their evaluation of work, students show an understanding of the nature of the gallery and the way in which design can be adapted to it. Year 13 students understand the reasons why house design is so conservative in Britain, although few openly agree with their teacher's modernist perspective. In resistant materials, lower-attainers in Year 12 benefit from working alongside higher-attainers in Year 13. They make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the breaking point of mild steel and its crystalline composition, as revealed by the destructive forces applied to it. When Year 13 students and teachers work collaboratively to evaluate problems and seek solutions, students learn very good ways of solving problems from their teachers.

109. Teaching in Years 12 and 13 is always very good. Students are taught by a very good team of experienced teachers with complementary strengths in designing, graphics, engineering, electrical and mechanical processes. They are supported well by an experienced and knowledgeable technician. As a result, team teaching works very well. Higher-attaining students are challenged and thinking skills are developed well, when students present their work to the class and have time to reflect on the constructive feedback they receive. Lower-attainers are supported sensitively: clear demonstrations are followed by practical activity. Good health and safety procedures are followed and students are inducted into these processes as and when appropriate.
110. Written work, seen in major projects, is of a high standard. Students do not make enough notes of their own, however, to explain thinking or planned modifications. All projects use ICT well for research, graphics and the analysis and display of data. Students' numeracy skills are adequate for the tasks undertaken. Work is marked against identified criteria and students understand how well they are doing. Problems occurred in 2001, in the AS-level examination, because staff and students were ill-prepared for the new requirements, which gave no choice of questions, and required answers from all sections of the paper.
111. All students are attentive, work hard and respond well to advice from their teachers or their peers. Students support one another well when using computers or finding solutions to design problems, for example in resistant materials, where one student was facing problems with designing an electrical circuit. In graphics mutual criticism, offered in a helpful spirit, opened students' minds to new solutions for hand-held communication aids to be used in an art gallery.
112. The subject is very well led. Good progress has been made in all areas identified in the last report. Problems of storage have been resolved by introducing jewellery assignments. The making of jewellery has proved popular with students: numbers taking the subject have risen and standards at A-level have improved over a number of years. Lack of access to specialist equipment slows students' progress on occasions. Currently there are missed opportunities for links with art. Both subjects contribute well to students' understanding of twentieth century culture, but neither department benefits from the particular expertise on the topic available in the other.

BUSINESS

113. The focus was on business studies. Economics was also sampled. In economics all students gained a Grade A-E at A-level in 2001. Students did as well as expected, given their GCSE results. One lesson in Year 12 was observed. The teaching was satisfactory, with a good class discussion led by the teacher, which developed students' use of the concepts related to merit goods.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers know their subject very well.
- Teachers use probing questions to develop the reasoning and evaluation skills of their students.
- Written work is marked very carefully.
- Students show a lively interest in the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not always plan lessons to ensure that students are actively involved in their learning.
- Computers could be used more to support learning and better presentation.

115. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations are broadly in line with the national average. This represents a slight decline since 2000, when results were above the national average. The proportion of higher grades, A/B, was below the national average and has decreased over the last three years. Overall, students' achievement is in line with what might be expected from their results at GCSE. In 2000, students' results were better in business studies than in the other subjects they took for A-level.

116. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment in Years 12 and 13 are in line with the levels expected nationally. Students have a sound knowledge of topics and use business terms in the relevant context. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students showed a satisfactory command of the different options available for financing health provision. They were able to approach the topic from a business angle, as well as appreciating the underlying economic principles. They had clearly absorbed a large amount of knowledge from their own independent study of newspapers and television, which were carrying much debate on the issue at the time. By the end of the lesson, they understood a range of advanced concepts including 'hypothecation'. In Year 12, students understand the mechanisms of the trade cycle and factors affecting trade. They were able to advise on the purchase or sale of shares on the basis of their knowledge and their reading of stock market reports.

117. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers ensure that the material used in lessons is accurate and up-to-date in order to motivate students in their learning. Teachers link topics to local problems such as transport in London and are planning to use local business expertise on management issues. Students make good progress in lessons in their knowledge and understanding of topics because teachers explain concepts very clearly. Students' understanding and evaluative skills are strengthened by probing session of questions and answers. Their obvious interest in their work, fuelled by their own private study of the Internet and the media, further supports their progress in lessons.

118. On occasions, however, the pace of progress is slower, because teachers dominate the lessons and there are too few activities to ensure that students are active and involved in their own learning. Opportunities to promote the skills of team work and to consolidate learning are lost. Teachers do not always prepare the material in lessons thoroughly so that it can be presented in a way which makes maximum use of students' time. Teachers make good use of newspapers in lessons, but generally resources lack

variety. Whilst teachers encourage reading and the use of other media for information outside lessons, they do not promote sufficiently the use of computers for the presentation of information and written work. Currently the examination syllabus does not offer many opportunities for lengthy assignments and individual research work. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, but the longer-term progress of the higher-attainers is slowed by these factors.

119. The teaching of number skills is good, even if calculations and graphs are not always presented as neatly as they could be. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory: technical terms form a large part of every lesson, although they could be reinforced in a stronger and more systematic way so that every student is sure to acquire them.
120. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The curriculum is adequate and broadened through visits outside the school and a strong Young Enterprise Scheme. The department is planning to re-introduce work experience and the lengthier assignments which could be based on this. The schemes of work lack detail in the availability of suitable resources, which in general, are limited. In recent years, teachers have kept up-to-date with changes in syllabuses, but have had little time to investigate new teaching strategies, supported by modern technology. The monitoring of the quality of teaching by the head of department is conducted mostly on an informal basis and so does not support professional development as well as it might.
121. There was no report on business education at the last inspection in 1997

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

122. The provision for computer studies in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Some very good teaching and learning in computer studies.
- Diagnosis of and provision for individual learning needs.
- Students' progress, especially in Year 12.

Areas for improvement

- The range of opportunities in information and communication technology.

123. Progress is very good for students who choose the computer studies course in the sixth form.
124. A-level results for computer studies in the year 2000, were below the national average in the number of higher grades. However, an above-average number of students gained pass grades. Results at AS-level in computer studies for the year 2001 were below average, particularly due to under-performance in the coursework. In the same year, there were only three computer studies entries for A-level but the students achieved well by gaining B and C grades.
125. Students enter the course with a wide variety of background experience in information and communication technology. Not all students have studied it to GCSE level. However, students' written work and the work they do during lessons show that progress is very good. Students rapidly gain some expertise in programming in visual basic and use this knowledge in a variety of applications. However, progress is sometimes on a trial and error basis rather than a carefully considered step-by-step analysis of the problem. Those students identified as having special educational needs or those with English as an additional language are given extra help, where class size

permits. Able students are given additional encouragement during lessons, at break, lunchtime and after school. They make very good progress, sometimes on a one-to-one basis. Overall, attainment is near national expectations in computer studies.

126. The teaching of computer studies is good overall, and sometimes excellent. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and understands the needs of the students. Time and resources are well used. Marking is completed at regular intervals. Informative comments direct students to future targets and grades are given that enable them to judge their progress effectively. Lessons are well planned and managed. Relationships are very good, because the teacher knows the students well, is enthusiastic and presents appropriate challenges. Expectations are high. Homework is set regularly as an integral part of the course. Literacy skills are emphasised by marking work for accuracy, spelling and grammar, as well as for understanding. Numeracy continues to be developed by the use of functions in databases and spreadsheets. Projection equipment for demonstration purposes is effectively used when teaching the whole class.
127. Students acquire computing skills, knowledge and understanding throughout their sixth form course but achievement is particularly good during Year 12. Information sheets provided by the teacher form the basis for some of this learning, but additionally the teacher explains processes, new words, techniques and applications very clearly. The students listen well, and are not afraid to ask questions. They are confident in the use of computers and enjoy problem solving. However, access to the Internet and to electronic mail is not fully available. This limits students' understanding of the wider applications of computers. The use of colour printing could be extended.
128. Students have very good attitudes to the subject. They enjoy the work and value the relationships developed within the class. Behaviour is good and tends towards informality at times. The students appreciate this, and report that the teaching is very good. Many aspects of the work help students to understand the advantages and disadvantages of developments in computing.
129. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Some of the decision making and planning for development, are shared and this can result in a slower pace of development than is desirable, especially if there is disagreement on the way forward. The AS and A-level computer studies course is mainly useful for those who are interested in a career involving computing. There is currently no qualification available to support the need for more general information and communication technology felt by students choosing other careers. Students' marks and attendance records provide information from tests, homework, class work and coursework that builds up an effective profile for each student. This is used to inform students, teachers and parents of progress within the subject but further use of this data would be desirable.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LESURE AND TRAVEL

