

INSPECTION REPORT

MALTON SCHOOL

Malton

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121681

Headteacher: Mr D J Roberts

Reporting inspector: Mrs M J Kerry
9931

Dates of inspection: 21 - 25 January 2002

Inspection number: 243695

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Middlecave Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr B Hodgson

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9708	Mrs S Daintrey	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How high are standards? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2739	Mr I Benson	<i>Team inspector Sixth Form Co-ordinator</i>	Geography; Equal opportunities.	How good are curricular and other opportunities? All questions as they relate to the sixth form.
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12885	Mr J Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
23246	Mr J Mitchell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Physics.	
31129	Mr J Pickering	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design.	
2113	Mrs C Marsh	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design technology.	
19152	Mr R Merryfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	History; Sociology.	
4615	Mr M Bostock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology.	
31332	Mr J Marshall	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
1340	Mr D Wigley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
23268	Mr K Corrigan	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
18447	Mr R Cohen	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	
12336	Mr M Overend	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs; Business education.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a popular, smaller than average mixed comprehensive school for 603 pupils aged 11-18. It is situated in the market town of Malton, but nearly 20 per cent of pupils come from a wider, largely rural, catchment area. There is a below average number of pupils eligible for free school meals (6 per cent), no pupils with English as an additional language or from ethnic minorities, and a below average proportion of pupils (17.2 per cent) who are on the special needs register, or who have statements (1.3 per cent). Pupils' attainment on entry is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, with a very effective sixth form, which successfully promotes and supports achievement for all its pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and this enables pupils to reach high standards, particularly in the sixth form. Leadership and management is thorough and thoughtful in its approach, has a clear direction for the work of the school and supports improvement across a broad range of areas. The school's resources are very well used and, as a result of the very efficient management of strategic resources, and the very good application of the principles of best value, very good value for money is obtained.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Consistently good quality teaching across the school and very good teaching in the sixth form setting high expectations of work and behaviour.
- Good standards of achievement and attainment throughout the school and across the range of attainment.
- Very positive and purposeful attitudes from pupils which support a strong work ethic and successful learning.
- High quality educational support and guidance which enable pupils to grow and mature as learners as well as people.
- Effective leadership and management which support achievement for all pupils and plans for consistent improvement.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Arrangements to enable pupils to achieve good quality learning in design technology and religious education have some weaknesses.
- ICT is not supporting pupils' learning as well as it should within every subject.
- Pupils' personal development is not sufficiently enriched and supported by provision for spiritual development.
- The quality of some evaluation work on the impact of developments on pupils' learning could be improved.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its last inspection in November 1996. There has been good progress in dealing with the key issues of the last inspection, especially the monitoring role of senior management, the provision for pupils who have special educational needs, assessment at the end of Year 9, and major improvements to the library. Very good progress has been made in providing the ICT hardware and accommodation to support pupils' learning, and this has provided the platform on which further improvement can be made. There has been some improvement in provision for spiritual development, but not enough. In addition to the key issues, other significant improvements have been: the quality of teaching in the sixth form is now very good, standards at both age 14 and age 16 have improved at a rate above the national trend, and sixth form results have continued the upward trend beginning at the time of the last inspection. Attendance has improved, and high standards of behaviour have been maintained. There have been additional improvements to accommodation, notably in art and music.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	C
A Levels/AS Levels	A	A	N/A	N/A

