

INSPECTION REPORT

MATRAVERS SCHOOL

Springfield Road, Westbury, Wiltshire

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126510

Headteacher: Mr N Gilhespy

Reporting inspector: Michael McLachlan
3654

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th December 2001

Inspection number: 243403

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 and franchised sixth form
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Springfield Road
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: John Clegg

Date of previous inspection: 27th January 1997

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14776	Phil Waite	Team inspector	Mathematics	
23080	Rob Isaac	Team inspector	English	
4738	David Berrisford	Team inspector	Science	
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Information Technology, Design and Technology	
8185	Peter Kendall	Team inspector	Art	How well are pupils or students taught?
1027	David Potter	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
4727	Jeff Hale	Team inspector	History	The school's results and achievements. How well does the school care for its pupils or students?
7636	Anil Sinha	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages, Equal Opportunities	
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4741	Di Valentine	Team inspector	Physical Education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Matravers School is an 11–16 co-educational comprehensive school in a semi-rural area of West Wiltshire. There are 870 students on roll and 69 students in the sixth form. The school draws its students from the town of Westbury and surrounding villages. There is the full range of educational attainment on entry to the school although there are slightly more low attaining pupils. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances, and there are significant local levels of deprivation. Thirteen.eight per cent of students receive a free school meal and this is in line with national figures. The number of students on the school's register of special educational needs(SEN) is average although the number with statements for SEN at 3.2 % is above average with specific and moderate learning difficulties most prominent. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups. With the full support of the local community, Matravers School has established a small sixth form in 2000 as an offshoot of the Trowbridge Sixth Form Centre. The LEA, in consultation with the local Learning and Skills Council, intends the school to grow in size and eventually reach around 1200 students with a sixth form in its own right. The school has recently gained Arts College status, operational from September 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Matravers School has been very effective in securing a steady rise in GCSE performance so that results are in line with national averages and well above the performance of schools of a similar type. AS level examination results, taken for the first time in 2001, are better than the national average. The governing body, in conjunction with the staff and with the full support of the local community, has very successfully invested considerable resources, time and energy in the establishment of the sixth form and gaining Arts College status. While these are major achievements, the school has a number of weaknesses that need urgent attention. The behaviour of a significant minority of students, especially in the lower school, impedes their own progress and that of others. The recent expansion of the school, and the consequent influx of new staff have led to an inconsistent implementation of the school's teaching and behaviour policies. The majority of teaching is good, however the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, mainly in Years 7-9, is significant enough to require a judgement that overall teaching is unsatisfactory. Leadership is satisfactory with considerable strengths but it needs to focus more attention on improving behaviour and teaching. The school recognises these weaknesses and has the capacity and ability to improve, plans are in place to bring about improvements that have yet to come to fruition. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Ensuring that the vision for the school as “a school at the heart of the Westbury community” is shared by all.
- The performance at GCSE level compared with similar schools.
- The governors' very good involvement with the life of the school and their overall long-term plans for developing and improving the school.
- Provision for the expressive and performing arts curriculum that has lead to the successful Arts College bid.
- The systems for collecting data and monitoring the performance of students and departments.
- The support for special needs students and the work of the learning support centre.
- The provision and the quality of teaching and learning in the new sixth form and the successes at AS level.

What could be improved

- The attitudes and behaviour of a minority of students, particularly in Years 7-9.
- The quality of teachers' expectations, planning and delivery in order to improve students' learning as well as their behaviour and the match of work to students' needs and abilities, particularly to challenge the most able and improve the performance of boys.
- The management of initiatives and school policies by the senior management team and middle managers so that they are applied quickly and consistently by all staff.
- The use of the information gained through monitoring the performance of students and teachers in order to improve standards and the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour in the classroom.
- The implementation of statutory provision for information and communication technology and design and technology and the provision for a collective act of worship in the main school and in the sixth form.
- The standards achieved at GCSE level in modern foreign languages and in religious education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997. The school has made satisfactory progress on many of the issues raised in the last report although some key issues still remain. Resources have improved; the National Curriculum requirements are now met in art, geography and history; improvements have been made in the provision of equipment for information and communication technology, but its co-ordination and use within subjects remain unsatisfactory. Students still make significantly better progress in the GCSE years than in lower school. Very good systems have been established to monitor and evaluate students' attainment and behaviour but not the quality of teaching. Consequently these systems do not sufficiently raise standards in the lower school or improve the overall quality of teaching and behaviour. Support for students with special educational needs has improved in lessons. Religious education complies with the local syllabus in the main school but the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

GCSE results have improved year on year up to 2000 with a slight decline in 2001. In 2001 the average point score and the proportions of students achieving five or more, and one or more GCSE grades A*-G are well above average with the numbers of five A*-C grades above average. Compared to similar schools all measures of GCSE performance are above average and the proportion achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G were in the top five per cent nationally. Progress made since Year 9 is rated in the top five per cent compared to similar schools. All students on the special educational needs register gained at least five GCSE passes at grades A*-G. This performance indicates that the school adds

considerable value for almost all of its older students although there are few very high grades achieved in most subjects. Overall, girls perform better than boys. English results are slightly below average while mathematics and science results are average. Art, history, music, textiles and food technology results are very good although there are significant weaknesses in French and religious education and boys' results in design and technology. Results in the national tests at age fourteen are just below average in English and average in mathematics and science compared to all schools. Overall, students reach above expected standards compared to similar schools. Mathematics is above average compared to similar schools while English and science are average. Girls perform better than boys in English, but similarly in mathematics and science. The school's results lie within the target range set by the governors and agreed by the Local Education Authority. High standards are seen in art, history, geography, food and textiles. Standards in information and communication technology and religious education across the school, and in elements of design and technology and French in the upper school, are unsatisfactory. Achievement is better in the upper school where students' attitude and behaviour and the quality of teaching are stronger.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. The attitude of a significant minority of students is unsatisfactory, particularly in the lower school, however attitudes improve the longer students are in school. Most students are keen to come to school and are interested and involved in school life. Almost all students respond well to teaching that sets high expectations.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. While the majority of students behave well a significant minority, particularly in the lower school, do not and this adversely affects the learning of others. There is little bullying, oppressive or malicious behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Most students, when given the opportunity, are able to use their initiative and they mature as they progress through school. Relationships are satisfactory overall, but are spoiled by the behaviour of a minority.
Attendance	Good. Attendance continues to be good feature with low levels of unauthorised absence and average levels of authorised absence.

The school rightly claims that it succeeds in developing mature and responsible young adults but there is considerable work to be done with students in the lower school in order to achieve this. There is improvement in the upper school, mainly due to the additional form tutor support and the more focused examination work. The contribution of students to the life of the school, arts programmes and community projects is good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and often very good or excellent in lessons where high standards are set, work is stimulating and no compromise is made to expectations of achievement or behaviour. The school has the capacity to improve behaviour and new approaches are being tried which have yet to fully impact on this issue. Good attendance remains a strength of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	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 proportion of good or better lessons has improved since the last inspection but the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is about the same. Teaching has strengths, especially in the upper school where teaching leads to well above average GCSE results and well above average progress from Year 9 compared to similar schools. However, the percentage of unsatisfactory aspects of teaching, mainly in Years 7-9, is significant enough to require a judgement that overall teaching is unsatisfactory. This unsatisfactory teaching is often related to weak management of behaviour. Other reasons include unsatisfactory learning by students because of poor planning, work which does not match the abilities of all students, uninspiring content and delivery and occasionally lack of expertise. These problems are mainly but not exclusively in Years 7-9 lessons. Good or better teaching throughout is characterised by the combination of clearly-explained, challenging, interesting tasks developed through a variety of activities, with frequent recognition and feedback about the learning taking place. In these lessons, which are a feature of many subjects, students of all abilities contribute well, learning is maintained and behaviour is seldom a problem.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory. Overall the curriculum is broad and balanced with many strengths, particularly in the arts. The statutory requirements for information and communication technology and design and technology are not met and provision for French is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The provision for students with SEN is good with many very good features. The work of the Learning Support Centre is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Provision for students' personal development is satisfactory. There are some strengths and weaknesses of provision within this overall judgement. Provision for cultural development is good and that for moral and social development satisfactory. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The support and guidance offered to students by the school are good overall. Procedures for monitoring academic performance are very good. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are much less effective and are unsatisfactory overall.

The school works well in partnership with parents who feel well-informed about the progress made by their children. The great majority of parents show interest in the work of their children and the school, but a significant minority of parents do not attend parents' evenings. The curriculum, while broad and balanced overall, is unsatisfactory in that it fails to meet statutory requirements. The arts provision is very good and the Arts College status is well deserved. Provision for extra-curricular and cultural and sporting opportunities is good. Academic and pastoral support in the upper school is very strong. The school has developed a good pastoral system that enables form tutors to meet individually with their students, however this has not made sufficient impact on the behaviour of a substantial number of students in the lower school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The recent major initiatives and the GCSE monitoring programmes have been well led and managed. Overall faculty leadership is good although the leadership of religious education is unsatisfactory. The leadership and co-ordination of information and communication technology is poor. The plans to improve behaviour and the monitoring and development of teaching by senior and middle managers need to be

	implemented more quickly and consistently.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body and its committees are well led by dedicated and enthusiastic governors who devote considerable time and energy to the task. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and support and monitor their respective tasks well taking the lead as well as reacting to internal and external issues facing the school. They are not meeting all curriculum statutory requirements with regard to information and communication technology, design and technology and the collective acts of worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. There are very good systems for monitoring GCSE outcomes, department performance and collecting data on behaviour. There is inadequate use of these monitoring and evaluation systems, by managers, to share good practice and to improve teaching and behaviour, particularly in Years 7-9.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory and often good use of resources particularly in the support provide for students in the upper school and the current and planned use of Arts College funding. There are some weaknesses in staffing in French and design and technology and learning resources in information and communication technology, geography and design and technology.

The governing body and senior managers have a clear, well-articulated vision for the school, which places it at the heart of the Westbury community. They have pursued the sixth form and Arts College developments in order to provide opportunities for the local community as well as the school, and have secured wide commitment to this vision. These major initiatives have been managed well while sustaining improvements in the performance of students in the GCSE examinations. There has been a considerable growth in staff and around half have two years or less experience in the school. The school is adequately staffed but weaknesses in the provision for teaching in design and technology and French directly impact on standards. The school recognises its weaknesses and has the capacity and ability to improve. Plans are in place for improvement but these have yet to fully come to fruition. Principles of best value are applied. Overall, the school gives satisfactory 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 support provided by the teachers, particularly with examination work in and outside lessons, and the quality of feedback given on students' progress and the subsequent GCSE and AS results. The support for induction and transition between schools. The support for students with special educational needs. The inclusiveness of the school and the opportunities this provides for students to develop tolerance of others. The new sixth form and arts college developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The unsatisfactory behaviour of students in some classes. The quality of homework. The sufficiency of support for some students with SEN. The responsiveness of the school to parents' concerns. The standards achieved in French.

The inspectors agreed with all positive views expressed by the parents. They also concurred with the view that there were problems in the school regarding the behaviour of a substantial minority of students that needed urgent attention and that standards in French were not high enough. Overall homework is

satisfactory and the school was judged to provide good and often very good support for students with special educational needs and to respond well to parents' concerns.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form provision at Matrovers school is currently part of the Trowbridge Sixth Form Centre. The sixth form was established in 2000 with a group of thirty-six students and all but one have continued into the upper sixth. There are now sixty-nine students on roll, all from Matrovers School. The school now benefits from the full support of the Local Education Authority and the local Learning and Skills Council to establish the sixth form in its own right.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The school has made a very successful start to the provision of sixth form education. A total of 36 students took AS examinations in ten separate subjects in 2001. Thirty-two per cent of grades were A/B and around ten per cent were less than grade D. Average points scores in art and history were good and in other subjects, apart from French and psychology, were satisfactory. The range of courses is small but adequate, given the range of courses across the two centres. The statutory provision for religious education is not met. The school has evaluated the first year of the sixth form well and has made changes and plans for improvements. At present, there is little enrichment of students' A/AS-level courses: there is no general studies programme, and the teaching of key skills is underdeveloped. Overall the quality of teaching is good, with very good and excellent features. Students place a high value on the quality of teaching and this has been a key factor in the rapidly established success of the new sixth form. Overall, the provision is cost effective and gives good value for money.

Strengths

- The commitment of the governors, staff, parents and students to the success of the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching and the commitment of the teachers to training and preparation for the new courses.
- The outcome of the first AS level examinations for most students.
- The very good attitudes of students: they are mature, confident and hard working.
- The leadership by the senior managers and governors.

What could be improved

- The support and guidance for students, in particular in preparation for higher education or other career paths.
- The provision for learning key skills, in particular information and communication technology and its use as an aid to teaching and learning.
- The contribution made to the life of the main school by the sixth form students.
- The overall support for staff development and the breadth of courses available.
- The provision for religious education in order that the statutory requirements are met.

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	Good: results in the AS examinations are variable and below national averages but students did well in relation to their GCSE results. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result.
Biology	Satisfactory: results are well below national averages and students did not do as well as might be expected in relation to their GCSE results. Teaching is sound overall and students learn satisfactorily as a result. Initial preparation for the introduction of the course was unsatisfactory but has improved.
Art	Very good: results in the AS level examination are remarkable with nine of the eleven candidates achieving grades A or B, the others C and D. The quality of teaching and learning is very good
History	Good: results in the AS level examination are good with all students passing and fifty-four per cent achieving grades A or B. The quality of teaching is good, supporting good learning by the students.
English	Very good: results in the AS level examination are good with all students passing and a third achieving grades A or B. The quality of teaching is very good, promoting very good learning.

Provision for drama is very good. All students passed with four of the ten students achieving grades C or B. Teaching is very good as is learning. Work in geography was variable with much of a good AS/A level standard but with some weaker levels of attainment from students with lower GCSE results. The work of business studies was seen in relation to the use of information and communication technology. The work was an example of good practice, and students were well challenged by the assignments given.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Induction arrangements are very good. Academic guidance is good and students in the main are well informed of their strengths and weaknesses; they feel well supported by their subject teachers. There were some initial difficulties in providing appropriate guidance for entry to higher education. Individual students with special educational needs are given very good support.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The governing body and senior management of the school, in particular the deputy headteacher responsible for the sixth form, have provided strong leadership that has enabled the provision to flourish. There have been some difficulties in day-to-day leadership but these have now been resolved. The first year has been thoroughly reviewed and lessons learned. Resources are adequate and the provision gives good value for money.

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 quality of teaching and challenge to do well provided by subject teachers. • The support given by teachers when they are having difficulty with the work. • The good relationships with staff and other students. • Support for independent study. • The help given to induct them into the sixth form and to cope with the demands of the work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of adequate careers advice. • The information given about their progress towards future qualifications. • The opportunities for enrichment courses beyond the subject studied • The range of courses on offer.

The inspectors agreed with all the views of the students. The teaching is good and students are well supported and challenged in their subject areas. While improvements have been made, further support and careers advice is required in order to ensure students are fully prepared for and understand the opportunities available to them in the future. There is a widespread sense of pride and achievement in the establishment of the sixth form by all involved and the successes to date combined with the local commitment for expansion indicate further success in future developments.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The profile of attainment of students when they join Matravers School is broadly in line with the national picture although there are slightly more students achieving the lower levels and slightly less achieving the higher levels as measured by the Key Stage 2 tests. The school's own assessment procedures through the Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) indicates students, particularly the boys, are less strong in their language skills than their numerical or non-verbal skills.

2. By the age of fourteen, students' attainment in the 2001 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) are in line with the performance of all schools nationally but are above when compared with schools in similar contexts as measured by free school meals. Over the last few years the school's average point scores for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national trend. Compared to similar schools, the average point score achieved by students was in line in English and science but above average in mathematics. The proportion of students achieving the expected and higher levels improved in English from the previous year although mathematics and science were broadly the same. In English, girls' performance, as measured by average point score, substantially improved over the previous year and is slightly above the national average. Boys' performance declined and remains below the national average. The trend over the last three years shows girls and boys slightly under-performing compared to the national average. The difference in boys and girls performance in English is similar to the national picture. In mathematics and science boys' and girls' performance is in line with the national averages and, although in 2001 girls' performance was better than the boys, in both these subjects the trend over the last three years shows girls and boys performing as well as each other.

3. Teacher assessments in other subjects show a mixed picture with student attainment above expectations in art, geography and history. Attainment is in line in modern foreign languages and although overall below expectations in physical education, a significant number of average and higher attaining students achieve in line with the levels expected. In music, design and technology, particularly in relation to resistant materials, and religious education, attainment is below expectations and is well below in information and communication technology.

4. In 2001, GCSE results are well above average, in the top quarter of schools, as measured by the average point score and the proportion of students achieving five+ and one+ GCSE A*-G grades. The school is also above average for the number of students achieving five A*-C grades. Compared to similar schools, using free school meals, the school is similarly in the top quarter of all schools' measures of GCSE performance and in the top five per cent of schools for the number of students who achieved five A*-G. This performance indicates that the school adds considerable value for its older students and in particular its less able ones. The attainment of the most able students is overall unsatisfactory. The number of students achieving the highest grades are very high in art, high in history but low in English, French, geography, physical education and design and technology.

5. Students made very good progress since their SATs. In this respect, the school's results were in the top five per cent compared to similar schools as measured by the average point scores and their five A*-G results. This was a very good performance given the profile of prior attainment of the students. For example all students on the special educational needs register in Year 11 gained five GCSE passes at grades A*-G in 2001, as they have in previous years. At the higher grades of five A*-C, the performance of girls well exceeded that of boys. This difference had previously been identified as an issue by the school but the intended improvements were not fully realised.

6. Attainment in English at GCSE in 2001 was slightly below average. There has been a steady improvement in the numbers of students achieving the higher grades although results have fluctuated over the years. Virtually all students obtain a GCSE certificate in English at grade G or better by the age of sixteen. Girls gained better results than boys at GCSE in line with the national picture. No differences were observed between the attainments of the small numbers of minority ethnic students and

those of other students. In mathematics, standards at GCSE are around the national average. Lower ability students are relatively the most successful and fewer students than might be expected obtain the highest grades. Results have risen strongly in the distant past but have been more resistant to improvement recently. Relative to similar schools this year's results are a little above average. In science, attainment in the Double Award Science GCSE examination has steadily improved and the number of students gaining A* - C grades is in line with the number nationally. The number of students achieving the highest A*/A grades rose last year and is in line with national figures. Last year both boys and girls attained better in science than they did in some of their other subjects.

7. Other subjects reveal strong contrast in attainment. In art and music, GCSE results are consistently above expectations with, in 2001, nearly nine out of ten students gaining A* to C grades, well above the performance of similar schools. Strong features of these subjects are the high proportion of students gaining A* or A grades in art and the high standards achieved in extra-curricular music activities. History paints a similar picture with above average higher and top grades in GCSE and, contrary to the national trend, boys performing better than girls. In physical education students' results were well above the national comparison with all schools in 2001. The results gained in GCSE drama in recent years have been positive for both girls and boys. In 2001, virtually all passed with over half attaining a C grade or above and over a quarter gaining a B grade or above. In design and technology, student attainment presents sharp contrasts with well above average results in textiles, above average results in food technology, and well below average results in electronics, resistant materials where standards have been affected by poor resources, including staff illness.

8. In geography, the proportion achieving higher C+ and top A/A* results declined steadily until 2001, when it fell sharply to well below both the school's predictions and national averages. In this year, girls' results, always previously better than boys', collapsed. Nevertheless, the proportion of students achieving graded results is good and very few students leave without a pass. Staffing difficulties have led to well below average attainment in French with GCSE results at around half the national averages. In religious education, results in the GCSE short course, followed by all students, are well below the national average for similar schools and have declined over recent years. Girls achieve better than boys in religious education but both achieve well below the standards expected.

9. At the time of the last inspection the high GCSE results gained were out of line with previous years and were not representative of the usual ability profile. The school has achieved a consistent, steady rise in GCSE results and this has been consolidated with the school achieving over fifty per cent five A*-C for two consecutive years. The school sets ambitious targets and the 2001 figure for five A*-C although slightly down on the previous year was within the target range set by the Governors in agreement with the LEA. Realistic targets have been set which anticipate further growth.

10. A focus on literacy has been introduced to the school curriculum this term but is still at an early stage of development. Although overall literacy standards in English, as well as in most other subjects, are sound, the poor literacy skills of a significant minority of students, particularly in the lower school, impede attainment and progress. There are some very good contributions made in subject areas such as history where standards of literacy are very good, as teachers use writing frames very well to direct students' writing about historical themes and to link concepts. Standards are higher than expected in that students do not just write reactive, evidence-based reports, but also more fluent, contemplative analyses. Similarly, in geography, teachers use writing frames, display many examples of key geographical words, which are germane to the work in hand, and provide opportunities for extended writing as well as oral contributions. Standards currently are average in written work in lower and upper school, but above average in oral work in the upper school. Good examples exist in religious education where previous work reveals that students have written, sometimes at length, expressing a personal viewpoint in a letter, or discussing the points for or against women becoming Church of England priests. In design and technology, students can read accurately, expressively and with good understanding; writing is coherent, fluent and effective, but spelling is weaker in the lower sets. Students in the upper school speak clearly and adapt their speech for a wide range of circumstances.