130. One lesson of sport at AS-level was sampled. Results at A-level in 2001 were above average and students did better than expected. The teaching was good with clear presentation of material on the history of physical education in state schools, followed by a productive session of questions and answers. As a result, students absorbed the concepts well and produced neat and appropriate notes.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

131. The focus was on art and design. Music technology was also sampled. One lesson

was observed and the teaching was good. The teacher made good use of her own extensive knowledge and understanding of music technology and involved the students in evaluating their own work. As a result of good teaching, students have very good listening skills and are competent musicians.

ART AND DESIGN

132. Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' good knowledge and understanding of two and three-dimensional approaches to art.
- Use of sketchbooks for research and the development of ideas.
- Opportunities for art gallery visits and the use of the locality.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of dedicated accommodation and limited resources for sixth form use.
- Restricted opportunities for large scale work.
- Limited independent study and research skills.

133. Art is taught at AS and A-levels. Lessons were observed in both year groups. Students showed involvement when talking about their ongoing work. A range of present and past students' work was studied. Numbers taking the subject have dropped in recent years.

134. The A-level examination results in 2001 were below average. Not all students who took the examination gained a pass grade. The proportion gaining the higher grades was below average. In relation to their GCSE grades, the higher-attainers did less well than expected. Overall, students taking art did better than they did in their other school subjects. Results at AS-level in 2001 were below average. Teachers and students were ill-prepared for the timing of this new examination.

135. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is in line with expectations. The majority of students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well in lessons because their teachers focus students' attention well, encourage risk-taking and applaud all gains in learning. As a result of this support, confidence grows and good gains are made in knowledge, understanding and skill development. All students, however, in both year groups, lack firm foundations in three-dimensional studies, and this limits their perception of what is possible: for example when experimenting with layering materials to achieve relief effects. The majority tend to think in terms of one medium, such as paint. Some students are further disadvantaged in not having undertaken the GCSE art course. The lack of a dedicated sixth form space also limits opportunities for reflection, personal growth and for undertaking larger scale work. Independent research is less developed than might be expected by this stage but teachers are currently making plans to stimulate independent study and research skills by providing excursions into the locality. All of these factors limit students' chances of attaining higher grades in the A and AS-level examinations. Overall, longer-term progress is therefore only satisfactory.

136. Teaching in Years 12 and 13 is always satisfactory and in three-quarters of lessons seen good and occasionally very good. The best teaching recognises and responds well to all students' needs. The teachers are perceptive as they observe students' working practices, listen to their concerns and become aware of their current stage of development. In these lessons, questions are used well to probe understanding, and

feedback is very pertinent to individual needs. Students react well to these sessions, but this dialogue cannot be ongoing between lessons, as work has to be packed up and students do not have their own space in which to work. Teachers' expectations and students' response are lower than at other times when the temperature in the room is too low. Working conditions for both year groups are unacceptable in these circumstances.