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

Standards at age 14 and 16 are above average and at Post 16 they are well above average. Results in English, mathematics and science at age 14, not included in the table, are well above average. Trends in improvement are above the national average at both age 14 and age 16. High performance Post 16 has been sustained over the last three years. Work seen during the inspection confirms the picture given by results, and demonstrates good progress, high standards and good achievement by pupils throughout the school. Achievement is very good in English and music, satisfactory in art, design technology, modern foreign languages and religious education and good in all other subjects. This view of achievement is supported by the school's own value added data. Both boys and girls achieve well, and pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. In addition to statutory targets, the school sets itself others covering a broad range of its work. These targets are carefully thought out, realistic, and sufficiently challenging: progress towards them is good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are hard working, well motivated and take a mature approach to learning. They are keen to improve and take a pride in their work and their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Pupils are confident that unacceptable behaviour will be promptly dealt with. They respond well to the high expectations that the school sets. Their behaviour is consistently of a high standard.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils show maturity and the ability to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. Relationships are very good, with respect and good humour clearly evident.
Attendance	Attendance is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Unauthorised absence is low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good, and in the sixth form it is very good. The majority of teaching was good or better, and in only a few lessons (6) was it less than satisfactory. Examples of excellence were seen in both the main school and the sixth form. Teaching is good or very good in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Pupils make good gains in their learning as results of challenging teaching. The skills of literacy and numeracy are effectively taught, and sixth form students have sufficient competence in key skills to support their learning. Effective use is beginning to be made of ICT, but this needs to improve further. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs enables them to make good progress, as do gifted and talented pupils in most areas except art and design technology. Teaching in the sixth form courses inspected and sampled was very good overall: there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Sixth form students are competent learners and are developing well the skills of critical enquiry and independent research that their courses require. The regular feedback they get supports their learning well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is of good quality and provides a broad range of options in both Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, which meet the needs of pupils well. These include work related and skills development options. Curricular provision is complemented by a good range of extra-curricular and wider learning opportunities. It does not meet statutory requirements in respect of religious education Post 16, the use of ICT to support learning across all subjects, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The much-improved provision includes in class support and withdrawal, both of which support pupils' progress well. The area is well co-ordinated and strongly led.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There is particular strength in support for moral and social development which is very good: support for cultural development is good. Provision for spiritual development remains unsatisfactory, and pupils need more opportunities to appreciate this dimension of their learning and personal lives.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Educational support and guidance is of very good quality and supports pupils well as learners and people. Systems for monitoring and tracking progress are good. The monitoring of attendance is very good. The school creates a climate where bullying and oppressive behaviour are recognised and dealt with.

The school works well with parents, and provides very good quality information for them. Parents are supportive of the work of the school and well satisfied with what it provides. Some parents have made a very positive choice to support their child's membership of the sixth form.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and leadership group provide good quality, thoughtful leadership, clearly focussed on the aim of achievement for all. They promote and support consistent improvement through good quality planning and effective deployment of resources. Subject leaders make a good contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective and committed and supports improvement well. Governors are well informed about the work of the school, and have a good insight into its performance through the monitoring that they do.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The use of data and the analysis of results as a tool for monitoring performance and suggesting areas for improvement is a significant strength. There are good quality processes of departmental review. The school improvement plan identifies relevant priorities, but the evaluation of their impact on pupils' learning could be sharper.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The resources of the school are very efficiently and effectively managed and financial planning is meticulous. Very good application is made of the principles of best value, which underlie decisions taken. There are sufficient staff, creatively employed to teach the broad curriculum on offer. Accommodation is good, although sixth form private study areas are inadequate. There are sufficient resources to support learning, with considerable improvement in ICT since the last inspection.

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 school's high expectations of work and behaviour. • The approachability of staff. • The progress which children make. • The good quality of teaching, where individual needs are recognised and catered for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The information they receive about progress, as part of a closer partnership. • A bigger range of extra curricular including a drama club or production. • The behaviour of a minority of pupils.