11. Many students enter the school with below-average attainments in speaking and listening. A significant minority of students still has poor skills in speaking and listening after a term in Year 7, yet by Year 11, English students are able to read Henry V's St. Crispin's day speech showing the

character's vitality and force in encouraging the English to arms against the French. In geography, Year 9 able students expressed mature and sophisticated views in a presentation on conflicting interests in the exploitation of tropical rain forests. Standards improve over time given the below-average abilities in listening in Year 7 and, in most classes, standards in listening are average by Year 11. That said, in the lower school, many students respond to teachers' questions with one-word answers rather than in fuller sentences although by Year 11, standards in speaking are sound. Standards in reading are average throughout the school but a large minority in the lower school is below average. Students' written work improves from Year 7 to Year 11, but in English throughout lower school, most students have not written sufficiently extended or imaginative stories. Written work in textiles and food for example is well integrated with practical work and helps students to communicate their ideas and relate their designs to similar commercial applications.

12. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory but are in need of further whole school co-ordination. The mathematics department is attempting to co-ordinate a whole school numeracy initiative and has established some effective remediation of basic skills in Year 7. Mathematical vocabulary is being promoted on the walls of classrooms, but speaking and listening standards are low in many lessons. Within mathematics lessons attention to numeracy has developed since the last inspection, although students' preferences for formal written calculations are impeding their choice of more efficient mentally-based methods of computation. Algebra standards, particularly in the context of plotting graphs, are good with good examples in geography where students' decision-making skills enabled them to choose an appropriate graph or diagram to display information and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of different "solutions" to third world debt. Similarly students' work on hydrographs in Year 10 geography is not only challenging but also shows the department's good work in numeracy. The understanding of shape and space is satisfactory but linked measurement skills would benefit from more practical activities. Within mathematics, the strong emphasis on investigation and problem solving, reported in the previous inspection, is now much less evident in ordinary lessons and this is lessening the engagement of students in the process of learning to think mathematically.

13. Standards in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory. Most students of all ages are able to use computers independently, to log on to the network, and use basic software; for example, word-processing, to organise and present their work in a number of subject areas. There are no timetabled lessons exclusively for ICT throughout the school, and fewer than normal opportunities for ICT activities across the curriculum in other subject areas. Work in folders and in progress during the inspection, confirms below average standards. There are no examination courses in Years 10 and 11, and the achievement of students aged fifteen and sixteen is not assessed. There is, however, a taught ICT element in the new sixth form key skills programme.

14. ICT activities in the main school rely heavily on the efforts of individual teachers. Satisfactory to good teaching and learning, involving the use of computers, was observed in business studies, science, textiles, childcare, music, and in learning support. The best work and learning, results from challenging assignments as seen in business studies; in design work in textiles, where students are able to instantly observe alternative colour combinations for their waistcoat designs. Similar examples occur in science where teachers use computer programmes to model and simulate investigations with their students and in music where students' creative compositions are scored by computer. In design and technology, some students make good use of information communication technology for designing and to present their work neatly, but overall its use is below that normally seen in Years 10 and 11. Not all students have access to these applications or instruction. In art, students rarely use computers to generate and manipulate images. All students do not yet have a school e-mail address, although access to the Internet for research is possible from all networked computers. Students currently under-use this facility.

15. Standards seen in lessons and through interviews with students indicate that in the majority of subjects students' work is in line with the teachers' assessments. Most of the samples of work seen during the inspection were judged to be satisfactory in all years and were good in the sixth form. In the lower school, standards seen in lessons were very variable with high standards in art, above average in history and about average standards in English, science, geography, modern foreign languages, drama, and music. However, standards were below expectations in mathematics, physical education, dance, design and technology, religious education and well below expectations in information and

communication technology. There is considerable improvement in the upper school and standards observed were good or better in art, history, geography, music, the food and textiles aspects of design and technology, GCSE physical education, drama and dance. Mathematics was seen to be at the expected standards. However standards in French and religious education were below average as were electronics and graphics products. Information and communication technology standards remained poor.

16. Progress within subjects, particularly in the lower school, is too variable. Very good progress is made in subjects such as art, science, geography and history. Progress, particularly in the lower school, is restricted by the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of students. Students' learning and attitudes to work are not always as good as they should be and, whilst the majority have made satisfactory progress by the time they leave school, many, particularly boys, could do better. In English and science students make satisfactory progress over the course of Years 7-9, but progress in mathematics is unsatisfactory. However, by the end of Year 11 most students reach satisfactory standards, and therefore make at least satisfactory progress in all three subjects. Standards and progress in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory across the school because the school's arrangements for teaching this subject do not comply with statutory requirements. Overall, the progress of gifted and talented students is unsatisfactory in the lower school, because of weaknesses in sufficiently matching work to meet their needs. In the upper school few students achieve the higher grades although art is exemplary as the proportion of students gaining A and A* is well above the national average. The school has rightly targeted improvement in this area but the efforts to date have not enabled school to make the intended gains in all subjects.

17. Where students on the SEN register are withdrawn to the Learning Support Centre for a programme of literacy support, they make very good progress against the programme targets. Where SEN students are supported in lessons overall they make the same progress as others in the class. Where the class teacher and support assistant do not plan and work effectively together, or where teachers' lesson planning is insufficiently differentiated to meet their needs, SEN students do not make the progress expected of them.

18. The school treats seriously the inclusion issues and takes steps to monitor, analyse and act on issues arising from the performance of individual groups of students, for example boys and girls or those with SEN. All students on the SEN register at the end of Year 11 gain at least five GCSE examination passes at grades A*-G. This is a key target of the SEN faculty, based on their effort to fully include SEN students in the mainstream educational targets of the school. The school also sets targets to improve the performance of boys at GCSE and increase the numbers of students gaining the highest grades. It has been less successful in meeting these targets as action plans arising from the very good analysis of performance data are insufficiently focused on improving teaching strategies and the management of students' learning.

19. Systems are in place to track the performance of the tiny numbers of students from different minority ethnic backgrounds, those students who become pregnant or belong to travellers groups. The standards achieved by these students are at least satisfactory and are in line with expectations based on prior performance.

Sixth Form

20. Results in the sixth form, which first entered students only in 2001, relate exclusively to AS level. The overall pass rate at ninety per cent was above the national average. Attainment in individual subjects was variable often, though not always, reflecting the prior GCSE performance of the students. A total of thirty-six students took AS examinations in ten separate subjects. Approximately thirty-two per cent of grades were A/B and less than ten per cent were lower than grade D. Average points scores in art and history were good and in other subjects, apart from French and psychology, they were satisfactory. Detailed reports are provided, at the request of Ofsted, on five subjects in part D of this report. The subjects chosen in conjunction with the school were mathematics, biology, English, art and history. Where other subjects fell into the National Curriculum, or related areas such as geography or drama, judgements were made about overall standards achieved and seen. At the time of the inspection national comparisons were unavailable.

21. In art all students passed with nine students gaining grade A, one grade B and one grade D, a remarkable performance by any measure, confirming the quality of art provision and teaching that has resulted in the school achieving specialist arts college status. In history, all twenty-one students entered passed, with eleven gaining grades A/B, exceeding the school's predicted average points scores for its students, based on GCSE performance. GCE AS-Level results were good last year - the first year of the new sixth form. In English Literature all students who sat the examination gained at least a pass grade and fifty per cent gained a C grade or better with a third of candidates gaining the highest grades of A or B. English is a little more popular with girls than boys, and girls did marginally better in the AS level examination. In mathematics standards in AS level were rather variable and below national average. The group did well in relation to their GCSE results but some found the jump into A level difficult. In biology, the proportion of students who gained a pass grade was well below the national average, with no students obtaining the highest grades A and B. In relation to their GCSE results students did not achieve as well as might be expected. In drama, all students achieved at least a pass grade or better, four out of the ten candidates attained a C grade or better, boys did better than girls but no candidates obtained an A grade. In psychology, nineteen students out of twenty-two achieved a pass or better with one third obtaining a grade C or better. Two students obtained a B although none gained an A grade. In geography, ten of the twelve candidates passed, half with grade C or better and a quarter with grade B. In business studies, thirteen out of fourteen students passed with nearly half achieving grades A or B. Only one student took French and was ungraded. Standards seen in lessons were in line with the achievements in the AS examination

22. Overall standards in Year 12 are satisfactory or better. In art, standards are well above average. In history, standards are good as are standards in English and drama. Year 12 mathematicians are more confident and show good understanding. In biology standards are below average and are dependent on prior achievements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

23. The previous inspection report describes the majority of students as attentive, conscientious and keen to learn. Disappointingly, these characteristics have not been sustained and while attitudes and relationships are generally acceptable, behaviour around the school and in a significant number of lessons is unsatisfactory.

24. The school claims that it succeeds in developing mature and responsible young adults but there is considerable work to be done with students in the lower school in order to achieve this. This view is supported by the inspection. The behaviour of a significant minority of the students, particularly in the lower school, is unsatisfactory but there is significant improvement in the upper school due to the additional form tutor support, the more focused teaching and extra support given for examination preparation. The attitudes and behaviour of the sixth form students, who are products of Matravers school, are very good and this testifies to the good work done by the school to date.

25. The unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour are due to a number of factors. A significant minority of students join Matravers school with already poorly developed attitudes and high levels of immaturity; for example Local Authority statistics show a number have already been temporarily excluded in their primary schools. There is a low level of parental support and commitment for a minority of students. The significant recent expansion of the school and the consequent influx of new staff have led to an inconsistent implementation of the school's teaching and behaviour policies, especially in the lower school. This contributes to the significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching. A clear school ethos does exist which explicitly describes the behaviour required and detailed guidance for managing behaviour is given in the staff handbooks. Although considerable good staff training has recently been given on behaviour management, this ethos has been difficult to sustain. Staff are inconsistent in their use of the school's guidance and, consequently, expectations are unclear and standards are mixed. Despite good attempts by the school staff to encourage personal development and raise self esteem, a minority of students do not consider the impact of their actions on others and the majority of students who are keen to learn are obviously frustrated by the unsatisfactory behaviour which surrounds them. The school has considered a number of approaches to managing the behaviour of the most difficult students. A recent sanctuary model, where these students were internally excluded from lessons, has

been dropped in favour of more intense in-class support. The senior management have not reacted effectively enough to the difficulties this has presented in some classes.

26. Teachers sometimes have to work hard to maintain control in the classroom and during a significant number of lessons students were slow to settle and concentration was not sustained. This had a negative impact on learning, especially in the Years 7-9 and particularly in English, drama, mathematics, elements of design and technology, music in the lower school and modern foreign languages. Relationships are satisfactory overall and students respect those teachers who set high standards and do not compromise their expectations of pupil achievement.

27. Examples of good and very good behaviour exist, particularly where the teaching motivates, is challenging, well planned and delivered at a pace which demands concentration and involvement. Art illustrates the point well. Lessons are carefully organised to provide good sequences of work that challenge and develop students' skills and ideas and because the quality of teaching is so good the quality of students' learning in art is also good or very good. Students enjoy art activities, are always well engaged in their work and keen to succeed, and behaviour is almost always good or very good. In the one weaker lesson seen, there was insufficient challenge in the work set so there was little to engage the enthusiasm of the Year 7 students. The link between inappropriate student behaviour and insufficiently motivating work was clearly demonstrated by this lesson. Excellent and very good behaviour is seen in most subjects and year groups and with students of all abilities. In all cases, there is a direct link between the quality of teaching and the response of the students. For example, students in the lowest sets in Year 11 and Year 9 were well motivated, keen to learn and take part in the lessons because the work was well planned, taught in an interesting way and the students were regularly given information on how well they were doing.

28. There was no evidence of bullying or oppression during the inspection and the school has well rehearsed procedures to respond to incidents if they do occur. The number of students excluded permanently is very low and the school prefers to use fixed-term exclusions as the preferred deterrent in its efforts to keep even the most disruptive students at school. Consequently the number of fixed term exclusions is significantly higher than average and there is some dissatisfaction from parents and students about the effectiveness of this approach on long-term behaviour change. Nevertheless while the school has work to do to improve behaviour, the overall impact of this strategy is to retain student involvement in school life and meets the Governor's aim to remain inclusive and give all students the opportunity to succeed. The current examination successes show the policy to be effective. Students do have opportunities to take responsibility and demonstrate personal initiative. For example, through hosting visitors and helping staff when on reception or front of house at events. The students involved in these activities are interested and enthusiastic.

29. The school does attempt to create a sense of order and despite the high incidence of unsatisfactory behaviour there were a number of lessons where respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others was evident, for example, art, history and dance. On these occasions attitudes were responsible and students were well motivated and interested in learning. Some students' respect for the school environment is unsatisfactory and their positive response is not encouraged by the general shabbiness of the older classrooms and facilities.

30. Attendance continues to be good. It is currently slightly above the national average and there is a lower than usual incidence of unauthorised absence and this reflects the students' overall positive response to the quality of the provision available at the school. The school has the capacity to address the issues of unsatisfactory behaviour and has sufficient examples of good practice in behaviour management and teaching to build on within many subject areas. The energies that have made the school successful in many respects, and enabled it to successfully manage the recent major developments, need to be harnessed to resolve the weaknesses in these areas.

Sixth form

31. Attitudes and values in the sixth form are strong. The students show mature personal insight and are enthusiastic about learning. They set themselves challenging targets and are keen to make progress.

32. During lessons interest is sustained and students appreciate the range of subjects offered and the teaching provided. Students' views about the school are strong and there is a very high level of appreciation about the sixth form and its contribution to the development of the local community. However, their involvement in the life of the lower school is undeveloped and opportunities for encouraging and supporting younger students have not been explored.

33. Attitudes to the development of personal and learning skills are very positive and students in the sixth form reliably have good study skills and habits. Their ability to work both collaboratively and independently is well practised and relationships are very good.

34. Respect for others is built on strong values of interest and appreciation, and talking with sixth form students during the inspection provided verification of the view that a 'very strong and capable group of students make up the school's first sixth form'.

35. Attendance levels in the sixth form are good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

36. The proportion of good or better teaching has improved since the last inspection. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching remains about the same and although teaching has many strengths, the unsatisfactory aspects of teaching, mainly in the lower school, requires a judgement that overall teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching was good or better in around six out of every ten lessons and nearly half of these were very good. No poor or very poor teaching was observed. Excellent and very good lessons were seen in art, English, mathematics, science, history, geography, design and technology (food and textiles), physical education, drama, music and in learning support. In a significant minority of lessons, unsatisfactory teaching is holding back students' learning and failing to manage the unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes displayed by some students. These problems are mainly but not exclusively in lessons in Years 7-9. This said, given the breadth of excellent, very good and good teaching across a wide range of subjects, the school has the ability, capacity and the resources needed to bring about the required improvements in teaching.

37. The school has gone through a period of staff turbulence caused by the expansion of the school population, some difficulties in recruiting specialists and by some long-term absences caused by illness. The overall effects of these are that there has been a larger than average turnover of staff, resulting in over twenty teachers either new to teaching or new to the school. Overall this influx of new staff has been very positive and has brought new skills and valuable experiences to the school. A number of students' learning, particularly in French and design and technology, has suffered from temporary teaching cover and they have begun to feel let down, leading to disaffection with the school. The systems for monitoring and supporting teachers are not consistently implemented and this sometimes means teachers have to cope as best they can in the face of some challenging student attitudes and behaviour.

38. Where teaching is good or very good students are provided with work that is adapted to suit different needs, so that all students gain new knowledge and skills. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson about the Amazon rain forest there are demanding tasks specifically aimed at more able students, with well paced and varied tasks during the lesson to create impact, generate debate and engage the interests of all students. In a Year 7 English lesson, there were rapidly paced, short activities designed to improve spelling, all students were fully involved, including students with special educational needs, and learning was checked regularly by asking students to explain elements of the lesson. In science, students in the lower sets in all year groups are engaged by well planned, interesting and demanding lessons where they are told how well they are doing and feel confident to talk about their work. In art, supportive individual tuition encourages and achieves very high attainment, students have confidence in their teachers and are prepared to take risks. The combination of clearly explained, challenging, interesting tasks developed through a variety of activities, with frequent recognition of learning taking place, characterises the teaching in lessons judged to be good or better throughout the school. In these lessons, students' interest in learning was maintained and behaviour, even when challenging, was well managed and never a problem.

39. The teaching of English is good. Literacy skills are developed well and students, particularly those with poor literacy skills on entry to the school, overall reach satisfactory standards because of this good teaching. There are examples of good literacy teaching in other subject areas including geography and history. The quality of teaching in mathematics is unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 7-9, although overall there is a reasonable proportion of good or very good teaching that can act as models for less confident or experienced staff. The teaching of numeracy is developing through the involvement of the mathematics department and the school in the national strategy. Good systems have been established through the Learning Support Centre to teach numeracy skills to those students whose skills are weak in this area. The teaching of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory as there are no time-tabled lessons for this subject. Satisfactory and good teaching of information and communication technology skills are seen in a number of subjects, for example, business studies, textiles, music, science and in the Learning Support Centre.

40. Teaching of students with SEN is generally very good. Relationships in the Learning Support Centre (LSC) are good and students work well. Teachers and education support assistants work well together to provide support in the LSC and in subject lessons. Assessment and record keeping are thorough, providing good tracking of students' progress.

41. Unsatisfactory teaching was identified in a number of subjects. Sometimes these were isolated incidents, as in physical education, dance, drama, and art where subsequently satisfactory or better teaching was seen. In mathematics, French, design and technology and religious education more fundamental issues exist. Although unsatisfactory behaviour was a feature of almost all unsatisfactory lessons, this was not always the root cause. For example, in Year 11 French and electronics lessons, frequent changes in staffing had a negative impact on all learning because the teacher was unable to deal with disaffection for the subject that has built up over a period of time. In Year 7 and Year 9 mathematics lessons, there was unsatisfactory new learning because the tasks contained insufficient challenge to motivate and excite the students. In physical education in Year 8, the teacher took too long to get activities going, and when they did it was to repeat rather than extending existing skills and knowledge. In religious education, the teaching focused more on social rather than religious concepts and did not always question or engage in order to meet the needs of all students. In English, drama, dance and science, some teachers' lack of experience meant they had insufficient skills and strategies to manage the behaviour of the children and did not adjust their teaching accordingly. In design and technology low level tasks delivered at a relaxed paced were not sufficiently demanding and students failed to engage in the work.

42. The school has identified a need to improve teaching for particular groups of students for example, boys, supporting gifted and talented students to improve the higher grades in GCSE and supporting pupils with special educational needs. While each department produces a development plan in order to address these issues, these plans do not sufficiently describe what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning in the classroom, consequently, some teaching is not always sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of these groups within a class. Good examples exist in geography, science and art which can act as models to support improvement in teaching for these groups of students across the school. The school works hard to identify and teach students with special educational needs and is very successful in this area. The quality of teaching in the LSC is very good. Special educational needs (SEN) staff know the Year 7 to 9 students well and work from individual education plans (IEPs) that specify literacy targets and give guidance on specific learning and/or behavioural problems that may be encountered in the classroom. Relationships in the LSC are very good overall and students work well in the lessons. Students with low levels of numeracy are assessed by SEN staff and given additional support within the mathematics department. Teachers and education support assistants work well together in delivering a well-planned programme of literacy support to students with special educational needs.

43. Subject teaching staff in the main school, who prepare work for those students withdrawn from their lessons to the LSC, effectively support them. This enables the education support assistants to manage the learning of small groups of up to three students for the structured hour they are withdrawn, with the oversight of SEN teaching staff. The very good records kept of students' progress over the six week modular programme, show that they make at least good progress with their studies. Small groups

of students whose reading age is well below national expectations are taught by learning support teachers in the Centre and make good progress against the targets set for them.

44. Most education support assistants who give support to students on the SEN register are attached to subject departments and thereby get to know the department, as well as the students they target. Where education support assistants are brought into the planning and preparation for lessons their support is very effective and valued by teachers and students. They give specific support to target students and more general support as is appropriate and indicated by the teacher. Where they are unsure of the expectations of the lesson and where behaviour is disrupting the teaching and learning, the impact of their support is weakened. Newly arrived and unqualified support staff are not always effectively prepared for their role and may not feel comfortable in that role in the first few weeks. Hence they are not fully effective in the classroom at that time. Two education support assistants give one to one support in mainstream classes to two students with more complex special needs. They have an excellent relationship with those students and enable them to make very good progress against targets set for them.

45. The inconsistencies of teaching approaches to the adaptation of work for different abilities, the ways to provide students with challenging tasks and the support they need to accomplish them, and issues of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, require urgent improvement. There are many examples of teaching and learning within the school and across departments that can serve as models of good practice and these should be disseminated across the whole school, with particular focus on the links between positive attitudes and behaviour, purposeful learning and effective teaching.