137. Written work seen is more limited than might normally be expected, with few personal notes on work in progress. Some use is made of digital imagery in recording figurative studies but lack of access to suitable computer hard and software currently limits further use of information and communication technology. Students receive regular oral assessment of their work in progress and know the quality criteria being used.
138. All students are keen about, and interested in, the work they are undertaking, but too dependent on their teacher to solve their problems for them. All students are limited in their perception of techniques other than painting and drawing, working only on a relatively small scale. They also rely too heavily on book illustrations and the Internet, and prove reluctant to get out into the locality and collect first hand reference material for themselves.
139. The subject is well led. Good opportunities are provided for gallery visits. The subject is in better accommodation than at the time of the last inspection. Further weaknesses in the accommodation and resources for the sixth form have been identified and are to be implemented in the context of the School Development Plan. Staffing has been increased to include a specialist three-dimensional studies teacher.

HUMANITIES

140. The focus was on history, but geography and government and politics were also sampled. In geography, examination results were average in 2001 and students did as expected considering their GCSE results. One lesson was observed and the teaching was good. It included a stimulating explanation of development issues, the use of contemporary examples to reinforce understanding and a well-structured sequence of student centred activities. This led to students gaining a secure understanding of the key issues involved in economic and social change in poorer societies. In government and politics, examination results were below average in 2001 but students did as expected considering their GCSE results. One lesson was seen and this was satisfactory: a well-planned question and answer session enabled students to increase their knowledge and understanding of the American electoral system.

HISTORY

141. The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The trend in results is upwards, and the AS results showed considerable improvement.
- The subject is well led and there is a strong sense of corporate identity.
- A good system of assessment, evaluation and student monitoring.
- A good range of extra-curricular enrichment activities.

Areas for improvement

- Higher-attaining students are insufficiently stretched in some lessons.
- More time needs to be assigned to discussion and individual research.
- Too many lessons were teacher-dominated.
- Information and communication technology skills are under-developed.

142. The A-level examination results this summer were broadly in line with the national average and were a significant improvement on the previous year. Eighty-one per cent of the entry gained a pass grade and the proportion of A/B grades was considerably higher than in former years. All students completed the course. In relation to their GCSE results, they did as well as expected. There is an upward trend in results and, as standards rise, the proportion of lower grades is falling. The history results match students' performance in most other subjects. There was a 100 per cent pass rate at AS-level in 2001. The present Year 13 achieved a far higher proportion of A and B grades even though the number of entries had increased, and there were no passes lower than grade D.

143. In Year 13, the standards of attainment in work seen are in line with expectations and students are achieving in line with their GCSE and AS results. Students' knowledge and understanding are good. Their listening skills are well developed and they are strong in source analysis and evaluation. In one lesson, students successfully drew on their knowledge of Nazi Germany to analyse the veracity and relevance of a selection of documents which assessed the impact of the SS on the government of the Third Reich. Discussion skills and individual enquiry are less developed, because many lessons are too teacher-directed. Weaknesses in these essential skills prevent some students from reaching the higher grades

144. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but are achieving much as expected. They are successfully moving on from their GCSE work into new areas of study. Students show a good knowledge and understanding of historical concepts, are able to interpret and evaluate a range of sources, and are developing a capacity for critical thinking. In a lesson on the Weimar Republic's foreign policy, they were able to analyse two contemporary sources and clearly identify the different viewpoints of the authors.

145. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 12 and Year 13 is satisfactory. Teaching was satisfactory in all the six lessons observed and was good in half of them. The principal features of lessons where the teaching was good were sound planning, clear objectives, a brisk pace and the regular changing of activities to stimulate students' learning. Students responded enthusiastically when teachers allowed them to discuss issues, to undertake individual research and to work closely with their peers. Where teachers provided opportunities for individual and group assignments there were real

gains in learning. In a lesson on the relationship between the Roman Catholic church and the Nazis, students carried out research which led into a wide-ranging discussion where they were able to present cogent arguments supported by carefully selected evidence.