Parents are generally positive and supportive of the school. Inspection evidence fully supported the positive views of parents. Homework was observed to be set regularly, marked and to be of good quality in enhancing and extending learning done in class. Information on progress is regular and informative, and annual reports are of particularly good quality. For a small rural school, the range of extra curricular activities is good. There is a small minority of pupils whose behaviour has caused concern, but the school has been effective in dealing with this.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM MALTON SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form of this rural 11-18 secondary school has 117 students. It serves a wide area, is expanding and includes broadly similar proportions of male and female students. Most of them have progressed from Year 11; a significant number join from other schools. There are clear criteria for entry to the courses students wish to follow. A wide range of subjects and courses that lead to GCE Advanced Level, AVCE, CSLA and CISCO certification are offered. A small number of students stay on to retake GCSE subjects. Learning opportunities are also provided through a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities. Study, organisation and key skills are taught within all courses. The standards reached in Post 16 examinations are well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This highly effective, successful and very cost effective Sixth Form is very well led and managed. Well above average results are achieved in external examinations and this high performance has been maintained over the last three years. Very effective systems are used to monitor and support students' academic progress and personal development. The quality of teaching and learning is very good across all courses, progress is good and retention rates are high. The students contribute to and benefit from membership of this vibrant school community.

STRENGTHS

- Very good teaching, demanding levels of challenge and expectations enable all students to make good progress and reach high standards in their learning.
- Students have very mature attitudes to school and are extremely committed to their work and to their success as learners.
- The positive school ethos, very good quality support and guidance and the coherent and systematic monitoring of their progress in learning and their personal development, enable students to grow as responsible, enquiring and considerate individuals.
- The high quality leadership and management ensures that a well planned and coherent curriculum and enrichment provision is made to meet the needs of all students and to prepare them for life beyond school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The current provision of accommodation for private study is inadequate
- Arrangements for specialist careers guidance is insufficient to meet the needs of students, especially for those seeking local employment

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 in detail.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. A Level results are well above average, although AS results are variable. Teaching and progress good, with very positive attitudes. Provision is well managed.
Physics	Very good. A and AS Level results are above average and students achieve well. Good relationships create a positive learning atmosphere. The subject is strongly led.
Business Studies	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students actively participate in the learning. The subject is very well managed.
ICT	Satisfactory. Standards are below average <i>at A Level</i> but well above average at AS Level. Satisfactory achievement is promoted by good quality teaching and good leadership.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Standards are close to the average and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good and leadership of the subject is satisfactory.
Geography	Very good. Standards are above average. Students have excellent attitudes and make very good progress. The subject is well managed.
Sociology	Good. Standards are average but are above average for the proportion gaining A and B grades in 2001. All students make good progress. Good teaching and students' very good attitudes are the key factors. Leadership is satisfactory.
English	Good. Teaching and learning are good and results achieved at GCE A Level are above average. Leadership is good.
German	Satisfactory. Current standards are in line and achievement is satisfactory: standards are higher in Year 12 than Year 13. Past results are above average. Teaching is good. Subject is well organised and led.

Other aspects of Sixth Form provision were sampled and included one lesson in each of biology, chemistry, design and technology, history, music and health and social care, two lessons of PE and three of French. In these subjects, with the exception of one French lesson where teaching was satisfactory, all other teaching was at least good and progress was good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	There is a coherent and consistent programme of support and guidance, monitoring of attainment and progress and very good preparation for the next stage of learning or employment. The careers and tutor programmes are of good quality, but external careers advice is less accessible than some students need, especially those seeking future local employment. Teachers give their time generously to support individual students.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are very good. Priorities for improvement are clearly defined and systematically implemented. Value-added and other data provide a firm basis for monitoring and improving standards and quality. The governing body and leadership group have a coherent whole school approach to improvement: this enables the Sixth Form to give attention and commitment to those matters that relate to their aspect of the school's life and work.

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 range of courses and available information. • The advice, support and guidance before and during the course. • Teaching quality and feedback on their progress. • The availability and help of teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External careers advice and enrichment. • Listening and responding to students. • Treatment as a young adult. • Sensitive support from staff for students with personal problems.