Sixth form

46. The quality of teaching in mathematics, English, art, history and biology was inspected. Overall, teaching in the subjects inspected is good with some very good features.

47. In most sixth form lessons seen teachers had expert subject knowledge and secure grasp of sixth form course requirements. In English, for example, good teaching not only conveyed the text to students, but also the teacher's enthusiasm for and insight into the nuances of meaning within the text, when exploring the writing techniques of Thomas Hardy. In art, students are able to develop high level technical skills and intense individually expressive work because of the close, detailed individual teaching support they receive. In mathematics, students receive clear, supportive teaching of complicated techniques. In history, teaching encourages students to develop critical approaches to historical concepts and perspectives. Biology teachers have good subject knowledge but there is a limited range of teaching methods. In some history teaching there is some uncertainty about AS course requirements.

48. Students' work is well marked and assessed, so that they have a clear idea of how well they are doing in relation to course requirements, and they get good guidance about how to improve their work. Students value the quality of teaching they receive. For all subjects inspected, the good quality of teaching has been a key factor in the rapidly established success of the new sixth form.

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

49. The curriculum has many strengths, and a number of improvements have been made since the time of the last inspection. However, as in 1997, it also has a number of weaknesses and areas where it fails to comply with statutory requirements, and is therefore unsatisfactory overall.

50. Teaching time is a strength, it meets or exceeds national recommendations at all levels. Enrichment through arts college activities is already good and has the potential to be very good as the college provision develops. In its early days, the arts college has improved an already good arts curriculum, adding a rich range of extra-curricular activity and links with the community, including other schools: it promises to stimulate creativity across the curriculum and to impact on school ethos.

51. The development of the sixth form is another very positive development. The staying-on rate has improved, and the aspirations of students and the whole community are beginning to rise.

52. The school has made other improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection:

- areas in which the curriculum did not comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum, such as the schemes of work for art, history and geography, have largely been brought into line, but ICT remains a weakness across the whole curriculum;
- literacy and numeracy: the school has begun to co-ordinate whole-school initiatives in both of these basic skills areas. Literacy is further ahead, with a policy which is beginning to be enacted. Good teaching of both literacy and numeracy takes place in a number of subjects, and the impact is increasing as co-ordination improves;
- personal, social and health education (PSHE): a promising new scheme has just been introduced. The programme is well organised and well led, with a good mix of elements taught by tutors and those taught by a specialist team. Careful implementation and evaluation alongside other developments will be necessary to ensure that the programme has the desired effect on school ethos;
- careers education: criticised in the last inspection report, this is now well planned, led and delivered from Year 7 to 13, with good work experience programmes and good quality, regular support from the local careers service. Careers education makes a good contribution to students' progress and motivation;
- links with partner schools and colleges, described as mixed in 1997, are now good. The advent of the sixth form consortium has improved collaboration with partners, guidance on to courses is generally good and the proportion of students which stays in education post-16 has increased. Further improvements to primary links have also taken place. The arts college has brought rich opportunities for teachers of dance and instrumental music to work in local primary schools, and links in English, mathematics and special needs remain strong, enhanced by work in literacy and numeracy. Students are carefully inducted as they move from their primary school to Matravers.

53. The provision for students with special educational needs, was very good at the time of the last inspection. It remains good throughout the school, and is very good for those students and students with statements of special educational need.

54. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities and by good links with the community. A rich range of activities is outlined in the Governors' annual report to parents, including many school based theatrical and arts productions, contributions to the Corsham Festival and the "Singing Village" project with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Such opportunities are particularly strong in the expressive arts, promoted by the arts college bid, and in physical education and games. There is a wide choice of activity in enrichment week, and a range of residential visits, including several abroad, for example a French exchange, and orchestra and choir visit to Salzburg and Vienna. Many students are involved in a wide range of competitive team and individual sports and perform well at local, county and some at a national level. A range of instruments is taught by the peripatetic music service. These opportunities significantly benefit students' learning and their attitudes to work and to school.

55. Community links are extensive and well developed. The school has a relationship both locally and internationally with a variety of organisations and individuals who support achievement in the classroom and have been instrumental in the schools successful bid to become a specialist arts college. Visit abroad and support for the 'children of Chernobyl' has provided many opportunities across the school to learn about and appreciate other experiences and cultures. Similarly, as part of the world wide community contribution through the Arts College, links with a school in Gambia have been established and the impending visit by a small group of students is eagerly awaited. Local specialists come into school on a regular basis to work with students e.g. drumming and this enhances their opportunities to learn.

56. Arts links with partner primary schools are particularly strong and the positive impact of this work on the local school community has been substantial, providing development for both students and teachers. Other good local activity includes the town centre information "millennium board", play group

support and business mentoring and design work with a local packaging company. The schools annual sponsored walk is a major community event and raises an impressive sum of money. Students in the sixth form have made a commitment to regular community action each week, the school does not sufficiently co-ordinate this activity and delivery is inconsistent.

57. The curriculum has three main areas of weakness. First, there are several areas in which it does not comply with statutory requirements:

- ICT does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum at any stage in the school. It is neither taught as a separate subject nor has a secure place in the subjects of the curriculum;
- the curriculum in design and technology also does not meet requirements: it is not taught to a large number of students in the upper school, and the required elements of systems and control are missing;
- RE is not taught in the sixth form;
- although the frequency of assemblies has increased, collective worship still does not comply with the law. Although they are well-organised, enjoyable and uplifting starts to the day, assemblies are neither daily nor acts of worship.

58. Secondly, although religious education is now taught to all students in the main school in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus (it was not in 1997), it is taught by geographers and historians. In the upper school, it is taught in blocks of time during which the teaching of geography or history is suspended. In Year 7, students' written work in RE is interspersed with their history and geography. All of this lowers the status of RE and makes its curriculum disjointed and ineffective.

59. Thirdly, the curriculum is only partly matched to the needs of students. The adjustment of the curriculum for the needs of more- and less-able students is patchy and generally inadequate. At an individual or small-group level, the adjustment and support are often good. There is good provision for a small group of disaffected students to follow individual programmes which include extra work experience and attendance at college, good support from the special needs department for those with learning difficulties, and occasional opportunities for talented students to attend master-classes. While these "branches" are good, the larger-scale "trunk", the design and planning of the curriculum, is unsatisfactory. The lack of a second modern language, and the poor organisation and low standards at GCSE in French, restrict opportunity for able students. The curriculum in the upper school lacks courses, such as vocational GCSEs, targeted at those for whom the full, conventional range of GCSE courses is inadequate.

60. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. There are some strengths and weaknesses of provision within this overall judgement.

61. Spiritual: the overall provision is unsatisfactory because while there are opportunities during the school day for spiritual values to be considered many of these are missed. Assemblies and form time rarely provide opportunities for collective acts of worship. Overall opportunities for spiritual development are underdeveloped in many subjects. In religious education, topics exploring personal responses, for example, to death, are underdeveloped so that overall religious education is making little contribution to students' spiritual development. Mathematics makes no particular impact, in science there is some consideration of alternative accounts of the beginnings of life and the Universe, and in art and geography students are encouraged to observe and marvel at the world around them. Provision is also better in some English, drama, history and physical education lessons. The school encourages links with the community that provide spiritual development, for example, a visit to the school by the Bishop of Ramsbury.

62. Moral: the overall provision for moral education is satisfactory although religious education again misses opportunities. There are topics that could raise moral issues in students' minds, for example, considering whether one "has the right to create a life thoughtlessly", but they are dealt with in a factual way, with little consideration for their moral or ethical dimension. Moral issues are raised in drama, with particularly effective work seen in a Year 11 lesson dealing with visible and invisible disabilities. Geography considers the ethics of globalisation, with this theme taken up again in some assemblies, and also covered by a visiting speaker leading discussion with sixth formers. Some moral issues related

to the development of computing and the internet are raised in business studies, and in art students are encouraged to value the work and ideas of other artists. In mathematics, in the lower school particularly, opportunities for moral and social development related to the habits and values of learning are not made explicit.

63. Social: students are able to work co-operatively in groups. For example, in art, students interact, discuss and apportion tasks to generate a successful outcome for all to take pride in. In music, social development is supported through extra-curricular activities which bring students together from all year groups, for example in orchestral playing and performances. Some of these activities extend into residential and work experience. The arts and physical education have a good record of public events, performances and exhibitions that celebrate students' achievement and develop students' social skills. In geography, science and technology, aspects of environmental care, the impact of technological development on society, and effects of globalisation are used to raise students' awareness of social issues. Social development is overall satisfactory and often good by the end of the upper school, however, a significant minority of students behave badly in lessons and do not take into consideration the impact of their behaviour on other students.

64. Cultural: the school provides opportunities for cultural development through a variety of activities. There are visits to museums, theatres and art galleries, where students can experience the wide range of artistic, musical and theatrical contributions to our culture. This is linked to lessons in school, where students' work is often inspired by other artists, composers and writers. References to European and other world cultures and traditions play a part, encouraging an awareness of multi-culturalism. There is a link to a school in The Gambia, with twinning arrangements and exchange visits in the active planning stages. In geography, there is a significant contribution through attention to issues of inequality, sustainable development and justice in the developed and the third world, encouraging students to take a wider cultural and global view. These opportunities for cultural development are good overall, but there is room for development in other areas, for example in mathematics, religious education and design and technology.

Sixth form

65. The sixth form is new and has only sixty-nine students, and so the range of courses on offer at the Matravers site is small. It is however adequate, and the range on offer within the consortium of schools and the college is very good. However, the statutory provision for religious education is not met and this is unsatisfactory. The school has evaluated the first year of the sixth form well, involving the students in the evaluation, and has made changes and plans for change, such as to increase the range of sciences on offer, as a result.

66. At present, there is little enrichment of students' A/AS-level courses: there is no general studies programme, and the school's efforts to teach key skills have been inconclusive. Work in many subjects contributes effectively to students' skills of communication and their ability to use number, but this is not brought together into a coherent key skills package; neither is it combined with a good programme of ICT skills. Students' skills of decision-making and team and independent working are well developed.

67. Students are involved in the wide range of activities available within the main school and contribute well to extra-curricular and other opportunities. Within this context their spiritual, moral, social; and cultural development is good. Students interviewed were mature, aware of their current and possible contribution to the school and the wider community and had a clear sense of local and world issues. Given the recent development of the sixth form, the wider contribution and the calming influence of the sixth formers to the main school is yet to be fully developed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

68. At the time of the last inspection, the school's arrangements for ensuring its students were well cared for were judged to be satisfactory. The 'personal tutor' system and academic monitoring arrangements were good but needed better oversight by senior managers. Provision for students with special educational needs was effective. The school dealt promptly and effectively with any instances of bullying but there was some unsatisfactory behaviour. The quality of teachers' assessment varied markedly and the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning was underdeveloped.

69. Evidence from this inspection indicates that where the school was previously judged to be working effectively, it has continued to do so but, despite much effort, and the development of a clear and helpful behaviour policy, the incidence of unsatisfactory behaviour has increased. The senior management, the governing body and many of the students themselves and their parents identify behaviour as a key issue. The senior management view is that there is considerable work to be done with the students to improve their behaviour but this takes time. They suggest that by the time the students reach the upper school and take their examinations students behave well and attitudes improve. In the main this assertion is true. The school has made a number of good attempts to address the issue of behaviour. The additional pastoral support given in the upper school along with the support in and out of school time for examinations is effective, and students do become mature young adults as the current sixth form students demonstrate. Form tutors have time built into their teaching day in order to meet individually with their students. New approaches have been adopted this year, including, additional training in behaviour management for all staff at the beginning of the school year and to newly qualified staff throughout the term. A good computerised system for recording the causes of unsatisfactory behaviour has recently been introduced as part of the Arts College developments. These systems have yet to fully impact on the unsatisfactory behaviour and further intervention is required in order to speed up the progress of the schools' plans.

70. Many aspects of the school's arrangements for caring for its students are well thought out and are effective. Procedures to address statutory requirements relating to child protection and attendance, for example, are good. There is a designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and the necessary training has been undertaken. There are good links with the Education Welfare Service and good procedures for securing and monitoring attendance. Unauthorised attendance is low and levels of authorised attendance are satisfactory. Attendance figures are included in newsletters and here, as in other areas, the school communicates well with parents. Interim reports are sent home at the mid-point of the year to ensure parents are kept up-to-date on their child's progress and statutory reports meet requirements, other than in respect of the assessment of information technology, where levels were not published in 2000.

71. The school gives great emphasis to the pastoral roles of year heads and tutors and its 'Tutor Contact Time' system works effectively. Additional tutors are assigned to forms in the upper school this improves significantly the level of monitoring and support given to these students and contributes significantly to the improvement of students' attitudes and behaviour as students progress through the school. Tutors have a key role in the monitoring of pupil targets and the review of homework planners. Many perform both this function, and their responsibilities in the recently revised and improved programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE), very well. Provision for careers education and work experience is satisfactory. The arrangements for academic monitoring are very good. The school has established a systematic and effective approach to the identification of students who need to be 'pushed' if they are to succeed in GCSE and there are frequent meetings between these students and key staff to discuss progress. However, the school looks constantly to address the needs of individuals, and parents confirm that, in this area of its work, it is sensitive and supportive. One parent, whose child had been ill before an examination, reported that 'the school could not have done more'. Similarly, parents praised the effort individual teachers put into examination preparation and particularly valued the extra lessons given outside school time. Equally, in its induction arrangements, both into the school and at transition into the sixth form, it works hard to ensure that new students and potential sixth form students settle quickly and confidently into the school's routines.

72. When questioned, students state that they like the school. They feel secure and confirm that, should they be in difficulty, they could confidently approach members of staff to ask for help. The school has a comprehensive system for seeking the views of students. For example, year groups are surveyed about their perceptions of the quality of tutor time, examination preparation, early experiences in Year 7

and induction procedures. The school analyses these responses and gives them careful consideration. The support and guidance offered to students by the school are, therefore, good overall.

73. There is very little bullying; parents confirm that should there be oppressive behaviour, it is dealt with promptly and effectively. However, although the number of permanent exclusions is very low, there have been many fixed term exclusions, indicating that the school's behaviour management systems, whilst clear and understood by students, have had less impact than they should on improving immediate behaviour problems. The system does however retain students' engagement with the school and has some overall benefits in final GCSE successes.

74. Given the management concerns over behaviour, the school has sensibly provided all staff with training on behaviour management, and maintains satisfactory levels of break and mid-day supervision, it has not, however, been consistently able to establish and maintain the boundaries of acceptable conduct particularly in the lower school. Despite the efforts of year heads and senior staff, there is some deterioration in students' behaviour in the course of the day with examples of unruliness and indiscipline both in lessons and outside. Other than in respect of newly qualified teachers, the school has not sufficiently monitored the quality of teaching in order to determine how far the causes of unsatisfactory behaviour lie in the students' response to teaching they receive. Arts College funding has been used to adopt a sophisticated daily incident log, generated by computer, that alerts senior staff to any emerging problems in good time. However, the procedures for using this monitoring to promoting good behaviour are much less effective and are unsatisfactory overall. The monitoring systems have the potential to provide important data as to the causes of disruption and therefore enable the school to focus on the specific actions needed to improve behaviour.

75. Procedures for assessing students' achievements are satisfactory. In some subjects, such as English, history, geography, art, music and aspects of physical education, they are good. In others, such as science and mathematics they are satisfactory but concentrate more on recording assessment than on using it to inform planning. There is insufficient assessment of pupil's standards and progress in information technology, French and design and technology. The assessment and support offered to students with special education needs are good, just as they were in the previous inspection. Across the school, there is too little use of assessment to set curriculum targets or to refine teaching and learning.

76. However, the school has established a very effective system for monitoring the effectiveness of departments. The use of performance data to monitor and promote pupil and subject success is well-established, well-informed and rigorously pursued. Line management of departments' standards and targets by senior staff is regular and challenging and has successfully created an ethos in which middle managers know how they are performing and what they must achieve if the school is to attain the overall targets it has set itself. This model is well developed in the upper school but as yet is not sufficiently well developed to fully impact on teaching and learning in Years 7-9.

77. The school continues to offer reliable care and support for the benefit of all students. Students and parents are enthusiastic about its 'friendliness' and the school is held in high regard by the local community for the safe atmosphere that it provides. Pastoral care is strong and there are comprehensive health and safety arrangements built around a well-developed infrastructure, which allows a flexible response to individual needs. Overall systems are in place to monitor health and safety matters, good procedures are in place to conduct risk assessments and monitor electrical safety and fire precautions. A daily log of concerns is kept in the staff room in order to alert the caretaker of immediate concerns. A number of minor health and safety issues were identified during the course of the inspection and reported to the senior management for action.

78. The Head of Key Stage 3 is the designated person for child protection and close liaison is maintained with relevant authorities concerning the well being of students. School staff know the students very well and both teachers and support staff make a significant contribution to the provision of a safe school environment.

Sixth form

79. Students entering the sixth form at Matravers school are well-cared for. The school ensures that appropriate careers guidance and guidance on post-16 opportunities are made available to students leaving Year 11 and the information it provides extends well beyond the options taught on its own campus. Potential AS and A level students are fully informed about the range of courses available in other centres and the school organises 'induction' days at Trowbridge Sixth Form Centre, which is the 'host' school from which its own provision is franchised. Students entering the Sixth Form are given a full day's teaching in the subjects they are planning to study so that they have experience of advanced level courses before finalising their options. The school discusses options with students to ensure they do not select inappropriate courses but the final decision is taken by the student not the school. This has led to some students finding the advanced courses very demanding.

Assessment

80. Once in the sixth form, students' progress is carefully monitored. The same system operating in the main school to track students' progress is used in the sixth form to identify students whose performance needs to be 'boosted' and the school keeps students and parents well-informed about their progress. Marking is generally systematic and thorough, grading is clear and the school makes every effort to ensure that students have a realistic sense of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.

81. The school provides sixth formers with opportunities to take responsibility within the school and has established a sixth form committee whose members are articulate and well-informed. In their questionnaire returns, students confirmed that they are given opportunities to express their views and feel free to question and contribute; the school is fully committed to its new sixth formers, gives them a 'voice' and listens to what they have to say. As is the case with many schools, some staff do not yet feel fully confident of their grasp of the requirements of the new AS and A level examinations. Whilst there have been appropriate opportunities for professional development, more are required if staff are to 'pitch' teaching appropriately. Equally, staff need to use assessment information more purposefully to inform their own teaching and ensure that a wider range of teaching approaches is consistently used in all subjects so that students are encouraged to participate actively in lessons and thereby develop the skills, understanding and self-confidence needed to cope with the demands of advanced level courses.

Advice, support and guidance

82. The advice, support and guidance given to students is at an early stage of development. Students are in the process of applying for university and, after an uncertain start, the process is now well underway. The systems to provide this support require further consolidation and the direct management of a head of sixth form. Students interviewed and those who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the support available from teachers if they were struggling with their studies or if they had personal problems. Overall they felt they were treated as mature adults and they were listened to by the school, although a significant minority tended to disagree with this view although not strongly. Careers advice and guidance is available although this was rated least favourably by the students who completed the questionnaire. Notwithstanding this response, the majority of students interviewed had a very clear understanding of what they wished to do and what was needed both academically and socially to achieve their goals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

83. The quality of school links with parents continues to be a good feature of the school. A wide range of information is provided through the school prospectus, the Governors' annual report to parents, the gazette, consultation evenings, home visits and annual reports on student progress. Many parents have very positive views about what the school does to help students make good progress. School staff maintain an 'open door approach' to parent concerns and complaints are taken seriously and resolved quickly. Special events are well attended and enjoyed by parents.

84. The school provides good and often very good information about students' progress. For all year groups, a mini report with anticipated grades is provided early in the year to inform parents about potential progress towards attainment targets. This is followed up by a more detailed written analysis of

performance later in the year and both are supported by a consultation evening where attainment and progress are discussed with parents and students. Personal targets are explicitly included and clear guidance is offered about future direction and action required but this detail is inconsistent across the curriculum. Parents were very supportive of this process and of the information it provides, particularly in the upper school with regard to progress towards GCSE examinations. They were particularly impressed by the extra support provided in preparation for GCSE examinations given by the teachers outside lesson time.

85. The majority of parents make a satisfactory contribution to students' education through their involvement in pupil planners and homework, by their attendance at parents' evenings and by offering practical support during school events. There is a small parents association which works hard to supplement school funds.

86. A significant minority of parents is critical of several areas of the school's work, especially behaviour, homework, and the closeness of their relationship with the school. The inspection team agreed with their concerns over behaviour but found that the school did provide appropriate homework although provision was unsatisfactory in music in the lower school and design and technology overall and French in the upper school. The school works hard to communicate with parents and frequently sends important letters and reports through the post at its own expense rather than use the less reliable student mail. The school has recently introduced an excellent postcard scheme, designed by students, which are sent home when students do well in academic and social aspects of school life.