146. In lessons where the teaching was only satisfactory, there was a lack of pace, a gradual decline in student concentration, and few opportunities for discussion or individual research. The teacher talked too much and students had to take far too many notes, as in a lesson on the Chartists, for example, in which opportunities were missed for students to evaluate actively good quality sources. Learning was satisfactory in all the lessons seen, but the limited range of teaching strategies sometimes affected learning adversely.
147. The department is well led. A well-structured assessment, monitoring and evaluation policy is a strength. Work is regularly marked and assessed, grades are linked to the requirements of the syllabus and teachers write comments which help students to progress. Literacy skills are a focus of the schemes of work and students are encouraged to write their assignments in a wide range of styles, with particular success in those tasks based on source evidence. The lack of opportunity for independent historical investigation means that students are not equipped to complete high-level essay work, which would eventually lead to the higher examination grades.
148. Standards of attainment have risen since the last inspection and there are now fewer lower grade passes at A-level. The quality of teaching has improved, but there is still a need to widen the range of teaching strategies and provide more opportunities for individual research. There has been insufficient progress in the development of skills in information and communication technology. Higher attaining students are still underachieving in a significant proportion of lessons and this problem needs to be addressed urgently.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

149. The focus was on English literature AS and A-levels, GCSE English language and French at A-level. German was sampled. In the A-level examination in German in 2001, all students gained grades A-E, although the average points score was below the national level. Students did as well as expected. One lesson of German in Year 12 was observed. The teaching was satisfactory, with very productive use made of question and answer sessions. The one student made satisfactory progress in listening and speaking skills, and in the acquisition of vocabulary in the area of food and health.

ENGLISH

150. Provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Students do better in English than in other subjects.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good and sometimes outstanding.
- Students' attitudes are very good: they work hard to improve.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form courses are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the proportion of students gaining the higher grades, A/B.
- Encouraging students to pay more attention to an author's choice of language to achieve an effect.
- Focusing middle ability and slower learners on using quotations to justify their opinions.

151. In 2001, results in the A-level English literature examinations were in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement from GCSE. Over the past few years, results have fluctuated. In 2000, students took combined English language and literature. Because there was an above-average proportion of students gaining higher grades A/B, results were above average overall, but in 2001 the proportion was below average. Students do better in English than in their other subjects. At AS-level in 2001, nearly all students achieved a grade, but few gained the higher grades A/B. This represents satisfactory achievement from GCSE.

152. In Year 13, standards in lessons and work seen are in line with national expectations. Achievement is good, sometimes better, depending on the quality of teaching. Students speak fluently and confidently, as in a lesson where groups gave impressive presentations on *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. They used the overhead projector effectively to share their knowledge and understanding of the text with the class. Students are very good listeners. They attend well to what the teacher is saying and to their friends' contributions in group work. Students read with understanding, though not always with an eye for detail. When looking at metaphysical poetry, they appreciated content and grasped some of the subtleties of Donne's writing, but sometimes missed features of style. Written work is well structured and well informed. They know the set texts well. Students wrote on the impact of the soliloquy in *Hamlet*, the themes in Tennyson's *Ulysses* and the way one might direct a scene in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. They did not pay sufficient attention to the effects of the writer's language in, say, *Hamlet* and *Hard Times*, and this limited the scope of otherwise good answers. Students, with the exception of the more able, do not support statements with sufficient quotations to make a point, and this prevents them reaching standards in line with A/B grades. Work is well paragraphed and presented. The more able achieve a high level of accuracy, while other students sometimes use vague or inappropriate expression, and do not vary sentence structure or vocabulary.