87. The school has also introduced a Home-School Agreement jointly recognised by the school and parents at the initial registration of the student. This agreement clearly and helpfully describes the expectations and responsibilities of the school as well as those of the parents and their children. While this agreement is met in the main by the school and the majority of parents, not all parents are fully supportive. For example a substantial minority of Year 7 parents did not attend the recent parents' meeting held with their form tutor to outline their child's progress in their first term in school. Unfortunately the attendance was poorest for the two Year 7 forms that have been targeted by the school because of their overall unsatisfactory behaviour.

Sixth Form

88. The parents have an overwhelming positive and well justified view of the development of the sixth form at Matravers School. The success of the provision was highlighted at the parents meeting with the Registered Inspector. Parents at this meeting gave positive support for the work done by the school, the induction process, the quality of teaching and feedback on progress and the many success achieved at AS level sometimes beyond their and their child's expectation. Some concerns were raised however over the support provided by the school in preparation for university and with general careers advice. The student survey was completed by fifty-six of the sixty-seven students, and the overall response was positive. In the main students agreed that the school information and induction were helpful. They thought they were taught well, encouraged to study independently and teachers were accessible if they had difficulties. They were most concerned over levels of careers advice and the information given about their progress. These areas of weakness have been recognised by the school and remedial action is being taken.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

89. The school has undergone a number of significant and in the main successful changes since the last inspection as a direct result of good leadership by the Governing Body and the senior and middle management of the school. Student numbers have increased considerably. The school has been very effective in securing a steady rise in GCSE performance so that results are above national averages and substantially exceed the performance of schools of a similar type. The governing body, in conjunction with the school and with the full support of the local community has invested considerable resources, time and energy in pursuing the establishment of a sixth form and applying for Arts College status. The sixth form, was created in September 2000 as a franchised facility from the Trowbrige Sixth Form Centre but the school now the full support of the Local Education Authority and the local Learning and Skills Council to develop as an 11-18 institution in its own right. Arts college status was gained

from September 2001, an impressive achievement given the competitive nature of the process and the requirement to raise substantial financial support through sponsorship. Alongside these major developments staff numbers have increased dramatically and combined with other staff changes this has resulted in situation where half of the teachers have two years or less experience in the school. While attainment of students on entry has improved in line with the national picture and is broadly average an increasing proportion of students starting at Matravers School have below average expectations of behaviour and lack maturity.

90. These fundamental changes have presented substantial challenges to the governance and leadership of the school and the large scale projects have been managed well by the respective deputy headteachers and with considerable success notwithstanding a number of staffing problems and long term illnesses faced by the school. However, while the school has made significant progress, there are weaknesses and fundamental issues that need urgent attention by the leadership of the school in relation to the management of behaviour, the improvement of teaching and the consistent implementation of the schools' teaching and behaviour policies. These weaknesses are well known by the senior staff and governors and strategies to address these issues are identified in the comprehensive school development plan and supported by the Arts College plan. A number of these features have come to a head during the term of the inspection and combined with the unexpected long term absence of a number of staff the school finds itself in some difficulties. The strategies and systems, adopted by the senior management in order to resolve these issues, have not had sufficient impact on improving the unsatisfactory behaviour and teaching. The time scales within the plans are too long and because of their key roles in the recent major initiatives, the responsibility for achieving improvements in behaviour has not been clearly set as a target for the individual senior managers. However, given the success in managing the recent changes, the leadership now has the capacity to focus its energies in resolving these issues.

91. The aims and values of the school are explicitly promoted through school's very good prospectus and Governors' annual reports to parents. The school's aim that "Learning, responsibility, openness and friendliness will be at the heart of the Matravers' community" supported by an eight point statement of commitment identifies appropriate expectations of the school and the contribution to be made by all partners in the school community. In the main this commitment is reflected in the life and work of the school and given the academic and other success of the school and the high achievements of students compared with similar schools, overall the school is successful in meeting this commitment.

92. The headteacher, together with the senior management team, comprising two deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers- one on long term sick leave-, the two heads of Key Stage 3 and 4 and a head of department, work well together meeting regularly to conduct school business. Minutes of these meetings are helpfully shared with the governing body thus keeping them informed of the daily life of the school. There is an effective school development planning process involving the senior management and middle management meeting in a residential setting in order to review and plan for the following year. The priorities identified in the current plan are appropriate but do not focus sharply enough on the fundamental issues of improving behaviour and teaching.

93. In addition to ensuring the success of the Arts College bid and the sixth form developments, the senior management has focussed their and the heads of faculty efforts in developing a sophisticated monitoring and evaluation process targeted on improving individual students' achievements. This has included school, department and individual student target setting and the monitoring of department performance particularly at GCSE level. Each deputy, while leading one of the major initiatives, is responsible for monitoring individual faculty performance. This process is supported through a very good target setting and data management system that is well managed by the assistant headteacher.

94. Overall the system of performance review is very good in the upper school and satisfactory in the lower school. Departments and staff are challenged by the process and are required to produce action plans and respond to termly monitoring reviews. However the action plans produced are not always focussed sharply enough on what individual teachers need to do to improve their quality of teaching or students' learning, or on what students need to know, do or understand in order to improve performance. Similarly the monitoring does not include the regular observation of teaching by senior or

middle managers in order to identify and support the improvements in teaching needed or to adequately share and learn from the very good and excellent teaching present in some faculties.

95. The performance review has predominantly focussed on GCSE outcomes and Year 9 core subject tests. The analysis of lower school performance in all subjects through comparing and moderating teacher assessments, the monitoring of teaching quality and the development of strategies for improving learning behaviour is underdeveloped. This is a key contributory factor to the higher levels of unsatisfactory teaching and attitudes and behaviour in the lower school. Examples of good, very good and excellent teaching, learning and attitudes and behaviour do exist across all subjects and year groups. The current practice at whole school level or within departments does not enable such good work to be shared effectively or sufficient work to be done to identify and improve teaching.

96. The governing body provides considerable support and challenge to the school and its leadership team. They have a clear, well articulated, vision for the school as being at the heart of the Westbury Community and have pursued the sixth Form and Arts College status, particularly the community provision and opportunities for lifelong learning, as vehicles for achieving and expanding this vision. They have secured commitment in the local community, with partner primary schools, fellow secondary schools and with the Local Education Authority. The governing body and the recently established committees are well led by dedicated, enthusiastic and committed governors who devote considerable time and energy to the task. This body and its committees understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, support and monitor their respective tasks well and take the lead as well as reacting to the school's and the wider agenda. For example, they have played a significant part in supporting the development of the Sixth Form and the Arts College application, negotiating the sale of land to improve sports provision and challenging the school over behaviour and attendance in response to parents' comments or their regular monitoring systems. They contribute to the school development process but usually after the first draft is produced, and would benefit from being involved in the process at an earlier stage.

97. The governors take their monitoring role seriously; they receive updates on examination performance and on issues from departments. They have been instrumental in raising behavioural issues with the senior management and challenging individual students and parents through their key stage committees. However they do not always follow through the process by monitoring and receiving reports on the progress of school or department action plans. While this is an effective governing body overall, the governors are failing to secure compliance with statutory requirements with regard to aspects of the curriculum in information and communication technology and design and technology and the provision for religious education in the sixth form and the daily act of collective worship.

98. Overall resources available to the school are managed well and are appropriately targeted at the key developments facing the school, in particular improving GCSE performance, the growing numbers and the sixth form developments. Additional resources for example have been provided to enable two teachers to support each tutor groups in the upper school in order to support individual student targets setting and mentoring. Additional periods have been added to the school day to provide extra sixth form lessons to avoid causing undue impact on the main school. The governors' finance committee and headteacher, with the very good support of the bursar, manage finances well paying due regard to the principles of best value. The recent auditors' reports were very favourable and the school has remedied the minor issues raised. The governing body has responded well to the growth of the school and has an effective strategy in place to manage the financial and staffing implications of this growth.

99. Subject leadership is good overall. Leadership is excellent in art, very good in geography, good in history, music, science, and English and satisfactory in mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology and physical education. Leadership in religious education is unsatisfactory and leadership and co-ordination information and communication technology are poor. Overall, staffing resources are good with appropriately qualified staff in most curriculum areas. However, there have been significant shortfalls in electronics and considerable turnover in staffing in French, leading to unsatisfactory standards in these areas. The school uses additional staff, funded through the Arts College bid, very well in order to provide teaching support in the arts, dance and drama to local primary schools and additional support in French. The work of the teaching staff is complemented by a number of other staff whose contribution to the overall smooth running of the school is invaluable. This said,

there are significant issues around staffing. Half the staff joined the school in the last two years. Nearly one tenth are newly qualified teachers (NQT) who started this term. The assistant headteacher responsible for staff development is on long term sick leave and during the week of the inspection five key experienced members of staff were also on long term absence. While appropriate induction and support programmes for new and NQT staff has been introduced and supply staff are, on the whole, teaching satisfactorily, there is significant variation in the understanding and implementation of the school's teaching and behaviour policies.

100. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection with new or refurbished teaching rooms, new albeit temporary, classrooms for the sixth form and a new drama and music block. However there are elements of unsatisfactory accommodation in design and technology, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education. The school's own student surveys revealed dissatisfaction with the general tidiness of the school. During the inspection week, while in the main the school was clean and tidy some rooms were left in an untidy and occasionally dirty state particularly after lunchtime. Students are allowed into the rooms over breaks and lunchtimes and a minority abused this privilege and this impacts on the following lessons. There has been considerable improvement in resources available to most departments since the last inspection; all departments, apart from design and technology, geography and information and communication technology are, at least satisfactory and there are good or better resources in art, music and English.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

101. The governing body and senior management of the school, in particular the deputy headteacher responsible for the sixth form, have provided strong leadership which has enabled the school to successfully establish a sixth form from scratch. This venture is seen by the governors, staff, parents and the local community as an important development for the school and also for the improvement of lifelong learning opportunities for the local community. Local ward data shows that the proportion of adults with higher education qualifications is around half the national average. Local students interested in the sixth form, travel a considerable distance to Trowbridge and a number drop out from courses because of this factor. The success of this first year of sixth form can therefore be measured not only by the AS results, which are good overall, but by the retention rate where all but one student has continued into the second year. Recruitment into the lower sixth was also maintained.

102. The original decision to establish a sixth form was taken with the full agreement and support of the Trowbridge Sixth Form Centre and the "franchise" arrangement has provided support for the developments at Matravers School through good liaison between senior staff and teachers from the respective institutions. This enabled the new sixth form to develop without undue impact on the previous provision. Considering how new the sixth form is, the school has been able to make provision where teaching is at least satisfactory, and in many cases good or very good, and standards of achievement for most students are in line with and sometimes exceed expectations, given their prior performance. The governing body has played a key role in the establishment of the sixth form and are aware of the strengths, weaknesses and intended developments in provision. A deputy headteacher, who has in a previous post lead a sixth form, monitors the quality of provision well and has taken effective and timely action when areas of concern regarding academic or student support and guidance have been identified. However, given the pressing issues in the main school, this work needs to be more closely managed by the head of sixth form. Appropriate analysis of the first year AS results has been undertaken and changes have been made to course provision in order to bring about improvements where necessary.

103. At subject level, leadership and management have in the main been good or better. In art, the provision has been very well managed to create a thriving tradition of advanced study in a very short time; history has made an excellent start; English teaching benefits from strong leadership; mathematics leadership has been very successful in establishing the new course. However, management in biology is unsatisfactory because the leadership role is ill defined.

Resources

104. The governors and senior managers have carefully considered the additional resources required to establish and to maintain the new sixth form. A three-year plan is in place to manage the financial and staffing implications of the growth of the school. This involves governors initially setting a deficit budget for the first time in the school's history but returning to a balanced budget within three years. This good planning has supported developments such as the new student common room, additional teaching time in order to provide the extra teaching required without unduly impacting on the main school provision and the provision of teachers, resources and staff training to support the new courses.

105. Overall, staff are well qualified and have adequate resources to teach the sixth form courses. They have, in the main, attended appropriate in-service courses and examination board meetings and met with teachers from the Trowbridge Sixth Form Centre. All subject areas would benefit from further opportunities to observe other good quality sixth form provision. As in the main school, the use of information and communication technology as a resource for teaching and learning is underdeveloped.

106. Given the inevitable start up costs associated with the new sixth form it is difficult to judge the current cost effectiveness of provision. However, the overall provision in subjects inspected is at least satisfactory and often good or very good. The performance of the students both in the recent examinations and in lessons seen during the inspection is in the main satisfactory or better. The quality of teaching is good, as is the overall level of student satisfaction. There are no unreasonably small group sizes. Taking all the factors into consideration the new school sixth form gives at least good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

107. In order to build on the current achievements of the school, the governing body, in conjunction with the senior management, the staff of the school and, where appropriate, the wider school community should address the following key issues. All these issues feature as areas for improvement within the current School Development Plan or the Arts College Plan.

- (1) Improve the attitudes and behaviour of students, particularly in Years 7-9. (Paragraphs: 16, 23-30, 61, 69, 73, 74, 86, 87, 108, 116, 140, 145, 150, 153, 162, 166, 167, 184, 198, 205, 207, 211)
- (2) Raise the quality of teachers' expectations, planning and delivery in order to improve students' learning as well as their behaviour and to improve the match of work to students' needs and abilities, particularly to challenge the most able and raise the attainment of boys. (Paragraphs: 2, 4, 5, 7, 16, 18, 27, 36-45, 59, 74-76, 94, 108, 117, 120, 125, 126, 130, 133, 138, 146,150, 154, 169, 178, 181, 185, 186, 191, 199, 200)
- (3) Improve the management of initiatives and school policies by the senior management team and middle managers so that they are applied quickly and consistently by all staff. (Paragraphs: 18, 25, 37, 44, 74, 90, 94, 95, 99)
- (4) Improve use of the information gained through monitoring the performance of students and teachers in order to improve standards, the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour in the classroom. (Paragraphs: 75, 76, 81, 92-95, 97, 173, 180)
- (5) Implement statutory provision for information and communication technology and design and technology and the provision for a collective act of worships in the main school. (Paragraphs: 13,15,57,97,135, 140, 156-161,173,179,187)
- (6) Improve the standards achieved at GCSE in modern foreign languages and religious education. (Paragraphs: 8, 15, 58,75,163-165,194-197, 200, 201)

Sixth form

- (1) Ensure that appropriate and timely support and guidance is given to students in particular in preparation for higher education or other career paths. (Paragraphs: 82, 88)
- (2) Improve the provision for key skills in particular information and communication technology and its use as an aid to teaching and learning. (Paragraphs: 66, 105, 229, 232, 254)
- (3) Develop the contribution made to the life of the main school by the sixth form students. (Paragraphs: 32, 67)
- (4) Support further staff development in order to improve understanding and confidence and expand the breadth of courses available as soon as resources allow. (Paragraphs: 104, 105, 216, 223, 228, 242)
- (5) Ensure that the statutory requirements with regard to RE are met. (Paragraph: 65)

The governors should also consider the following minor issues outline elsewhere in the report. Extending the development of the literacy and numeracy strategies (paragraphs 10-12, 112, 147, 173), improving provision for spiritual development (paragraphs 61 and 196) and improving the health and safety,

accommodation and resource issues identified in the report (paragraphs 100, 140, 149, 180, 193 and 201).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	169
	Sixth form	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		83

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	9	35	52	54	19	0	0
Percentage	5	21	31	32	11	0	0

Sixth form

Number	2	6	3	7	0	0	0
Percentage	11	33	17	39	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than five 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	870	69
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	117	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	110	2

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	89	92	181

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	54	51
	Girls	75	67	63
	Total	119	121	114
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	66 (62)	68 (67)	63 (68)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	28 (17)	37 (38)	27 (31)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	67	61
	Girls	75	80	70
	Total	116	147	131
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	65 (66)	80 (73)	72 (87)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	26 (19)	44 (43)	31 (32)
	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	64	80	144

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	27	64	64
	Girls	47	77	78
	Total	74	141	142
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	52 (53)	98 (94)	99 (94)
	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	44.4 (43.1)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	938
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	93	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	851

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	20.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	2361151
Total expenditure	2369142
Expenditure per pupil	2770
Balance brought forward from previous year	23602
Balance carried forward to next year	15611

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	33.6

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

991

Number of questionnaires returned

179

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	55	8	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	53	19	8	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	58	17	5	2
The teaching is good.	20	67	8	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	53	8	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	40	6	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	43	5	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	58	15	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	30	53	6	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	58	5	6	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	52	7	2	8

Other issues raised by parents

- Parents were particularly pleased with the support provided by the teachers, particularly with examination work in and outside lessons, and the quality of feedback given on students' progress and the subsequent GCSE and AS results; the support for induction and transition between schools the support for students with special educational needs; the inclusiveness of the school; and the opportunities this provides for students to develop tolerance of others; the new sixth form and arts college developments. Parents felt that the school should improve the unsatisfactory behaviour of students in some classes; the quality of homework; the sufficiency of support for some students with special educational needs; the responsiveness of the school to parents concerns and provision for modern foreign languages.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- A significant improvement in attainments at GCSE over the last five years.
- The standards attained by girls by the age of 14 and 16.
- Good leadership provides a clear direction in harnessing the skills of a new team.
- The good quality of teaching in Year 10 and Year 11.
- The content of English lessons is well-planned, broad, balanced and relevant.
- The informed expertise of subject leaders and the fresh ideas of new teachers.

Areas for improvement:

- The attainments of boys, as well as the attainments of more-able and less-able students in lower school.
- The behaviour of a significant minority of students in lower school.
- Insufficient use of information and communications technology.

109. Attainment in English is average by the age of fourteen. In 2001, the results attained by students aged fourteen in the National Tests were in line with the national average. Few students achieved above average when compared to those who did so nationally. Although the percentages of students who attained Level 5 or Level 6 were better than those in similar schools, because a significant minority of students achieved results which were well below average, the school's overall average was in line with national averages. Boys did better than girls in 2000 but girls did much better than boys in the 2001 National Tests (81 % of girls attained Level 5 or better, compared to 48% of boys). The work seen in lower school classrooms now is about average, which is similar to that seen at the time of the last inspection,

110. Virtually all students are entered for GCSE English Language and Literature. The attainments of students aged sixteen in GCSE English Language in 2001 was slightly below the national average. There has been a steady improvement in the number of students achieving a C grade or better in recent years from 42 % attaining C grade or better five years ago to 57 % attaining C grade or better in 2001. That said, these percentages have fluctuated in individual years. Virtually all students obtain a GCSE certificate in English at grade G or better by the age of sixteen. Girls have gained better results than boys at GCSE in 2001, with 68 % of girls as compared to 45 % of boys attaining C grade or better. The attainments in GCSE English Literature have also improved in the last five years from 45 % to 59 % attaining C grade or better. No differences were observed between the attainments of the small numbers of minority ethnic students and those of other students. In its commitment to raising standards, the school has set itself challenging but realistic targets for attainment in the future.

111. Overall standards of attainment in English work currently are average by the age of fourteen and also by the age of sixteen. This is because of good teaching in the majority of classes. Students with special educational needs in lower school achieve less than could be expected in relation to what they have done before, as do those who are gifted or able. Given their prior attainments, most students usually achieve soundly in the upper school. Students' achievements improve over time but are held back in the lower school because of the poor behaviour of a significant minority.

112. A focus on literacy has been introduced to the school curriculum this term. Standards in literacy in English as well as in most other subjects are sound and improving. In classes, teachers introduce new vocabulary and ensure, through discussion, that students gain a good understanding of it in context. In history lessons, standards of literacy are very good. Teachers use writing frames very well to direct students' writing about historical themes and to link concepts. In many classes in, lower and upper school, teachers help students in their extended writing and in developing compositions which link ideas and phrases, and use subordinate clauses well. The standards are higher than expected in

that students do not just write reactive, evidence-based reports, but also more fluent, contemplative analyses. In geography classes, teachers display many examples of key geographical words, which are germane to the work in hand. Students complete extended writing as well as their oral contributions. Teachers help students become more literate through the use of writing frames in many geography lessons. Standards currently are average in written work in lower and upper school, but above average in oral work in the upper school. The focus on literacy in geography as elsewhere is still at an early stage of development. In religious education, previous work reveals that students have written, sometimes at length, in a range of forms such as by expressing a personal viewpoint in a letter, or discussing the points for or against women becoming Church of England priests. In design and technology, students can read accurately, expressively and with good understanding. Their writing is coherent, fluent and effective, but their spelling is weaker in the lower sets. Students in the upper school speak clearly and adapt their speech for a wide range of circumstances.

113. Many students enter the school with below-average attainments in speaking and listening. A significant minority of students still has poor skills in speaking and listening after a term in Year 7, yet by Year 11, students are able to read Henry V's St. Crispin's day speech showing the character's vitality and force in encouraging the English to arms against the French. In most classes, standards in listening are average by Year 11. Standards improve over time given the below-average abilities in listening in Year 7. That said, in the lower school, many students respond to teachers' questions with one-word answers rather than in fuller sentences. In Year 11, standards in speaking are sound. In a Year 11 lower set, students were inventive in discussing the metaphors used in love-poetry, comparing a paper clip to love "because it binds things together" and likening a foggy day to a shaken "glass of milk". Another student strikingly described the day "as a blind mouse" and another said that "love is a conductor of electricity". Given the range of special educational needs in this class, their achievements were high because the teaching was very inclusive. In another good lesson on video-film making techniques, a student referred to a young spider's "genetic clock flipping" as it reaches maturity.

114. Standards in reading are average throughout the school but a large minority in the lower school is below average. Students in Year 7 are usually able to read fluently but not with good emphasis. Sometimes, students are able to show understanding of the poetry or prose read to them by the teacher and its underlying implications. In Year 9, students are able to study the differences in the use made of language by advertisers of different products and read from texts with an improved understanding. In upper school, students are able to read Shakespeare's verse quite well with support from their teachers. They build a good understanding of such literature because they are receiving good teaching from well-qualified specialists. Occasionally standards in reading and writing in upper school are sloppy but students make good progress over the two years because sometimes they receive very good teaching. Students in the top English set in Year 10 are fairly adept at reading the sixteenth century dialogue of Shakespeare but lack good expression.

115. Students' written work improves from Year 7 to Year 11, but throughout lower school, most students have not written sufficiently extended, or imaginative, stories. They show a good knowledge of the formal and informal conventions of language. The poetry on display in some Year 7 and Year 8 classes is sometimes compelling:

*A cold but sunny day,
Every breath like smoke,
Some pearl earrings were melting away...
Hundreds of tiny little eyes fall onto me.*

Others write sentences such as "I scrambled up the slimy, jagged, blood-covered rocks, not knowing if I would slip...". Some extended writing builds a heightened tension well in a horror tale: "Just then a light turned on in the ancient signal box and I saw the shadow of something moving ... Then I saw him ... an old man ... He was leaning on a stick that looked knobbly, bumpy and gnarled, just like a bone." Some writing is clearly above-average: "It had two rows of blooming cherry trees but the houses on either side were derelict ... It was dark and smelt of rotting flesh... Huge glistening chandeliers were hanging from the ceiling and the golden walls were encrusted with emeralds, sapphires and diamonds..."

" In Year 9, a small minority of higher-attaining students write some striking verse:

*"The sand is everyone's garden
Like a million gems glinting in the sun."*

And

“The night is like a sleeping secret shed

(as I) submerge myself deeply into the depths of a thick muddy swamp.”

Students write similes such as “Her eyes were like the ocean, sparkling in the sun”, and metaphors such as “Her smile a boat of happiness, lifting me when I'm down.” In Year 10, more-able students have written with insight about the way characters react to events in plays such as “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller. They write that “*He has achieved some of the financial elements of the American Dream but he has yet to find personal happiness.*” Year 11 students have learned that Shakespeare's soliloquies were speeches designed to let the audience know of a character's thoughts. In the best Year 11 writing, students handle and communicate ideas fluently, and a few are able to support hypotheses with well-chosen quotations from the text. Most students use information technology to a limited degree only in their writing. The handwriting of students in Year 7 is often untidy with many examples of printed rather joined script. Their presentation is sometimes barely adequate. In later years, students' handwriting is improved, and is sometimes neat and well formed. Standards in punctuation, sentence construction, and spelling are average.

116. Attitudes to learning are just about satisfactory but the behaviour of a large minority in the lower school is unsatisfactory in many lessons. Attitudes to learning were good in the upper school. The longer most students stay at the school, the better behaved they become. In lessons where students behaved particularly well and were well motivated, the teacher showed a high degree of skill and knowledge, and presented interesting and practical lessons. The unacceptable behaviour of students in the lower school hinders not just their own learning but also the learning of others in their classes, such as that of the more-able students. Students in the upper school show maturity in evaluating their attainments, as well as the work of their peers, such as when they evaluated Shakespeare's verse.

117. The quality of teaching is good with some very good teaching in the upper school. The English department has effectively forged a new team in the current term where three teachers out of seven were new to the school from September. No teaching is unsatisfactory but a majority of lessons observed in the lower school were satisfactory with some good features. When teaching is effective, it is characterised by very good subject knowledge, good relationships, a determination to focus on the task, and effective use of resources. Students are confident to learn from their mistakes and enjoy discussions of high quality because the teachers know and make clear exactly what they want their classes to understand. Most teachers draw attention to spelling mistakes judiciously. Many show a consistency of approach to developing students' knowledge through informed and skilful questioning. Teachers also make lesson objectives explicit to focus students on short-term goals although some are less clear about the objectives of learning. Classes are usually managed well, and most lessons are pacy and well timed. The match of work set to the needs of individual students is usually good. Students learn well in the upper school and soundly in the lower school. A number of teachers use humour to good effect. As a result their students enjoy their lessons, and learn more quickly. Students in the upper school learn much about GCSE requirements because teachers have an excellent knowledge of these through their experience as GCSE markers. In some lessons, students learn less effectively as a direct result of the poor behaviour of a minority. Teachers usually, but not always, use plenary sessions well to make explicit conclusions or to establish what new understandings have been gained. When they do not, it is often because they mis-time lessons and end up with insufficient time to draw conclusions at the end.

118. The overall breadth and balance of the English curriculum are good. The department has good methods of ensuring that students develop their skills in and knowledge of English progressively. The schemes of work for the lower school prepare students adequately for GCSE courses and, as literacy is built into more lessons, standards are set to improve further. Teachers are aware of the needs of students who come from a broad range of backgrounds, including those of the ethnic minorities. The English curriculum, however, does not make sufficiently explicit references to the United Kingdom's rich diversity of cultures. Students with special educational needs are included fully in learning. All students are helped to a better empathy with those who have special educational needs through sensitive explorations of society's attitudes to the disabled. Teachers often check individual students' understanding informally to monitor their progress. In the lower school, marking of work is usually helpful and provides students with a clear idea of how to improve. In the upper school, marking is usually even more helpful, informative and regular. Analyses of the results students have obtained in GCSE examinations have provided a useful basis for planning. However, the department does not

analyse enough the attainments and learning styles of groups of students, such as those of less-able boys or those with a minority ethnic background. Students are, though, more aware of how well they are doing because of timely feedback.

119. The English department is led and managed well. The department has a clear sense of its educational direction. Teachers are guided well by the subject's leaders, and resources are good in both quality and quantity. The school's library is well resourced and well organised by the new librarian in a child-friendly way. Good progress has been made since the 1997 inspection though work remains to be done in sharpening the focus on literacy. Standards have improved in attainment in National Tests at sixteen. The quality of English teaching is improving. New teachers are being inducted well and all possess the qualities to make an increasingly effective contribution to the department's work. Overall, the school achieves good value for money in the provision for English.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The department reaches national average GCSE results from an intake that is a little below average.
- Low and middle ability students do relatively well.
- Standards in algebra and graphical work are good.
- There is improved tracking and forecasting for individual students.
- Team ethos is strong.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching – there are too many lessons where rates of learning are unsatisfactory, mostly within Years 7-9.
- The performance of more-able students.
- Action planning.
- Curriculum target setting and teaching.

121. Standards at GCSE are around the national average. Lower ability students are, relatively, the most successful. Fewer students than might be expected obtain the highest grades. Results have risen strongly in the distant past but have been more resistant to improvement recently. Relative to similar schools this year's results are a little above average. Standards in Year 9 are similarly around the national average but slightly weaker than in Year 11 and not matching the national trend of improvement.

122. The standards of work seen in the department in lessons were below expectations in Years 7-9, but better in Years 10-11. Work sampling showed good performance was being achieved by particular students from both ability extremes. These students had worked hard on appropriate mathematics and showed good rates of progress with their learning. The general conclusion is that more students could attain higher standards, particularly by the end of Year 9.

123. Within mathematics lessons attention to numeracy has developed since the last inspection. Students' preferences for formal written calculations are impeding their choice of more efficient, mentally-based methods of computation. Algebra standards, particularly in the context of plotting graphs, are good. The understanding of shape and space is satisfactory but linked measurement skills would benefit from more practical activities. Data handling work would be more mathematical if more imaginative contexts were usual alongside textbook examples. The strong emphasis on investigation and problem solving, reported in the previous inspection, is now much less evident in ordinary lessons. This is lessening the engagement of students in the process of learning to think mathematically.

124. The department is successfully attempting to co-ordinate a whole school numeracy initiative and has established some effective remediation of basic skills in Year 7. Mathematical vocabulary is being promoted on the walls of classrooms, but speaking and listening standards are low in many lessons.

ICT has a developed plan but none of it was seen during the inspection. Across the department the standard of presentation of students', work was far too variable.

125. The quality of teaching has deteriorated since the last inspection to such an extent that during this inspection week the quantity of unsatisfactory teaching, most of it in the lower school, was unacceptable. Overall there is a reasonable proportion of good or very good teaching, delivered by a variety of staff, which could act as a model for less confident or experienced colleagues. Teaching performance in Years 10-11 was more consistent, although also capable of improvement.

126. The best lessons are carefully planned to the prior knowledge of the students and do encourage experimentation. At some stage they contain a task that holds some genuine challenge for the majority of students. Often a practical approach to some aspect of the work adds variety to the sixty minute periods. Other facets of more effective lessons are a strong teacher-pupil relationship based on mutual trust and respect, the clear sharing of objectives with the class and the use of models to support the visualisation of processes being described. In the unsatisfactory lessons, oral mental opportunities were often missed and classroom management of whole classes on text examples failed to cater for the ability range present.

127. The variable teaching within Years 7-9 contributes directly to a failure to establish good learning habits amongst too many students from the beginning of Year 7. It is true that learning progress improves later, but standards are being impeded by this unhelpful start.

128. The mathematics curriculum continues to meet statutory requirements. There have been good initiatives for low attainers, concentrated in Year 7, and improved tracking of student assessments to provide target levels or grades. Presently the department is less refined in using this information to both offer students more useful curriculum related targets and to modify existing schemes of work.

129. Since the last inspection leadership has been successful in starting up A level mathematics and in anticipating National Numeracy developments, using the support of a consultant. Resources for learning have improved and ICT plans are now more satisfactory. Links with primary feeder schools are better and schemes of work have been reviewed. The major present weakness has been a failure to prioritise and act sufficiently quickly on the lower school underperformance issue. Rather vague development plans need transforming into a sequence of precise and practical steps including evaluation criteria, that become convincing timed and costed action plans. Staffing has lost some of its previous strength but team ethos has remained strong.

SCIENCE

130. The quality of science provision within the school is **satisfactory**. Following an unsettling period due to staff changes, the faculty is now in the process of re-building and is starting to make good progress in a number of areas.

Strengths

- Results in external tests at the age of fourteen that are at least in line with those of similar schools and, at sixteen, results that compare well with all schools;
- Instances of good, very good and excellent teaching, particularly in the upper school;
- The majority of students approach their work and lessons in a positive manner;
- Students undertake their practical investigations with care and with enjoyment.

Areas for improvement

- The planning of lessons so that the intended learning points for each lesson are clearly identified at the start of the lesson, are appropriate for all students within the group and are checked at the end of the lesson for pupil understanding;
- The marking of students' work to include comments that will tell students what they need to do in order to make further progress and to attain higher marks.

131. Since the last inspection, results in science tests at the age of fourteen have steadily improved and, whilst falling slightly back last year, they still compare well with the results achieved by students nationally. Year 9 students made particularly good progress, improving on their Year 8 end-of-year test scores. Achievement of students in the current Year 9 is in line with expectations; for example, the majority of students can recognise that matter consists of particles and can explain what happens to the movement of the particles during changes in state. Some students are starting to understand that elements can be grouped according to their atomic structure and that this determines the reactivity of the element. Students in Year 7 are making satisfactory progress and are beginning to build on their understanding of science developed in their primary schools. For example, a number of students with challenging learning needs were successfully using 'circle time' activities to establish criteria for classifying vertebrates. Other students were investigating the impact of streamlining on objects as they moved through fluids and were able to formulate predictions and possible reasons as to the outcomes of their investigations. Year 8 students are similarly achieving in line with expectations. Attainment in the Double Award Science GCSE examination has also steadily improved since the last inspection, and the number of students gaining A* - C grades is in line with that achieved by students nationally. The number of students achieving the highest A* /A grades rose last year and is in line with national figures. Last year, both boys and girls attained better in science than they did in some of their other subjects. Current students in Year 11 are achieving in line with expectations, but will need to sustain their improvement and consolidate their learning if they are to succeed in achieving their predicted grades. Upper science groups in Year 10 are currently working on cell structures and on energy transference and most students demonstrate an understanding of these topics. Lower groups are finding some of the concepts more difficult to understand; for example, the 'thermal cracking' of crude oil into other products. Consideration should be given to the teaching and appropriateness of such topics for these students. Throughout all year groups, students with learning difficulties are making progress, but frequently struggle with work that is insufficiently differentiated to meet their needs. Similarly the rate of progress of very able students is sometimes limited by the progress of other students within the teaching groups who are working at a slower pace. Written work in all year groups shows progress but sometimes work is of variable quality and for some students work is incomplete, corrections are not addressed and it is poorly presented.

132. Students mainly respond well to their teachers and they frequently show positive attitudes towards their work. Incidents of poor behaviour were very few and were mainly directed towards other students. Practical work is undertaken safely and sensibly, although opportunities for students to plan investigations for themselves is more limited in the lower school than in the upper school. Students are encouraged to work together, and to discuss results and issues. They do this with varying degrees of success, gaining confidence as they progress through the school. For example a Year 11 class were able to debate the relative merits of irradiating food without too much assistance from the teacher. Whilst most students listen well to their teachers, they are 'chatty' and frequently have to be reminded about their attention. When idle chatter becomes disruptive to the learning of other students, it is usually when students are waiting for others to finish their work.

133. In almost all lessons seen, teaching was nearly always at least satisfactory and in a very high proportion of lessons was good, very good or excellent. Whilst a number of teachers are relatively inexperienced, they have a good understanding and knowledge of the requirements of the science curriculum and are able to convey their enthusiasm to the students. The majority of teachers make their lessons interesting through a range of activities and relevant examples that engage the interest of the students. In several lessons teachers' were using computer programmes to model and simulate investigations with their students. Students are challenged through a range of questions and through one to one support, when time in the lesson permits. In some lessons practical work is too teacher led and opportunities to develop the skills for scientific investigations are not taken. Teaching is at its weakest when lesson planning does not take into account the individual needs of the students and is too general. This results in the expected learning outcomes being unclear to the students, and with tasks that sometimes do not stretch the more able, or which are too complex for those students that are less confident in their learning. In several lessons students were not asked about what they had learnt from their lesson. Student books are regularly marked, but marking standards are inconsistent, ranging from the award of grades to more formative comments. Consideration should be given to the provision of more detailed comments in which strategies for improvement are made clear to the students.

134. Since the last inspection the faculty has had a significant number of changes in the teaching staff. The relatively new Head of Faculty has a clear vision for the future development of the faculty and for raising standards still further; this is generally shared amongst the staff. The faculty has achieved a great deal already and has a clear plan for the future, including the revision of Schemes of Work for both key stages. Data is used effectively in determining predicted grades for students. Consideration should now be given to refining the use of data in order to determine appropriate teaching strategies based on identified strengths and weaknesses of students in tests and examinations. Strategies for monitoring the work of both teachers and students are in development. Whilst the quantity and quality of learning resources have improved since the last inspection, they are still barely adequate. The faculty does benefit from adequate accommodation that is generally well furnished and which provides excellent display areas for the promotion of science and of students' work. Storage space is, however, very limited; this results in larger pieces of apparatus being stored in each laboratory and taking up valuable space required by the students.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good levels of attainment across the school, including a very high percentage of A* to C grades at GCSE in recent years, including good achievement for students with special educational needs.
- Good quality teaching, with some excellent teaching seen in both key stages, with particular strengths in subject expertise and the quality of individual support provided.
- Achievement of Arts College status, with very thorough strategic planning, schemes of work and lesson organisation.
- The individually expressive aspect of students' work, with good attention paid to the development of observational drawing skills underpinning the visual quality of their work.

Areas for improvement

- Using information and communication technology (ICT) to improve students' learning in art.
- Improve provision for three-dimensional work.
- Give students more opportunities to write about and discuss their responses to art and design, so that they develop a vocabulary for critical and cultural discourse.

136. Attainment seen in Years 7-9 is above expectations for the ages of the students. In Years 10-11, attainment seen is above expectations for the GCSE course. In the 2001 GCSE art examination more than 87 % of students gained A* to C grades. This continues a trend, over all recent years, of very much higher percentages of A* to C than occur nationally in similar schools. For example, in 2000, the national level was 63.6 % A* to C grades compared with the school's 89.2 %. Another strong feature of GCSE success is the high proportion of students actually gaining A* or A grades – this again well above the national level for these highest grades.

137. Students produce good quality work in drawing, painting and printmaking. Some of the work is of outstanding quality. Working from observation is a particular strength of drawing, with visual knowledge developing throughout the school, strengthening the visual quality of all image making. Students understand the qualities of line and tone, and can record details of proportion, often in fluent drawing styles, from Year 7 onwards. Painting skills develop through imaginative and bold work, including some lovely silk paintings in Year 9, to include working in oil paints on elaborate, individually expressive compositions in Years 10-11, showing expressive understanding of colour, tone, texture and pattern to convey mood and feeling. This technical and expressive quality is also seen in many examples of printmaking, using block, screen and etching processes with powerful effect, often on textiles with elaborate colour schemes or repeat designs, and on large and small scales. In the artwork of students in all years there is clear evidence of the inspiration gained by studying the work of other artists and designers, and this adds further richness to students' technical and expressive range. Opportunities to acquire greater knowledge and historical or critical understanding about artists and designers are less developed, and there are few opportunities for students to develop their skills in three-dimensional work, or to use computers to generate and manipulate images.

138. Teaching to Years 7-9 is good and in Years 10-11 teaching is very good. Across all year groups some of the teaching is excellent. A key feature of good art teaching seen in the department is that all students receive plenty of individually adapted one-to-one support to identify problems and push ideas forward, providing students with confidence to explore and develop their own creative responses to the work set. During these in-class interactions between students and teachers a great deal of assessment of students' work takes place, particularly helpful as it guides students towards ways to improve their work as it unfolds. This informal assessment is in addition to a more formal assessment system, so that, between the two, students have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers provide plenty of expert technical subject leadership so that students gain skills with materials and tools and the visual qualities of art. Lessons are carefully organised to provide good sequences of work that challenge and develop students' skills and ideas. The work is clearly explained and demonstrated, so that male and female students of all ability levels are able to achieve their proper potential. Because the quality of teaching is so good the quality of students' learning in art is also good or very good. By Year 10 students can investigate a theme of their own choice, sometimes experimenting and researching over extended periods to develop their ideas and realise their intentions. Students have high expectations of art lessons. They enjoy art activities, are always well engaged in their work and keen to succeed, and behaviour is almost always good or very good. In the one weaker lesson seen, there was insufficient challenge in the work set so there was little to grab the enthusiasm of the Year 7 students. The link between inappropriate student behaviour and insufficiently motivating work was clearly demonstrated by this lesson.

139. The art department is well managed, with good leadership ensuring that art teachers work together as an effective team to deliver a quality art experience to all students. Development planning is very good, with long-term strategies to provide a vision for future development. This has enabled the department to improve things since the last inspection. There is still insufficient opportunity for students to explore three-dimensional work and use computers as an aid to and a means of expressing their work. This limits overall attainment in these areas and requires attention. Since the last inspection art has played a leading role in the development of Arts College status, and has successfully introduced sixth form advanced level study in art. These accomplishments have enhanced the quality of the department's work further, and it is a subject of considerable strength in the school.

GEOGRAPHY

140. Provision in geography is **satisfactory**. GCSE results have declined to well-below-average levels but a new team led by a new head of department is bringing about rapid improvement to teaching, curriculum and standards. This committed team is very well led. Improvement since the last inspection is good, but most of it has taken place very recently

Strengths

- Rapid recent improvements in standards and quality.
- Teaching is good, it is becoming consistent in quality and has many strengths.
- The curriculum is well planned, with a very good scheme of work.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to students' personal development.
- The subject is very well led and managed, with very good systems for review and planning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE have fallen to well below national averages.
- Provision for ICT is currently inadequate to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- The behaviour and attitudes of a significant minority of students in Years 7-9 inhibit teaching, learning and the standards achieved, and limit other students' right to learn.
- Resources: the provision for Years 10-11 and of maps and equipment across the school is inadequate.