153. In Year 12, standards are as expected, though there is a significant minority of higher-attainers with the potential to gain A/B grades at A-level. Achievement is good. Students are willing speakers and often use wide-ranging vocabulary. They discussed the key features of a scene from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, focusing on the character of Blanche. They showed a sympathetic understanding of her isolation and how this affects her behaviour. In whole-class and in group situations, they listen attentively and this has a positive impact on learning. Students read aloud from a play script with

accuracy and expression. Subsequent discussion showed that they have a firm understanding of plot and character. They showed perception in their comments on the king's actions in *Henry V* and on the reasons for his going to war with France. In discussions on set books, students explain why they have a preference for a particular play. While higher-attainers put forward an argument well, other students do not always develop a point fully. Students cover a variety of texts in their writing. They identified themes in Fanthorpe's poem, *Rising Damp*, and compared the portrayal of nature in Blake's *Tiger* and in Hughes' *Pike*. They discussed the presentation of Pip in the opening chapters of *Great Expectations* and explained how Dickens shows his disapproval of Gradgrind's school in *Hard Times*. In essays, students sometimes forget to explain the point of a quotation or to use enough quotations. Slower learners lapse into a re-telling of the content rather than evaluating the quality of the writing. Recent work shows significant improvement in the way ideas are sequenced and paragraphed. Spelling is inconsistent, however, and the language of speech creeps into formal essays, creating a jarring note. Students taking GCSE are working at Grade C level, which represents good achievement. The media approach to *Romeo and Juliet*, a new text for these students, is awakening an interest in literature, as seen in an essay on the play. Re-drafting is helping to improve expression and technical accuracy.

154. Teaching and learning are strengths in the sixth form. In all lessons seen, teaching and learning were at least good, and in nearly half they were excellent. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to extend students' thinking and to assess how much they have learned. For example, in two excellent Year 13 lessons on the metaphysical poets, the teachers' questions probed students' appreciation of the poets' styles and their implicit meaning. As a result, students gained a very clear view of the poems' qualities. Planning is very good. Teachers employ group work effectively. Students collaborate very well because relationships in the classroom are very good. Their attitudes to learning are very positive, sometimes excellent. They are highly motivated and concentrate hard on the task. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, students in groups planned a talk on the different views of the novel, which they presented confidently to the class. This involvement in their own learning promoted good progress. Teachers' high expectations and their lively approach to literature enthuse students and challenge their thinking. Marking is good, with many constructive comments telling students what they need to do to improve.
155. English lessons make a very good contribution to the development of key skills and give students ample opportunity to speak, listen, read and write. The regular use of group work gives students the chance to practise note-taking, to use initiative, as when making presentations to the class, and to develop a collaborative style of working. Information and communication technology is used in word processing essays and in researching on the Internet.
156. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department leads by example and is dynamic in her determination to raise attainment, as seen in the subject development plan. Four of the five teachers involved in A-level English teaching are in their first year at the school. Already, a very good team spirit is evident, with all working in concert to help students achieve well. Sixth form work is well co-ordinated through regular meetings and frequent informal discussions to share ideas. A very good bank of support materials enhances the well-focused schemes of work. Assessment is regular, well recorded and the data well used. The department has analysed A-level results to see in which papers students have performed least well. Response to the identification of weaknesses is swift. For example, in a Year 13 lesson the teacher, to redress omissions in an essay on the metaphysical poets, introduced a competition to present in visual form the main features of the poetry of Donne, Herbert and Vaughan.

This concentrated students' minds very well and learning was excellent. It is not possible to judge improvement since the last inspection as very little was said about post-16 studies. Standards have been maintained, but the numbers studying the subject have increased. Given the head of department's inspired leadership, the close teamwork of teachers and the students' very good attitudes, the capacity for further improvement is good.

French

157. Provision in French is **satisfactory**, and improving.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very good: they want to do well.
- The recently appointed head of department co-ordinates sixth form work efficiently.

Areas for improvement

- Results in A-level French.
- The speaking skills of some students, which are hindered by weak pronunciation.
- The use of and resources for information and communication technology.

158. In 2001, results in A-level French were well below the national average, as they have been over recent years. However, these results were not significantly different from students' results in other subjects. This represents broadly satisfactory achievement. At AS-level, all five students achieved a grade, with two gaining a grade B, two a grade D and one a grade E. This represents satisfactory achievement from GCSE. Comparisons should be treated with caution as the numbers taking AS and A-level French are low.

159. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 13 are as expected. Achievement in lessons is good. If the students in the current Year 13 achieve their predicted grades – and indications are that they could – results will match, or even exceed, the national average. Speaking skills are improving, though a few students still have anglicised pronunciation. For example, in discussions on the merits of theme parks, students grew in confidence as the lesson went on, and developed ideas in extended sentences. Listening skills are good. Students follow what the teacher and rest of the students, are saying in French, and often respond appropriately. They read challenging passages, understanding the gist of extracts. The more able grasp finer points of meaning. Research skills are good. For example, in a lesson where students were studying advertisements on cars, they listed specialist words relating to the topic and extended their vocabulary. Students express ideas in a range of written tasks including personal, discursive, creative and informative writing. In work on the environment, the death penalty and abortion, students structure their ideas logically. While the work of more able students is largely accurate, other students make errors in tense, in the form of irregular verbs and in spelling. Work is well presented, sometimes enhanced by the use of computers.

160. Standards in Year 12 are as expected in lessons. Achievement is good. Students respond willingly when asked questions in French. Pronunciation is a weakness, with the final 's' in 'dans' and 'personnes' being sounded, but there are signs of improvement, as when students described pictures of café scenes. They were confident in speaking and worked hard to overcome difficulties. Students listen well, as to a tape of a news report in French, and grasp the main points. They read a passage, for example about cafés, with sound understanding. Students cover a good range of written assignments. They described 'Un Bon Ami', discussed 'Avoir beaucoup de l'argent: bien ou mal?' and wrote in the persona of a victim in the Vietnam war. They learn to extend their thinking, using interesting vocabulary. Sentence structure and vocabulary are sometimes repetitive, and spelling and grammar errors hinder communication. The work of the more able students, however, shows an above average level of accuracy.
161. Teaching and learning were good in all lessons seen. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to ask questions which extend students' thinking, and assess what they have understood. This helps students to improve their language skills rapidly. Because several students have weak pronunciation, teachers plan lessons to address this. There are good opportunities for students to speak in French in lessons, and to hear their teachers modelling language. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher made good use of a tape recording of French spoken at normal speed, and this challenged students' listening abilities as well as creating a French atmosphere. Teachers focus well on language skills, such as precise expression, correct spelling and appropriate use of tense. This is helping to raise standards in written work. Relationships are very positive, and so students work hard and show very good attitudes to learning. They concentrate well and collaborate effectively in pairs or small group work, respecting the ideas of others. As a result, they learn rapidly in a lesson. Marking is generally good, though there is scope for more detailed written comments on how students could improve, to support oral feedback.
162. In French, students develop key skills well. They frequently research new vocabulary in relation to their A-level topic, and learn to incorporate it into their written work. Independent learning skills are in evidence in regular small group work. Students discussed the topic and together composed sentences such as 'Je pense qu'elle se cache ses sentiments derrière l'alcool', when describing a lonely woman in a bistro. Students have frequent opportunities to practise speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, information and communication technology is underemployed. The department lacks suitable resources: this limits teaching methods and the way students learn. The head of department is fully aware of the opportunities to raise attainment through information and communications technology, and it features prominently in the subject development plan.
163. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department has identified weaknesses in learning and has begun to address them swiftly. For example, he is focusing attention on teaching in Year 11 to increase the numbers opting for French in the sixth form. He has fostered a good team spirit amongst the teachers who are involved in post-16 work, so that students benefit from continuity in lessons. There are sufficient books to support AS and A-level work, but they need updating and further extension material would be a helpful support. Since the last inspection, improvement is satisfactory because of the new head of department's hard work in recent months to improve standards. Teaching now focuses on extending the range of students' vocabulary; marking is careful; and tasks match the needs of the more able well. Given teachers' commitment to raising attainment, and the very good attitudes of students, the

capacity for further improvement is good.