141. At the time of the last inspection, the department was achieving standards in line with the national average. Now they are above average in the assessments at age fourteen, but have declined rapidly to well below the national average at GCSE. Both boys and girls do well in the assessments at

age fourteen. Current work in Years 7 to 9 is average overall, but there are clear signs of recent improvement: students take more care with their work, which is usually complete and satisfactorily presented. Since the teaching team is new, it would be wise to moderate carefully the levels awarded to students at 14 in 2002. Geography is a popular subject at GCSE, with an above national average proportion of students choosing the subject. The proportion achieving graded (G+) results is good - it has been at or above the national average for several years, and very few students leave without a pass. Students with SEN achieve well. However, the proportion achieving higher (C+) and top (A/A*) results declined steadily until 2001, when it fell sharply to well below both the school's predictions and national averages. Girls' results, always better than boys', collapsed. Almost all of those who were on the grade C/D borderline fell below that line. The school and the department have undertaken a courageous and honest appraisal of what went wrong; not enough attention was given to the revision of key knowledge and understanding or to examination technique, and the scheme of work was out-of-date. The new department has put together a sensible, well-targeted recovery plan; this is being put into effect with urgency, and improvement can already be seen in the work of students in Year 11, while those in Year 10 have made an impressive start to their GCSE course and are achieving above-average standards. The first results at AS level showed some promise, with good performances in the physical geography papers, but were below the national average and most students' predicted scores overall.

142. Standards of work in Years 7-9 are average. On arrival in the school, students' mapwork skills are patchy, but their knowledge of places is poor. By age fourteen, students' knowledge of places has improved, as a result of the broad geographical education they receive, and is satisfactory. Mapwork skills have moved on a little but not enough: Ordnance Survey maps do not feature sufficiently in lessons or in the scheme of work, and the department's stock of maps is poor. Students have a sound background in elements of physical geography such as ecosystems and coastal landforms, and they can explain the effect of physical features on people's lives well. In an excellent Year 9 lesson on the exploitation of tropical rain forests, students presented the conflicting viewpoints of various interested parties, with most able students expressing mature and sophisticated views. Less able students can describe and link climate and vegetation, and show how they affect lives and economies. The scheme of work powerfully emphasises differences in development; as a result, students understand the differences between less and more economically-developed countries.

143. Standards are above average in Years 10-11, and are especially high in Year 10 because of the improvements in teaching and curriculum are having most impact there. Students' knowledge and understanding of settlements are good: they can interpret data, photos and maps and bring them together to describe and compare the characteristics of different areas of cities. Students' understanding of changes over time and differences between places is good; in their work on industry, they can classify industries accurately, and can describe and explain changing patterns of location in MEDCs and LEDCs. Their decision-making skills are good: they can choose an appropriate graph or diagram to display information, and can analyse the advantages and disadvantages of different "solutions" to third world debt. Students' work on hydrographs in Year 10 is good; not only is it challenging, it also shows the department's good work in numeracy. The presentation of work in Year 10, and the clarity of its layout ready for revision for GCSE, are very good. The skills of Year 11 students under exam conditions - recall, organisation of work, answering the precise question - are under-developed but improving.

144. In the sixth form, standards of work vary: some is of good AS/A-level standard, while the work of a few students in both Year 12 and Year 13, most of whom entered the course with a grade C or D at GCSE, is weak and marginal to the standard required to pass AS/A-level. Most students' understanding is better than their oral explanation, which in turn is better than their ability to write answers.

145. Most students behave well and are interested in their geography because it is well taught, motivating and because of good relationships. In Years 10 – 13, both behaviour and attitudes are almost invariably good: students work hard, concentrate and contribute well. However, in many classes in the lower school, there is a small group of students whose negative, and sometimes defiant, attitude slows the pace of the lesson and lowers the standards which can be achieved: they dominate the teacher's attention, break the continuity of the lesson and waste everyone's time - this despite the good teaching they receive. Most students' show a genuine interest in environmental and social issues, including differences in development.

146. At the time of the last inspection, geography teaching had significant weaknesses. It is now good, with many strengths and much that is very good and excellent. Lesson starts are very good and maximise opportunities to learn. Students start work promptly, helped by the key question and aim with which every lesson begins; this focuses attention and gives the lesson direction and purpose. Lesson planning is very good, ensuring that the needs of both most and least able students are addressed. There is some exemplary management of students by one teacher, from which members of this and other departments should learn. Because of the consistent and determined teaching, the impact of the poor behaviour described above is minimised, but it still slows the pace. Learning, although generally satisfactory, lags slightly behind teaching because the learning culture in the school is insecure and students arrive in lessons with differing expectations of work and behaviour. Teachers of geography are knowledgeable subject specialists who use their knowledge to develop motivating materials and to choose methods, especially video and enquiry methods, that will motivate students. The use of fieldwork has improved; where it is used, it motivates students and enlivens their work. Areas for development in the teaching include the tendency of inexperienced teachers to allow students to work on individual tasks for too long; they lose concentration and the pace of learning slows. Teachers of sixth form groups do not spend enough time on the learning skills of weaker candidates.

147. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is generally good. The department has taken very seriously the use of writing frames, key and command words and the need for extended oral and written answers. Numeracy is good: students are trained to draw and interpret graphs, diagrams and data tables. Although the teaching of ICT has improved from the last inspection, now being carefully planned into each unit of the new scheme of work, it is not yet a feature of many lessons. There is a good level of reference to relevant websites. Especially through its work on the environment and differential development, the link with Gambia and fieldwork, the department makes a good contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development. Assessment, a weakness in 1997, is becoming a strength. Marking is good throughout the department - it is thorough, regular, encouraging and targets errors accurately. Homework is generally good, but variable from group to group in Years 8 and 9.

148. The department is very well led and managed. This entirely new team, under a new leader, is striving hard for improved standards. The impact of leadership and management can be seen in: the increasingly consistent, good quality teaching; the team-planned and -written courses; the quality of analysis of departmental strengths and weaknesses, leading to high-quality departmental improvement planning and well-targeted staff development, including the use of INSET days to focus on key improvements; the shared commitment to high standards and improvement. All of these are based on good monitoring of the work of the department. The scheme of work, currently being re-written for the whole school, is of very high quality. Well-chosen units of work are being put together into a logically-sequenced course which provides lesson plans, resources and homeworks, and which guarantees that the methods used are varied and motivating. The scheme does not yet give sufficient emphasis to the acquisition of skills, including mapwork, fieldwork and ICT. Again, an area of weakness in 1997 is becoming a strength. The pace of improvement in the department is excellent.

149. The current organisation of the humanities curriculum, with some teaching of religious education and history by geography teachers and long blocks of time during which the teaching of geography is suspended, makes students' work disjointed and deflects teachers' attention away from key improvements in geography. The department was poorly resourced in 1997. Now, the quality of purchased resources is satisfactory in the lower school and the sixth form, but remains unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 where there are barely sufficient textbooks. There are too few maps, and the equipment for fieldwork, weather study and ICT is inadequate. Library stock is good - geography is well represented in a well-organised library. The quality and quantity of home-produced resources are very good.

HISTORY

150. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory** in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11.

Strengths

- Standards are improving and are above average at Key Stages 3 and 4.

- Extended writing is much improved since the last inspection and literacy is now a strength.
- Teaching in Years 10-11 is good.
- Marking and assessment are very good.
- Leadership is good

Areas for improvement

- Some teaching in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory.
- There is some unsatisfactory behaviour in Years 7-9.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching.

151. At GCSE, results are good and improving. Sixty-two per cent gained grades A* - C in history in 2000, with 22% achieving grades A/A*, with both figures being above the national average. In 2001, 67% gained grades A* - C, with a similar proportion gaining A*/A as 2000. Contrary to the national trend, boys performed better than girls. Samples of students' work indicate that written work is frequently fluent and well-constructed, suggesting students have a good understanding of the topics they are covering. Students' research skills are progressing well. They are increasingly skilled in analysing and evaluating a range of sources, such as videos of local history, interviews with outside speakers and extracts from newspaper articles and text books, and many students are able to link ideas very well. Local history work, for example an examination of the contrasting quality of education available in Westbury between 1950 and the present day, was good and, in some cases, excellent. Students' use of language, and their ability to construct and sustain a narrative is often very mature for their age. In lessons, standards are at least satisfactory and often good. Students' knowledge of period and grasp of chronology are satisfactory, difficult concepts, such as 'prehistory', are increasingly understood and most, but particularly able, students respond well to challenge. Less able students make good progress. There is limited use of ICT, but some good examples of word-processing and the use of the internet. Literacy is a strength of the department. However, many students write better than they talk, and boys' comments, in particular, are less developed and reflective than girls'.

152. In Years 7-9 in 2001, 82% of students were judged to have achieved Level 5, a figure that is above the national average. Nearly half performed above expectations but girls performed significantly better than boys. The work of older able students is often well-structured, knowledgeable, and composed, with good paragraphing and proper conclusions drawn that follow from the body of the argument. Here, as Years 10-11, the impact of the school's emphasis on literacy is marked and spiritual development is well supported, particularly in a lesson exploring Gandhi's use on non-violent protest. Less able students often make good progress because excellent teaching helps them concentrate and encourages them to celebrate each other's success. However, standards sometimes dip when the joint teaching of history and religious education blurs important differences between the subjects

153. Behaviour and attitudes to learning in Years 10-11 are frequently good. In Years 7-9, they are sometimes unsatisfactory. Older students identify with the aims of the lesson. Girls, in particular, take an obvious pride in the quality of their work and present it neatly, but both boys and girls listen attentively and persevere when in difficulty although some students are a little 'teacher-dependent' and passive. In a minority of classes, younger students are not always sufficiently mature and tend to 'blurt' answers unreflectively. When lessons are not well-organised and well-planned, behaviour deteriorates, inevitably affecting students' learning and progress.

154. Despite some weaknesses, teaching is largely satisfactory at Years 7-9 and consistently good, and sometimes excellent in Years 10-11. At its best, teaching is challenging and students respond. In one Years 7-9 lesson, where less able students were exploring the reasons for Hitler's rise to power, their enthusiasm and evident desire to 'get it right' were genuinely moving and their success was equally rewarding for teachers and students. The best teaching is purposeful and well-organised, expectations of students' likely academic achievement and behaviour are high, subject knowledge is good, explanations are clear, and a range of teaching methods and approaches are used to maintain students' motivation: for example, when using visual aids such as video recordings teachers ensure that students take notes; they are never allowed simply to sit and watch. There is appropriate use of homework and marking is

frequently very good. Teachers encourage students to take a justified pride in the quality of their work and they respond well to staff whom they clearly like and trust. Staff allocated to support students with special educational needs generally work effectively and students in their care make satisfactory progress. However, a minority of teaching in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory because lessons are not well-organised, the objectives are not appropriate or clearly expressed, teachers talk too much, low level responses are over-praised and the behaviour of some challenging and immature students is not well-managed.

155. Leadership and management are good. The department has a clear vision for developing history and all staff pursue it. Challenging targets for improvement have been set and largely met. The department is committed to raising standards and is not complacent. The scheme of work has been revised, an audit of students' strengths completed and a system of end-of-unit assessment activities devised that will, when fully implemented, help the department track the performance of individuals and determine the scope for improvement. There is a good quality handbook to guide new staff, good use is made of students' prior and predicted attainments to focus planning but insufficient monitoring of teaching or opportunities for teachers to observe the good practice of their colleagues. Resources are adequate but the range of educational visits is limited by funding difficulties.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

156. Overall, the quality of provision is **poor**.

Strengths

- The school has some exciting resources (but still more are needed).
- Students generally have positive attitudes towards ICT and learn well when opportunities arise.

Areas for improvement

- Learning is unsatisfactory overall as opportunities are too few.
- The implementation of the full statutory ICT National Curriculum, at Key Stages 3 and 4, and the use of ICT in all National Curriculum subjects.
- The co-ordination, monitoring and assessment of ICT across the school, in all National Curriculum subjects.
- The improvement of standards relative to National Curriculum levels.
- Provide more training for staff.

157. Most students of all ages are able to use computers independently, to log on to the network, and use basic software; for example word-processing, to organise and present their work in a number of subject areas. There are no time-tabled lessons exclusively for ICT across the school, and fewer than normal opportunities for ICT activities across the curriculum in other subject areas. There is no regular assessment of ICT capability, consequently the school is not able to ascertain standards or track individual progress through the school. The last set of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9, (summer 2001), showed overall attainment to be well below national expectation, with fewer students than those nationally attaining Level 6, and no students attaining Level 7. Work in folders and in progress during the inspection, would confirm these below average standards. There are no examination courses in Years 10 and 11, and the achievement of students aged fifteen and sixteen is not assessed. There is, however, a taught ICT element, in the new sixth form key skills programme.

158. ICT activities in the main school rely heavily on the efforts of individual teachers. Satisfactory to good teaching and learning, involving the use of computers, was observed in business studies, science, textiles, child care, music, and in learning support. The best work and learning, results from challenging assignments. Some examples were seen in business studies; in design work in textiles, (where students are able to instantly observe alternative colour combinations for their waistcoat designs); and in music (where students creative compositions are scored by computer). Unfortunately, not all students have access to these applications, or instruction at even a basic level. All students do not yet have a school e-mail address, although access to the Internet for research is possible from all networked computers. Students currently under-use this facility.

159. At the time of the last inspection provision for ICT was unsatisfactory when the scope of the subject was narrower than the National Curriculum requires. Although considerable improvements in resources have been made, most of the concerns expressed at that time remain unresolved.

160. Adequate management arrangements are not in place, and this is preventing the development and implementation of a clear policy for ICT across the school. Resource, including staffing, accommodation, and learning resources, are insufficiently co-ordinated and monitored. The ratio of students to terminals is below average, and there are too few terminals in many rooms used by large classes. There is only one room with thirty computers, and in this room the teacher is unable to see all screens from one point. Currently technician support is not available every day of the week. However, the recent appointment of a theatre technician is helping to develop the use of ICT in the expressive arts faculty.

161. The major concern is the lack of co-ordinated assessment, to monitor progress. There is an urgent need to meet National Curriculum requirements in Key Stages 3 and 4. All students should be given opportunities to apply and develop their ICT capability through the use of computer applications to support their learning in all subjects, and this is not happening. The teaching and consideration of systems and control, and the impact of ICT on students' and others' lives, are particularly weak areas. However, the school has forward looking development plans to address these issues. These recognise the importance of new technology and incorporate the spirit of its use in a school with expressive arts status.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The provision for French seeks to meet the needs of a variety of aptitudes and abilities.
- It contributes to students' cultural and social development.
- Staff are qualified and committed. They serve as good role models for French.
- The Modern Languages Faculty has developed systems for self-analysis in order to improve the outcomes of the teaching-learning process.

Areas for improvement

- Work in partnership with parents to raise the status of languages in the school as well as the commitment of all students to this subject.
- Provision of adequate and stable specialist staff to teach the subject
- A coherent strategy for the effective management of in-class behaviour and disaffection in language classes.
- A policy of inclusion of SEN students in French lessons which does not hamper the quality of teaching and learning by all students, including the more able.
- Teaching practice to encourage greater enjoyment of French by students as well as their enhanced ownership of learning the language.

163. In work seen during the inspection, standards in writing, reading and listening in French at age fourteen are overall in line with those expected in the National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages, though standards in speaking is below expectation. At age sixteen, GCSE grades A*-C in French are significantly below national average, though girls out perform boys. There was a similar mixed picture at the time of the last inspection. While the standards of students' written work and their awareness of French grammar have improved, overall no significant shift has taken place in the standards of their work. The percentages of French GCSE A*-C are 34.2% for 1999, 21% for 2000 and 24.8% for 2001 (against the national average of around 54%). These figures depict a stable trend of well below average GCSE performance. Generally, students' achievement in French over time is below average overall at both throughout the age range.

164. At age fourteen, the majority of students are able to work with the target language as the language of instruction. They can take part in choral drills and repeat short phrases in French. With

teacher support, they can usually respond in French to simple questions and can take active part in role-plays involving basic language structures and vocabulary. Their knowledge of the French vocabulary is increasing and their pronunciation demonstrates their feel for the French language. Their grasp of French grammar is becoming firm, which is a solid foundation for the challenges of GCSE work in later years. Students produce a good deal of written work involving a variety of topics, exercises and worksheets. For most students, the skills in independent, unaided writing are still at preliminary stages, however – as are their independent language learning skills, such as the use of dictionaries, grammar books and textbooks, reading for pleasure and using other sources of language material to consolidate their knowledge of French. Moreover, students in Years 7-9 find speaking French particularly onerous, as their speaking skills are significantly under developed. During and at the end of Year 9, there are, on the whole, few significant variations in the attainment of students from various groups, such as boys and girls or those with special educational needs.

165. At age sixteen, students' attainment overall is below average, which is reflected in their GCSE results. Moreover, variations between ability groups are noticeable. The work of lower ability students tends to be less sustained both in range and in quantity. Students understand classroom instructions in French and they respond in phrases or sentences, often with the assistance of their teachers. Their pronunciation is largely accurate and their grasp of basic grammar points is usually secure. Nevertheless, most students show hesitation in communicating in French. While students produce a variety of written work in response to specific tasks, coursework or homework, not many students can also produce written work involving paragraphs or larger passages without a good deal of assistance. The majority of students experience difficulty in completing their course work in line with the requirements of the examining bodies for higher grades. Students' study of French contributes to their literacy skills but ICT-linked language work is limited and little evidence was seen of numeracy work in lessons or during scrutiny of their written work. Variations in the attainment of boys and girls and those with special educational needs are significant during and at the end of Key Stage 4.

166. Students' behaviour in Years 7-9 is generally satisfactory. However, there are significant instances of disengagement and disaffection. A minority of students, who make good progress, demonstrate enjoyment in learning French. While many show a positive attitude to French, there are significant numbers of students who display open hostility to the subject, with the consequent dilution of the necessary ownership of language learning. Progress in such cases is slow and the enjoyment of French as a means of communication is hampered. The disruptive attitudes and behaviour of a minority also impact adversely on the learning and progress of all students in French lessons in the lower school.

167. In Years 10-11, students present a mixed picture with respect to their attitudes and behaviour in French lessons. In one Year 10 lesson, students demonstrated exemplary commitment to the subject and persevered enthusiastically to learn higher grade listening skills. They attend to class work and homework, producing substantial amounts of work. They also take pride in their presentation of French homework and they value their French exercise books and worksheets. On the other hand, instances of misbehaviour and disaffection were noted in some Years 10 and 11 French lessons, especially in two Year 11 lessons. In these cases, students often pay scant regard to their exercise books and worksheets and the presentation of their work is unattractive. Such attitudes and behaviour inevitably impact adversely not only on their own learning and that of their peers but also on the effectiveness of their teachers. Students' poor attitudes to French and their resistance to class and homework often provide the best explanations for their overall poor performance in the subject.

168. Teaching of French is satisfactory overall, with some very good features. These include skilful class management, effective use of assessment, record-keeping and feedback, planning for the learning needs of all students, variety of activities, generally high teacher expectations, use of praise and reward to encourage all students to their best efforts, and the teaching of grammar to raise students' awareness of the distinct linguistic features of French. However, often lessons tend to be teacher-directed, which does not create sufficient space for students to learn how to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.

169. As at the time of the last inspection, teachers' planning and language materials do not always address the challenge of matching closely the needs of their students with what their lessons offer. When the language content is adequate and the teachers' use of the target language is consistent,

students not only tend to enjoy the lesson but also feel encouraged to take risks with the spoken language (as observed in one Year 8 lesson, for instance). On the other hand, insufficient and often inconsistent use of the target language by teachers, combined with inadequate amounts of grammar and vocabulary planned for a lesson, result in limited opportunities for students to listen to as well as to practise French. In many lessons, the noticeable imbalance between written and spoken work has led to many students feeling diffident about the spoken language. Moreover, teaching across the school lacks strategies for fostering enjoyment for French and for promoting it as a useful, international communicative tool. Teaching is further hindered by the need to recruit supply teachers, who do not have sufficient knowledge of the needs of their students nor indeed the levels of their attainment in order to create a credible ethos for learning and progress.

170. In Years 7-9, most students are co-operative, willing to learn. They work hard. Many are developing independent skills and take their homework and class work seriously. They respond well to the activities in the lessons, taking part in all four language skills. Their exercise books demonstrate a variety of written activities over time. However, insufficient enthusiasm and inadequate skills for language learning make many students dependent on teachers and they acquire a passive, re-active stance to learning. This, in turn, equips them inadequately for the demands of the GCSE work in later years.

171. In Years 10-11, a mixed picture is observed. A number of students show considerable commitment to the subject. They take their course work and lesson activities seriously. These students make good progress during lessons as well as over time. They build on their knowledge of the language acquired in previous years and consolidate their skills. There are significant numbers of others, however, who prove disruptive. Their motivation is uncertain and their efforts inconsistent. Both their learning of the language and progress in the subject suffer as a consequence. Overall, a relative minority of students in Years 10-11 demonstrate independent learning skills, including the use of dictionary and grammar books, collaborative learning skills and enthusiasm for French. There is a noticeable difference between the commitment and perseverance of boys and girls in Years 10-11. Students with learning support needs, on the other hand, generally make progress commensurate with their abilities.

172. The Modern Foreign Languages curriculum meets the statutory requirements, although, since the previous inspection, the provision has contracted from two languages (French and German) to one (French). In addition, there has been no significant improvement overall in students' attainment and progress in French since the last inspection. Moreover, as noted at the time of the last inspection, mixed ability teaching (with inclusion of SEN students) continues to pose challenges. Sound leadership of the Faculty team, co-ordination of teaching and assessment as well as the management of the difficult staffing situation all benefit the delivery of the languages programme. Together the current team of teachers show a capacity for further improvement towards raising students' standards in French. Further implementation of ICT and the student exchange programme are likely to enhance the quality of the curriculum, offering greater opportunities for learning the language. Resources are generally adequate but current accommodation suffers from inadequate refurbishment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

173. Overall, the quality of provision is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good in textiles and food.
- Recent improvements in workshop accommodation and schemes of work are helping to improve standards in resistant materials.
- Teachers are determined to improve attitudes and raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards and teaching in some areas of the subject are weak.
- Assessment needs to make closer references to National Curriculum and national examination standards.
- Students' skills in numeracy and information communication technology.

174. Recent GCSE results have been just below national standards overall for similar schools with above average results in Food Technology, and well above average results in Textiles; in contrast to poor results in other areas of the subject, where standards have been affected by poor resourcing, including staff illness. Standards in Year 9 are below national expectations overall, partly due to poor past provision in resistant materials, and graphics. The department has faced considerable difficulties since the last inspection, and overall improvement since then is unsatisfactory, with many of the issues remaining unresolved, although the enthusiasm of teachers to raise standards is providing some capacity to improve.

175. Year 10 textile students are competent at designing and making garments to meet specific needs, for example for Disneyland characters, and Year 11 food technology students are developing a good understanding of designing recipes for healthy eating, and the rudiments of nutrition. In an example seen, students working to a strict time plan prepare imaginative dishes for vegetarians based on carbohydrates. The quality of food preparation, hygiene, and presentation is high. Most Year 10 and 11 students working on graphic products have not attained a corresponding depth of understanding or skill. Products are often poorly finished; showing below average knowledge of design principles, and use of inappropriate lettering and colour combinations. It is hoped that planned visits by local design agencies will help to develop awareness of the importance of working to commercial specifications and constraints, and meeting deadlines.

176. The design process is used in all areas by students aged eleven to fourteen; and the best work, and design sheets, show a clear path from research, to initial ideas, and through to the development and final evaluation of an original product. However, the attainment of students covers a wide range, and attainments in design awareness, and freehand drawing are below expected standards for many, who fail to complete work. Written work in textiles and food is well integrated with practical work and helps students to communicate their ideas and relate their designs to similar commercial applications, although written evaluations often do not identify how products might be modified to improve their performance. Some students make good use of ICT for designing, and to present their work neatly, but overall its use is below that normally seen in Years 7-9.

177. Students' approach to the subject and tasks set is overall satisfactory, but there is wide variation in temperament. The majority of students, including those with special needs, enjoy the creative nature of the subject, work well during practical sessions and make satisfactory progress. In a minority of lessons, at both key stages some students are insufficiently motivated; some have low expectations of their own capabilities, while others are complacent. This can result in disruptive behaviour, wasted time, and a reduction in the quality of learning. When tasks are made interesting, teaching methods varied, and classes are well planned and managed, students show positive attitudes and behave well.

178. The quality of teaching is predominantly satisfactory and there is some good and very good teaching. Courses in textiles and food technology, are extremely well planned and structured to help students at all attainment levels to do their best. In these lessons, teachers communicate their knowledge of the subject well, set achievable targets, with extension work for the more able, use time and resources effectively, and build up students' skills sequentially. For example, Year 7 students are skilfully shown how to make shortcrust pastry, before designing and making pasties of their own. Whereas, in less successful lessons, teachers' expectations of students' conduct and standards of work are too low. Teachers' do not adequately focus on the needs of individual, or groups of students, and skills and design concepts are not presented in appropriate order. In these less successful lessons there is insufficient emphasis on National Curriculum attainment targets or examination requirements and assessment criteria. Subject guidance for example on planning the composition of a design sheet, the consideration of corporate image, or the importance of direct observation when making freehand drawings, is missing. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk, literacy is well integrated, and question and answer sessions are used effectively to reinforce learning and provide on-going assessment. There are times when opportunities to incorporate numeracy are left unexplored. However, learning is good where students are given clear aims and objectives at the start of the lesson, and encouraged to present their findings to the class in their own words; as in a Year 10 resistant materials lesson on types of manufacture and production.

179. The Faculty is well led and managed. The Head of Faculty has worked hard to improve the curriculum and raise attainment in the face of many difficulties; inadequate accommodation; considerable staff illness; large classes; and unsatisfactory timetable arrangements. Currently statutory requirements are not being met, as not all students have design and technology lessons, and the systems and control element of the National Curriculum is not being adequately covered at either key stage.

180. Development plans identify important areas for improvement; to raise standards; improve assessment procedures; and to develop the use of computer aided design and manufacture. However, priority must be given to ensuring that staffing, accommodation and learning resources adequately support teaching and learning, and these are consistently good in all areas of the department's work.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The attainment of students in Years 10-11 and recent rising trends in GCSE results.
- Overall curriculum planning
- The leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards in Years 7-9, especially in performing and composing.
- Teaching strategies to sufficiently challenge students at Years 7-9, especially the more musically able.
- To relate, more effectively, the practice of assessment with learning expectations within curriculum planning.
- To implement ICT and music technology in both key stages.

182. At the end of Years 7-9, standards in music are below that expected from students of a similar age. The 2001 teacher assessment results also indicate that students are working at levels below the national expectation. At Years 10-11, standards are above that expected of students of a similar age and from similar schools. GCSE results for 2001 indicate that 87.5% of students achieved A*-C grades, which is well above the national average. Results from the last two years show an upward trend. Standards in instrumental lessons are in line with that expected of students of a similar age. High standards are achieved in extra-curricular music activities.

183. At Years 7-9, the students' background knowledge of music is reasonably secure, for example in reading notation in Year 9 and in understanding form in Year 8. However, they are not able to apply their knowledge and understanding effectively enough through the practical activities they undertake. Standards of singing from a Year 7 class were weak, especially in intonation and phrasing, and

composing skills were underdeveloped in a rhythm piece. Performing skills in Year 9 were limited. The students' overall achievement is satisfactory, although the more musically able and some less able students underachieve, especially in performing and composing activities. In Years 10-11, students discriminate effectively in pieces that they listen to and in musical features and devices they explore. Their general musical knowledge is good and they apply this effectively in both performing and composing. Good examples were observed in a Year 11 class, where a group compared dance styles and rehearsed an arrangement of a dance - an area of study for GCSE. A Year 10 group also displayed high levels of performing skills in a rock arrangement. Evidence from students' portfolios indicates that composing skills are developing well. Achievement is good for all students in Years 10-11, including a student with special educational needs.

184. The students' attitudes and behaviour vary across and between year groups. In better lessons observed in Years 7-9, students displayed positive attitudes and worked productively together when required. Attitudes were unsatisfactory in a significant number of lessons where the behaviour of a few students disrupted the class and where it inhibited the learning for the majority. In Years 10-11, students consistently display positive attitudes to their work. Relationships are constructive and students are able to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning.

185. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with good teaching observed in both key stages. Teaching has a positive impact on the students' learning in Years 10-11, where teachers display good subject knowledge, where lessons have clear learning objectives and where work is challenging. Other characteristics of good teaching include aspects of planning, in teaching methods including the good use of questioning to enable students to learn effectively, and in the use of time and resources. Teaching has less impact on students' learning in Years 7-9. This is partly because the behaviour of a minority inhibits learning and other students' achievements, but also because some students are insufficiently challenged and where teaching strategies do not take full account of the variety of students' abilities in the class.

186. The department is well led. There is a clear vision and direction for and a shared commitment to the department by all music staff. There has also been significant improvement since the last inspection. This includes the raising of standards in Years 10-11, curriculum planning, the introduction of effective assessment procedures in Years 7-9 and the links with surrounding primary schools. Areas for further improvement include the raising standards in Years 7-9 through the introduction of more effective strategies to provide greater challenge for all students but especially for the more musically able; in the introduction of clear links between assessment procedures and curriculum planning and in the further development of music technology, especially computers, across the school. First rate accommodation, the recent acquisition of dedicated computers and music technology equipment and the recently acquired Arts College status for the school have provided a clear impetus for such improvement and for the future development of the department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- 2001 GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Many students work with interest and concentrate well.
- There is a high proportion of good or very good teaching.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- The relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- A good range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided.
- A high number of students enjoy physical education.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of planned progression to help students in all years to develop their skills of observation, coaching and officiating.
- The use of ICT in physical education.
- Lack of a systematic approach to monitoring teaching and learning across the faculty.

188. Attainment is below that expected on entry to school as a significant number of students lack agility, co-ordination and control as they practise basic skills. Most students make steady and sometimes good progress across Years 7-9 and by the end of Year 9, although overall attainment remains below the National Curriculum levels expected, a significant number of average and higher attaining students achieve in line with the levels expected. Students know how to warm up and stretch and the basic principles of fitness although these are not related to specific activities sufficiently. Higher standards are evident in games than in dance and gymnastics. In games, boys and girls have a satisfactory understanding of the principles of attack and defence and basic patterns of play. In rugby, higher attaining boys, improve their ball handling skills under pressure and demonstrate some well timed moves and passes in the game. In gymnastics, higher-attaining girls show good body tension and controlled landings as they practise a range of jumps and vaults. In Year 8 gymnastics students, particularly boys, display skills that lack precision, control and fluency. Students' skills of observation and evaluation are not well developed.

189. In previous years, results in GCSE physical education have been just above the national average. In 2001, students' results were well above the national comparison with all schools. During the inspection, the written work of more able students was of a good standard with detailed analysis of skill development and good use of technical vocabulary and understanding of the changes that occur in the body when exercising. For some non-GCSE students, progress is slow as the effective recording procedures used in Years 7-9 are not continued. In lessons, students show sound technique in trampolining and good skills and effective team play in rugby.

190. The majority of teaching is good. It is most effective when students receive clear, concise instructions that enable them to be involved actively early in the lesson. For example, the interest and concentration of younger students is maintained when reviewing their achievements in netball because the teaching method helps the students to organise themselves and their possessions. There are short time limits for tasks to be completed together with meaningful, frequent feedback to many individuals. Good class management and good relationships between teachers and their students enable Year 10 students to make good progress in trampolining and rugby. In these lessons, teachers' very good subject knowledge resulted in a good match of task to students' needs. They had to work hard physically and to think about the quality of their skills and sequences.

191. In Years 7-9, some unsatisfactory teaching occurs when the teaching methods are not adapted to engage students with challenging behaviour. There is insufficient use of demonstration and students do not receive sufficient or frequent guidance to keep them working purposefully. A significant minority of students are immature and their behaviour is poor. This affects their own and others' learning; consequently students do not make sufficient progress in their work.

192. Leadership and management are effective. There is a strong staff team with good subject knowledge. Curriculum and extra-curricular provision have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers are committed to raising standards in GCSE where good analysis of students' work has occurred, areas for improvement have been identified and teaching adapted. This process is not yet extended to all year groups. The department has effective assessment procedures in Years 7-9 but is not making sufficient use of the information to identify the main strengths and weakness in students' work or teaching. For example, opportunities to observe and comment, coach and officiate need to be planned for all year groups so that progress in learning is accelerated.

193. The faculty is well placed to strengthen its monitoring procedures and to share its expertise in class management and subject knowledge. Physical education contributes well to the social and moral and personal development of students. The use of ICT is weak, however the faculty helps to develop students' literacy skills through the effective use of key words. The accommodation for physical education remains an issue as in the previous inspection and restricts participation and learning in indoor activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

194. Overall, provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**. This is a department which has improved in terms of provision of time and resources but one which recognises that further improvement is needed in student's learning and achievement, especially at examination level, and in the provision of specialist teaching support for the subject.

Strengths

- The team of teachers are positive about religious education, supportive of each other and committed to improving standards in the subject.
- Steps taken in the development and use of assessment tasks.
- The use of imaginative stimulus material to engage students in their learning.
- Student's positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Specialist teaching support.
- Timetabling to enable continuity of learning in religious education.
- Further development of unit planning to ensure students are able to meet the standards expected by the Agreed Syllabus and GCSE specifications, ensuring a clear focus on religious concepts and questions, and enabling student's to build on prior learning.
- Planning to ensure that there is more explicit focus on developing skills which enable students to draw meaning from their learning in RE for their own lives.
- Continued development of a wider range of teaching and learning strategies to engage and meet the needs of all students.
- Development of assessment policy and practice.
- Provision of Post 16 Religious Education.

195. The standards achieved by the end of Years 7-9 are below the expectations of the Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus. Results in the GCSE short course, followed by all students in Years 10-11, are well below the national average for similar schools, with a decline over recent years. Girls achieve better than boys but both achieve well below the standards expected.

196. Student progress and achievement across the school is slow and sometimes unsatisfactory. Better progress is made in knowledge than in students' ability to use their learning to explain significance and meaning. Opportunities to reflect on their own and others' ideas in light of their learning are underdeveloped. Important opportunities to promote students' spiritual and moral development are often missed due to inadequate guidance and planning. For example, rap music used in a Year 9 lesson as a source of information about responses to prejudice was not used to stimulate student's own reflections and responses. Students in a Year 10 lesson, part of a GCSE unit on Religion and Human Relationships, spent most of the lesson copying down methods of contraception, rather than exploring a range of religious and moral responses to the issue. Across the school, the courses students follow are not planned to ensure that new learning builds on what has gone before. Standards are held back because expectations are low and the students do not know what they are capable of, or how they can improve. The setting of assessment tasks is improving. Where these are effective they focus on challenging questions, for example, 'What motivated Gandhi?' This task enabled an able Year 9 student to produce work of a high standard. Other tasks need to be better planned if they are to enable students to do their best. For example a Year 9 task to write a special report under the heading 'Racism the facts' encourages low achievement.

197. There is insufficient attention paid to developing activities and strategies to support the learning of students of all abilities – particularly high and low achievers - with most lessons based on whole class teaching, with all students undertaking the same activities. Extension tasks are provided for more able students, but there appears little incentive for them to complete these well. The need to improve boys' achievement in the GCSE short course has been recognised but no action taken as yet.

198. Students have a positive attitude to religious education. When given appropriate opportunities they work well in groups and express personal viewpoints confidently, as for example in the preparation of a role play on miracles by Year 8 students. There is some unfinished work in books, both class and

homework, but most students try to produce work of a good standard and have been encouraged in this by the use of a marking system which they understand. Behaviour is mostly satisfactory but is sometimes challenging.

199. Teaching is mostly satisfactory or better but sometimes unsatisfactory. Religious education is taught by a team of history and geography teachers who are positive about the subject but lack subject knowledge and confidence. When teaching is good discussion is driven by skilful questioning and imaginative resources are used to engage students interest. When it is unsatisfactory lessons fail to take account of what students already know, too much time is spent on copying information, low level responses are accepted and recorded without challenge, and lessons are not planned to take account of different needs. A group of able Year 9 students, for example, beginning a unit on Gandhi, were not enabled to share or build on what they already knew, and the key question explored in the lesson, relating to powerful leadership, was more appropriate to history than religious education. Under-developed unit planning which does not keep key religious concepts central to the work, and which is not built around the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus, impedes the progress of students and does not appropriately support the non specialist team of teachers. Marking of work is regular but does not clearly identify ways of improving. There is little planned use of ICT, but some students have researched topics at home on the internet and others have word processed their work.

200. Leadership and management is unsatisfactory. More deliberate co-ordination, sharing of good practice and monitoring of the team of non specialist teachers is needed. The department's scheme of work is incomplete and needs further development if it is to effectively support lesson planning and raise achievement. Planning does not indicate the standards expected, identify a range of teaching and learning strategies, nor identify how these can be matched to particular skills and to the learning needs of students. Clear specific policy statements are needed to identify good practice and ensure consistent approaches, particularly in relation to assessment.

201. Time for religious education has improved since the last inspection but the way the curriculum is organised is unsatisfactory. Religious education is taught in blocks of time rotating with history and geography. Students are taught religious education by their history and geography teacher, they use one exercise book for two or three humanities subjects, and in Year 9 students have two different teachers for religious education. Religious education does not have a base and the only display of students work is in the corridor. There is no provision for religious education in the newly created sixth form.

DANCE

202. The provision for dance is **good**.

Strengths

- Many students are interested in dance.
- GCSE dance has been introduced.
- There are increased opportunities for clubs and performances.
- There is excellent subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment is below the National Curriculum levels expected.
- Insufficient use of ICT to support learning.

203. Attainment is well below that expected on entry to school; many students have experienced very little dance. A significant number of Year 7-9 students lack confidence to perform, particularly boys. They display a lack of fluency in their transitions between shapes as they practise sequences. The

quality of their movements lacks awareness and tension that results in poor technique. However, many students have made significant progress in a short time. In Year 8 students express anger and fear as they work sensibly in groups to compose quite complex sequences in their prison dances. Through lively teacher demonstration students learn simple movement phrases rapidly in response to an African rhythm. They have gained knowledge of different formations and group relationships. Most students observe one another quite sensitively.

204. In Year 10-11, some GCSE students demonstrate some good technical and expressive skills. Many are able to move fluently between movement phrases and they use dynamics and relationships effectively in their duets. Students work with interest and many have gained confidence in performance.

205. A specialist teacher and members of the physical education faculty teach dance. Almost all teaching is good or very good. Lessons are well planned and the content interests the students. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and their belief in students' capacity to learn results in considerable physical and intellectual effort. Almost all students practise constructively when working independently of their teachers. In one lesson, the poor behaviour of a minority of students affected their own and others' learning. These students are unable to work unless in direct contact with the teacher and they were left too long without guidance.

206. Leadership and management are good. Appropriate priorities have been established and good progress made outlining units of work and establishing regular extra-curricular clubs and dance platforms. Arts College funding has enabled the profile of dance to be raised and links to be established with primary schools. Regular assessment of students' work is underway through teachers' notes and students' observations and evaluations. ICT is underused to support students' learning. Accommodation is good, although when the main school hall is used, some classes lose their lessons because it is needed for other events.

DRAMA

207. Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **good**.

Strengths

- Good attainments at GCSE.
- Good leadership in the department and good support in the expressive and performing arts faculty.
- The good quality of teaching and the in-depth, specialist expertise of a strong team.
- The well-prepared and thorough drama curriculum.
- The consistent and thorough procedures for assessment.
- The rich provision for extra-curricular drama.

Areas for improvement

- The behaviour of a significant minority of students in lower school.
- A sharper focus on educational drama.
- The aims for drama in strategic planning in order to set more realistic, achievable targets for development.

208. The school has made good progress in improving its provision for drama since the last inspection, for example, in the development of Arts College status, and in the greatly improved resources associated with this initiative.

209. The results gained in GCSE drama in recent years have been positive for both girls and boys. Drama is popular at GCSE and on average about half of students choose this subject at fourteen. Over a half of drama candidates attained a C grade or better in 2001, and virtually all gained a pass grade or better. More able students do well generally and twenty-five out of eighty students gained a B grade or better.

210. In upper school lessons on dramatic improvisation, students are able to work co-operatively in groups to create carefully observed characterisations. Because of the teacher's expertise, students are driven to explore the motives of their characters more deeply, and improve their sensitive use of timing in the delivery of a line to good effect. They often show flair in performance, dropping into role, using facial expressions well, and physical levels effectively for cameo tableaux. The quality of improvisation about differing attitudes to the disabled is at times very high. Students show the ability to depict such attitudes very sensitively and movingly. Because of this, the ensuing follow-up questions put by students to their peers - in character - provide very good opportunities for spiritual and moral development. In another lesson involving improvisation, students were more adept in body positions than facial expressions. They worked well with each other and many had developed confidence in presenting static mimes. They had less of an idea of how clothing affects performance in method acting. In other Year 11 lessons students listen very carefully and use volume, tone, and pause to good effect. Girls prove a little more perceptive than boys in *reading* facial and body signals.

211. In lower school lessons behaviour is unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory or poor behaviour of a significant minority affected the quality of learning in three of the five lessons observed. Students are able to say how emotions can be conveyed through body language and some show a concern to improve their performances. They often show poor listening skills and a minority lacks self-discipline; but their teachers show considerable patience and strong will in supporting their learning. As a result some get quite deeply into role by the end of the lesson - but the pace of learning is slow. One of the key factors which hinders good learning in lower school drama lessons is the way in which boys and girls apply very old-fashioned gender stereotypes to themselves as well as their teachers. A minority shows blatantly sexist attitudes to other students and adults. Standards in Year 7 are well below average whereas standards in Year 9 are just below average currently. By age fourteen standards are average, meaning that students make sound progress over time.

212. Students' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory and sometimes poor in Year 7 and good by Year 11. In lower school a significant minority behave badly in lessons, inhibiting learning for themselves as well as their peers. A significant number find it difficult to cope with the open space of a drama studio and the associated need for greater self-discipline. Although teachers work very hard to help students learn, the poor behaviour of the minority of younger students makes teaching a much more difficult task.

213. The overall quality of teaching is good. A new team with many strong features has been formed since the start of the autumn term. The drama team has a good blend of experience and specialist qualifications and has set about improving standards and reshaping the curriculum with considerable vigour. The new processes for assessment are particularly good and teachers are using them consistently and wisely to inform their work and that of their students. In the best teaching, teachers exert a very strong control over their classes when necessary, and know also when to step back and enable students to learn more independently. Teachers in upper school lessons include students well, particularly so with those who have special educational needs such as verbal dyspraxia. One of the key ingredients in successful drama teaching lies in the very good relationships between teachers and students. This means that students feel less inhibited in their performances and achieve more highly as a consequence. Teachers put on a very good range of extra-curricular events for students, including school productions throughout each year, visits to theatres near and far, and visits to the school by theatre-in-education teams.

214. The drama department is led and managed well, but also gets very good support from the head of faculty. The changes and developments associated with the acquisition of Arts College status have been managed well and new staff are settling in well and making a strong contribution to the department's work. Accommodation is very good and provides many opportunities for students to work on and improve their attainments. The department ensures good value for money in the expenditure on drama.

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

215 In the inspection, five 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
Applied mathematics	10	60		10		1.2	
Biology	9	78		0		1.3	
Business Studies	14	93		43		2.7	
Art	11	100		91		4.6	
Drama and theatre studies	10	100		10		2.3	
Geography	12	83		25		2.25	
History	21	100		52		3.4	
Psychology	22	86		9		1.8	
English literature	24	100		33		2.8	
French	1	0		0		0	

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
Not applicable							

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Not applicable							

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them well in classwork and in answering routine questions and overall are achieving well.
- Teaching is good and well structured.
- Students work well with smaller groups, being prepared to demonstrate from the front, and help each other.
- The subject is well led and being critically reviewed.

Areas for improvement

- Group sizes are small so early efficiency is not high.
- Increased experience will help with the selection of appropriate A level students.
- Mathematics groups would be stronger if the school were able to offer physics or chemistry on site.

217. Standards in AS level, of the first group of A level students, were rather variable and below national average. The group of ten students did well in relation to their GCSE results but some found the jump into A level difficult. The remaining five in Year 13 are working to a satisfactory course standard and should achieve average results.

218. Students in Year 12 are more confident mathematicians and show good knowledge and understanding of their programming techniques and the use of the simple method in the solving of inequalities. Modules on decision mathematics and statistics are appropriate with biology being the only A level science subject on site at present.

219. Students in Year 13 display a sound understanding of expectation and variance whilst revising continuous distributions and explaining the normal approximation to a Poisson distribution. Students' files showed high personal standards, meticulous approaches and wide syllabus coverage. Some sensible module order changes were benefiting this year's intake. Marking and support of work is very good.

220. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are clear objectives, careful planning, a brisk pace and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations. The support for individuals in this small class situation is strong. Both quicker and slower students were being helped appropriately. Occasionally there was a tendency to stray into periods of too much "telling" rather than demonstrating by activities.

221. Relationships with teachers and between students are strong with a good climate of mutual respect. Students display a responsible attitude to their work and are fully involved in their own learning. They receive regular formal and informal information about their progress and plenty of help and suggestions of how to overcome any difficulties they are encountering.

222. The curriculum offered and its leadership have been very successful in making a good start to mathematics provision in the new sixth form. Considerable effort has been spent in seeking local advice, selection and teacher preparation. With this accomplished and a new focus on increasing the performance of more able students in the main school, then numbers should rise and discussions about other mathematical provision can start.

Biology

223. Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Sound teaching.
- Good biological knowledge and understanding of the teachers.
- Sound lesson planning.

Areas for improvement

- Clearer management structure for the subject.
- Unsatisfactory preparation for the introduction of the new A/S course particularly in respect of coursework requirements.
- Make use of data logging equipment in experiments/demonstrations.

224. In 2001, Year 12 took the new A/S biology examinations. Comparison with previous data is not possible because this is a new course. When A/S results are compared with A-Level data then the proportion of students who gained a pass grade was well below the national average, with no students obtaining the highest grades A and B. In relation to their GCSE results, students did not achieve as well as might be expected. The number of students who chose to study biology in the first year was encouraging and this year that number has nearly doubled. Importantly, students are accepted on the course with the appropriate GCSE grades. There is currently one group in each of Years 12 and 13. Overall biology is a cost effective subject. About half the students who were on the course last year have opted not to study biology to A2 Level in Year 13. The reason for this high drop out can be explained in terms of their previous relatively low attainment at GCSE. These students sensibly took advantage of the new system, which allows students to concentrate on those subjects where they are more likely to find success.

225. The standard of work of current students is below average. In the lessons seen students learnt satisfactorily as a result of sound teaching, which made appropriate demands on them. It might be expected that sound teaching would lead to average standards but standards are dictated more by the calibre of the students than that of the teaching. Good lesson planning helps to maintain students' interests but this could be improved still further by using a wider range of methods and resources. In one lesson, Year 12 students were given the opportunity to develop both their communication and ICT skills when preparing a presentation about cell division. Important as these basic skills are it is vital that the students do not neglect the subject content. In another lesson, Year 12 students revised satisfactorily through the provision of a carefully selected set of questions. Some students found the earlier work on biological molecules very difficult because of their lack of chemical knowledge. They would certainly benefit from a block of chemistry lessons to cope with the demands of this difficult topic. Year 13 students showed expected knowledge of previous work on cell structure, which they were able to use to understand how messages are transmitted through the body's nervous system.

226. Teaching is sound overall, and students learn satisfactorily as a result. The principal features of teaching are good biological knowledge and understanding, and planning. While there are some opportunities, overall, teachers do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop their basic skills of communication, numeracy, and ICT. Teachers must provide all students with the opportunity to use the data logging equipment. It is very important at this level that students can link sensors to their experiments and analyse the information from them using computers. There are sufficient computers and sensors available but teachers require training in their use.

227. Students show expected levels of interest and respond well to the variety of teaching styles that they experience. When working in small groups students co-operate well with each other in a mature way listening to the points of view of others.

228. The satisfactory provision for biology is a finely balanced decision. The preparation for the introduction of the new course was unsatisfactory. There were staff changes in the department, which meant that the teachers who finished up teaching the new course had too little time to prepare. A teacher has now attended the examination board's training day but only after the moderator had significantly reduced students' marks for their coursework. Despite this problem Year 13 students have confidence in their teachers and have no regrets about taking biology in this school. The school took the decision not to allow any students last year to be entered for the module test in January and that all tests should be taken at the end of Year 12. The work necessary for the module test in January had been covered but students were thought not to be ready. It is pleasing to note that the current Year 12 students will take the module test in January 2002. These relatively low attaining students will certainly benefit from the modular approach, which the examination board provides. Usually two teachers share the teaching of a group. There are four inexperienced biology teachers for post-16 work who meet regularly, but informally, to decide teaching order and share ideas. However the management of the subject is unsatisfactory because the school has not made clear to the teacher responsible for planning the course the degree of control she has for all aspects of the subject. It is vital that this teacher is given opportunity to study best practice in schools with well- established sixth form biology departments. The initial funding for setting up the course was too low so that resources are inadequate for students to fully experience what can be achieved in this exciting subject. Additional technician support is required to cope with the demands of this new subject and increased student numbers.

Art

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

Strengths

- Excellent AS level results in 2001, especially as these are the first external proofs of success for sixth form work. Evidence of good levels of work continuing in the school's first Year 13.
- The high quality of teaching, recognised and valued by sixth form art students.
- Individual tutorial style studio teaching, providing students with clear information about their progress and how they can improve and develop their work.
- Well structured AS and A2 level courses providing students with increasing levels of skills and concepts.
- The expressive and technical quality of students' work.

Areas for improvement

- Three-dimensional work and use of ICT in art
- Possible development of other post-16 art courses to suit a wider range of students.

230. In the 2001 examinations, 91 % of students who took AS level art gained A and B grades, a remarkable performance by any measure, although the actual number of students involved is too low for reliable comparisons with national statistics. As a first set of post-16 art results for the school this is a vindication of the decision to extend this provision into the sixth form, and a confirmation of the quality of art provision and teaching that has resulted in the school achieving specialist Arts College status.

231. Attainment seen in sixth form art is above expectations for advanced level courses. This applies in both years, Year 12 in relation to expectations for the AS stage and Year13 in relation to the A2 stage.

232. Drawing from observation, including studies of natural and man-made forms, figure drawing and opportunities for life drawing from a professional model, has reached good levels. Many students draw with confident, fluent style, using line, tone, and colour in a variety of graphic media on large and small scales. Drawings reveal good understandings of proportion and visual relationships, and these understandings inform the quality of students' imaginative and expressive work, resulting in higher quality work. Art exhibitions and displays reveal a broad and prolific body of students' work in art and design. There are many ambitious, powerfully expressive and symbolic paintings, collages and prints. Portfolios and sketchbooks show how extensively students research and develop methods, information and ideas as their work grows into finished creative and expressive pieces, each unique to its creator.

Print processes include block cutting and etching, as well as batik and photographic screen prints using trichromatic colour separation. These advanced techniques are used expressively to generate some very high quality work. There is very little three-dimensional work or work generated through use of ICT. Students generally have good critical and historical knowledge about art and design.

233. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. Students get plenty of support to develop their practical skills, with expert subject leadership to help them through difficulties. Teachers know their students well as teaching is mostly by individual critical and evaluative tutorial. This enables every student to follow their individual interests and ideas in response to the set projects and themes, resulting in many unique responses, each interpreting and expressing ideas and using different materials and processes. In addition, this teaching method enables teachers to gain an accurate picture of the developing abilities of each student, and be able to provide detailed, in-depth evaluation and advice about how best to improve work in progress. Students place a high value on the teaching they receive. All of the students seen took a keen interest in their studies. They clearly enjoy the challenges presented by the projects set and respond to them keenly and creatively. They use studio time productively, amassing large volumes of portfolio work.

234. Post 16 art provision has been very well managed to create a thriving tradition of advanced study of art in a very short time. Facilities are good, materials are available in a good range and quality, supporting some ambitious projects. The development plan has identified a wider range of post-16 art courses, for example GNVQ courses, and the department is in a strong position to move towards providing these.

Drama

235. Overall, the quality of provision is **very good**. The focus for inspection of drama was in the main school but it was also sampled in observations of two lessons in the sixth form.

Strengths:

- Good attainments at GCE AS Level.
- The very good quality of teaching which exhibited strong subject knowledge, skilful lesson management, and a good pace to learning.
- A rich drama curriculum based upon development of theatre skills supported by close textual analysis.
- A thorough assessment process which helps students obtain a good knowledge of their own progress.
- Very good provision for extra-curricular drama.
- Good support from technical staff.

Areas for improvement:

- The aims for drama in strategic planning in order to set more realistic, achievable targets for development.

236. Post-16 provision has only recently been introduced in 2000, but is already led and managed well. It provides good value for money.

237. The results gained in the school's first GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level drama examinations last year have been positive for both girls and boys in that all students achieved at least a pass grade or better. Four out of the ten candidates attained a C grade or better in 2001. Boys did better than girls but no candidates obtained an A grade. The departments ability to recruit and retain students is good in that all AS candidates have gone on to the A2 course.

238. In work on dramatic improvisation and mime in Year 13, students had a good sense of what is needed to put together and present a performance. They have built a very strong unity in the group, and this enables their levels of concentration to be high when necessary. Students bring out detailed characterisation through a detailed understanding of the character's feelings because their teacher was

skilled at developing their empathy. In other work in Year 12, students are able to build a choral quality to their rap rhythms spoken in the round with some verve. They refer to terms such as pitch, accent and pace in spoken drama with some authority.

239. Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They are eager to learn and amenable to the leadership, advice, and guidance of their teachers. Students give every indication that they want to do well and apply themselves to their work with great energy. As a result their progress is good.

240. The overall quality of teaching is very good and occasionally teaching is excellent. In a voice master-class the teacher developed a rich tapestry of voice techniques and vocal effects with a lively pace. Teachers use plenary sessions skilfully to draw out the conclusions and implications of learning. Teachers do well in helping students to build levels of concentration that are at times intense. Assessment is good - particularly in terms of students' day-to-day work, learning is further reinforced when teachers go through students' performances in painstaking detail to identify strengths and areas for development.

241. Teaching and learning is considerably improved by the informed support of the drama technician. His support is rightly driven by the needs of the drama work students' are engaged in, and his advice is invariably well-informed.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards in the sixth form are good. At AS level, all twenty-one students entered passed, with 54% gaining grades A/B.
- Students ask searching questions that allow them to explore ideas and technical concepts in depth, not merely memorise or accept them uncritically.
- Students have good historical knowledge and very good attitudes to learning. Teaching, particularly marking and assessment, is good.
- Teachers have very good historical knowledge, use language well to develop students' grasp of demanding concepts and have devised an excellent assessment framework to show what is required to reach the higher levels and what students must do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Some students need to improve their ability to locate key historical events in their context so that their contribution to the line of argument they are developing is not confused.
- The department needs to develop its understanding of the requirements of the new examination and should seek further professional development as soon as it is made available by the examination boards

243. Standards in the sixth form are good. At AS level, in this the first year the school entered students for advanced level examinations of any kind, results were good. All twenty-one students entered passed, with 54% gaining grades A/B. No comparative data is available to allow the school or inspectors make comparisons. Nonetheless, history far exceeded the school's predicted average points scores for its students, based on GCSE performance, and the school has good reason to anticipate that its success will be repeated when this year's students sit the second element of A Level.

244. In lessons observed and in coursework reviewed, standards are good. In Year 12, some very good work was evident in an essay on Charles I. The student had a clear grasp of the key events and issues facing the Stuart kings, was able to develop and defend a clear line of argument, using facts and interpretations of source material sensibly, knew how to organise material effectively and constructed conclusions that followed logically from the evidence. In another example, students still in the early stages of their AS course were able to draw connections between the concepts of 'bias' and 'cultural perspective' to question the notion of historical knowledge, indicating that they had already progressed satisfactorily beyond the level required by GCSE. These students were beginning to ask searching

questions that allowed them to explore ideas and technical concepts, not merely memorise or accept them uncritically. At times, the grasp they have of the complexity of their subject matter is uncertain but the good literacy skills the department has fostered lower down the school have been sustained and provide them with the basis for a more mature writing style when they encounter more demanding work.

245. In Year 13, students have good historical knowledge and handle source material well. In one case, a student had analysed the ministries of Gladstone, Disraeli and Lord Salisbury perceptively; in another, concerning British Imperial policy, the essay combined a wealth of historical information with good literacy skills to generate a reflective and considered account of the growth of empire. The most confident students do not simply cover the facts; they know they must combine and contrast them in order to give a balanced account of their subject matter and are ambitious in their approach even when the subject matter is difficult. Several are developing the ability to interpret authors' perspectives critically, although in others there is a need to give this greater emphasis. At times, however, essays over-reach themselves and temporarily lose their way. Some accounts are a little too personal, offering opinion rather than a developed line of argument, and the good use of a telling phrase is not always matched by secure organisational skills that keep the argument on track, link cause and effect securely or place events in the correct chronological setting.

246. Teaching is good. Teachers have very good historical knowledge and use it to channel students' ideas to higher levels. They understand how to develop students' self-confidence and introduce them to more demanding material at the appropriate time, and avoid overwhelming AS students with unnecessary detail whilst still ensuring they move quickly beyond the more limited perspectives of GCSE. Teachers structure students' understanding by providing them with detailed and clearly written guidance notes that organise their note-taking and allow essays to develop coherently. Teachers use language well, taking the less sophisticated answers of students new to AS and translating them into more abstract phraseology, thereby allowing them to make the transition to more demanding work without anxiety. The quality of marking and other guidance is excellent. The department has drawn up an excellent assessment framework that spells out precisely what is required to reach the higher levels and this allows students to understand how well they are performing and what they must do to improve.

247. Students' attitudes to learning are good. In Year 12, they are interested in history, are not daunted by the new course and are confident of their teachers' ability to support them in their efforts to come to grips with the demanding concepts and topics of the advanced level syllabus. Girls, in Year 12, however, appear more confident and are readier to contribute in class than boys. In Year 13, students work hard, are reflective and conscientious, and take an obvious pride in meeting the challenge of the advanced course. Students do not look to be 'spoon-fed' but work independently, research topics thoroughly before committing their ideas to print and ask questions spontaneously if they need clarification.

248. The department has made an excellent start to the teaching of advanced level history. Staff are, however, conscious that the demands of the new AS examination are still not wholly clear and that there is less compatibility between the teaching and learning approaches required by GCSE, AS and A level than they would like. They should, therefore, seek out further opportunities for professional development as soon as they become available and the demands of the new AS course become clearer. They should also sustain the programme of in-house development of their own scheme and take every opportunity to observe the teaching of colleagues in their own and other schools so that their momentum and success can be maintained.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

249. Overall, the quality of provision for English is **very good**.

Strengths

- The good attainments at GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level in 2001.
- Very good, skilled, knowledgeable teaching.
- Good, strong leadership which has developed a broad structure for learning and a very good teaching team.

- A rich, well-balanced curriculum which helps spiritual development.

Areas for improvement:

- Learning that is sometimes too teacher-directed.
- Insufficient use of information and communications technology in many classes.

250. GCE AS-Level results were good last year - the first year of the new sixth form. All students who sat the examination gained at least a pass grade and 50 % gained a C grade or better with a third of candidates gaining the highest grades of A or B. English is a little more popular with girls than boys, and girls did marginally better in the AS level examination. All who completed the AS-Level course have gone on to the A2 course in Year 13. Those few students who come from minority ethnic backgrounds, with English as an additional language, achieve very well, are highly motivated, and are included fully in learning because of very good teaching.

251. Current standards of work are above average. Most students achieve well. This is due to a powerful mix of very good teaching coupled with very good learning. Those students who are more able also do well and are encouraged to achieve their full potential. The department fulfils the aims of the school, particularly in terms of spiritual development, as students develop a greater understanding of what motivates people by a deep immersion in great literature. Students are able to examine literature such as Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and analyse the underlying concepts with considerable perception, using the text well to support interpretations. They talk of Tess's "*ancestors, her useless ancestor.*" and say how they see Tess as "*very pretty but fatally flawed*", and as "*innocent but still having an unconscious sexuality.*" Students are able to perceive underlying themes such as the way Hardy used the colours of nature to imply danger or peace. One was able to say how Hardy describes the changes in the landscape through which Tess walked as reflecting the transition in her own life. They recognise the crucial differences in Tess's relationships with Alec D'Urberville and Angel Clare. In another lesson on the poetry of wars such as World War 1, students read the selected poetry very well. Other students were able to comment on the different qualities of poetry and prose, referring to how in prose characters can be well-defined, and how in poetry, patterning and repetition can add impact.

252. Most students enter the sixth form with average attainments in speaking and listening. Their standards improve over time. When students speak, other students listen respectfully and carefully. They hold lively discussions and articulate their views cogently. They are confident enough to cross-question their teachers in order to add depth to their understanding. Standards in reading are above average. Students read fluently with good emphasis. They have a good understanding of the poetry, plays and novels they read and develop this further through vigorous discussion with others. Many read the poetry of Tennyson, with good emphasis and understanding but they do not get enough opportunities to read aloud in class. Students' written work is usually good and occasionally very good. They make wide-ranging links with a sharp focus when comparing literature from different centuries. Students improve their writing through a structured process of drafting and redrafting. They demonstrate a good understanding of the underlying implications of literature. Students' writing covers a good range of genres. In the best, they handle and communicate ideas fluently, and are able to support hypotheses with well-chosen quotations from the text. Standards in punctuation, sentence construction, and spelling are good. Students' attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good. They show maturity in evaluating their attainments, as well as the work of their peers, in the literature they study. They have good working relationships with their teachers and other students and this enables them to be delightfully uninhibited in their explorations of literature.

253. Teaching is very good. The main features of teaching are excellent subject knowledge, very good relationships, confidence, and thorough planning. Students are eager to learn from their mistakes and enjoy discussions of high quality because teachers have a very good knowledge of the texts and enrich discussions by introducing links to other media such as film and opera. Teachers develop students' knowledge through informed and reflective questioning and have a thorough understanding of examination board requirements. They ensure that their reactions to students' answers are reflective rather than judgmental. Teachers also make lesson objectives explicit to focus students on the requirements of the course. Classes are managed well, and learning is rapid. Teaching is sometimes less effective when learning is too controlled and directed by the teacher. When that happens, students are not given enough opportunities to initiate their own discoveries in learning.

254. The overall breadth and balance of the English curriculum are good. The department ensures that students develop their knowledge of English progressively. The schemes of work prepare students well. Teachers bear in mind the needs of students with a broad range of backgrounds, including those of the ethnic minorities. They often check individual students' understanding informally to monitor their progress. Marking is helpful and gives students a clear idea of how to improve. English teaching in the sixth form benefits from strong leadership. The school has not yet made provision for students to develop and improve their key skills, for example in language, literacy and communication. Good progress has been made since the last inspection when there was no post-16 provision. Considering how new post-16 provision is, standards are good and the quality of English teaching is very good. Overall, the school achieves very good value for money in the provision for English at post-16 level.