The students are extremely positive about their Sixth Form; inspection evidence fully supports their views. The evidence also partly supported two of the concerns. They have voiced concerns about the lack of private study room and, although lists of free classrooms throughout the week are displayed, these are not always available. An alternative solution is being looked at. The availability of external careers advice is a matter of concern, especially for those seeking local employment opportunities. This needs to be explored in relation to the service level agreement with the careers service. When concerns are voiced by students, the school listens, takes account of their views and makes every effort, within the regulations, to treat them as young adults. Many excellent examples of staff giving time and sensitive support to help students were shared with the inspection team.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. This is a school where pupils achieve well. They reach above average standards across the majority of the curriculum, and achieve high standards in the Sixth Form. There is a strong emphasis on achievement for all, as part of the school's inclusive philosophy.
2. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment, taken across all year groups and across all subjects, is above the average nationally. Within this above average intake, the percentage of pupils entering the school with higher levels at Key Stage 2 is average. The intake includes pupils across the full range of prior attainment.
3. At age 14, pupils are reaching above average standards across the curriculum, with particular strength in English, mathematics and science where results overall are well above average. For the last 3 years the average points score has been well above the national average and has been rising at a rate above the national trend. Both boys and girls perform better than average in English, mathematics and science. In foundation subjects, results cover a wider range, with some subjects well above average and some below, but overall the standard is above average. Standards of work seen in lessons and in work scrutiny confirm this picture: work seen in music and in mathematics was of a particularly high standard. Standards in art at age 14 are not as depressed as the 2001 results indicate, but are still below average.
4. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and their achievement is good overall. Achievement is weaker in art where it is unsatisfactory and especially strong in music where it is very good. The good quality teaching observed in almost all subjects supports this achievement. Lessons have a good degree of rigour, pace and challenge which enables pupils to work hard and make consistent progress. The school's own value-added work within English, mathematics and science supports a picture of good achievement.
5. At age 16, pupils are maintaining above average standards. Average points score at GCSE is above average, and has been rising faster than the national trend. The percentage of pupils gaining five A*-C grades was well above average in 2001, and has been above average over the last three years. The school received an achievement award in 2001.
6. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment achieve well, and the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades was above average in 2001. The percentage of pupils gaining one or more GCSE pass is close to the national average: however, this description masks the fact that all pupils gain at least one pass, unless they are ill or transfer to another school prior to the examination. This involves a very small number of pupils each year, but it has a disproportionate effect on the percentage calculation *because of* the small cohorts.
7. There is also significant achievement on courses that are not measured by performance indicators, such as Youth Award Scheme, entry level certificates and RSA Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT).

8. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11, in lessons and in work scrutiny, are also above average: standards are weaker in religious education (RE), where they were below average, but strong in mathematics, music and science, where standards observed are well above average. Standards achieved by pupils in business education in Years 10 and 11 are good, with a significant number of pupils achieving the highest grades.

9. Pupils make good progress in most subjects in Years 10 and 11, and continue to achieve well. In English and music they achieve very well. As in Years 7 to 9, their achievement is promoted by good quality teaching which is consistent across the curriculum. The school's own value-added data supports a picture of good achievement, and this is confirmed by results which are in line with those of similar schools.

10. The additional support provided for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress and reach standards that represent good achievement. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In relation to their levels of prior attainment, these standards are often above those expected. In some lessons the quality of learning for these pupils is not sufficiently well supported by tasks and resources which match their special needs, but this is not generally the case. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons for additional support in literacy and numeracy, their progress in these areas is good.

11. The school is beginning to develop criteria for identifying the gifted and talented. The progress of such pupils is usually good, due to careful matching of work by staff. This is not the case in art or design technology, where progress of gifted and talented pupils is inhibited by weaknesses in the curriculum.

12. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with enough competence in reading and writing to gain full benefit from the secondary school curriculum. Most of them speak and write at least adequately in formal English, with a good range of vocabulary and sentence patterns. In class and group discussion, and in general speaking situations, such as the sessions in which they gave their views of the school to the inspectors, they are highly confident and articulate. They take pride in their written work and they enjoy writing. They have benefited from the daily literacy hour in their primary schools and are well equipped to build on the knowledge they have as they meet the more specialist language in the separate subjects. As they pass through the school year by year they absorb and use technical language in most subjects, with noticeable improvement in writing in history and geography, as well as in English. In Year 7 they are enthusiastic users of the library, although borrowing rates decline steadily as they get older.

13. Standards of numeracy and pupils' confidence when using number in the school are rising. Good use is made of number in history, geography and business studies. Pupils in these subjects are sometimes expected to collect, analyse and present data in different forms and to draw conclusions from this. Good use of number is also made in design and technology as part of the work involving scaling and measurement including the conversion of imperial to metric units. Pupils with special educational needs also make good use of specialist computer software designed to further develop their confidence when using number.

14. Standards overall in ICT across the main school are good compared to schools nationally. Recent and planned developments in ICT resources should see standards rise further, particularly in the use of ICT across the curriculum.

Sixth Form

15. Students in the Sixth Form reach well above average standards, and their achievement is good. The average points score for those doing two or more GCE Advanced Levels or equivalent has been well above average for the last three years. When the school's results are compared with those from all maintained school sixth forms in 2001 they are above average, and they are well above average compared to all Post 16 providers. The average points score for students taking A/AS examinations was 18.7 in 2001, as compared to a national average of 17.4. Students taking GCSE re-sits do reasonably well compared to national averages, in so far as comparison based on such small samples is valid, and in some cases this represents very good individual achievement.

16. Work seen in Sixth Form lessons and work scrutiny supported this picture of attainment, although there is variability within subjects. Taking an indicator such as average points score over several years and across all subjects evens such fluctuation out and gives a clearer picture of attainment over time. Generally work seen in subjects demonstrated above average attainment, looked at across students taking both AS and A2 courses.

17. Achievement in the sixth form is good, and in some individual cases very good. The school's own value added data indicates that most students achieve at least in line with expectations, with a few who do not achieve this, and some who achieve over and beyond what might have been expected. The high quality teaching and learning observed in the sixth form enables students to achieve well and translate their good progress into high standards in examinations. Although the school does not provide separate teaching for key skills, students have sufficient competence to support their sixth form studies.

Overall evaluation

18. The school has maintained and improved the high standards reported at the last inspection. Results in the sixth form, judged as above average at the time of the last report, have continued their upward trend and are well above average. Pupils who have special educational needs now make good progress, due to the improvement in provision made for them.

19. Attainment and achievement are good throughout the school. These high standards clearly spring from the consistently good teaching and learning observed across the curriculum, which is especially strong in the sixth form.

20. The school sets itself a wide range of targets across all areas of its work, not just those required by statute. These targets are carefully arrived at and challenging. If they need to be revised in order to incorporate sufficient challenge, then this is done. Progress towards these targets is good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development continue to be a strength of the school. Pupils in all year groups and across the range of attainment consistently respond very positively to the school's provision. This enables them to make good progress in their learning and to achieve well as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11.

22. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to learning. The pupils interviewed during the inspection were very enthusiastic about most aspects of school life. They like the

friendly atmosphere, the range of opportunities available to them and the ways in which the teachers help them. These attitudes, which are widely shared, result in a calm purposeful learning environment throughout the school in which pupils can make the most of their potential.

23. In lessons, attitudes are usually good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Examples were seen in all year groups and in most subjects, but particularly in geography, history, music and physical education. For instance, in a Year 11 geography lesson for a mixed ability class, all the pupils were eager to be involved in learning about the impact of industry on the environment. They shared ideas with each other, took responsibility for their work, maintained a high work rate and so made very good progress. Occasionally pupils were rather passive in their learning, and in a few lessons their attitudes became unsatisfactory. This is usually a result of weaker teaching, for example when the lesson is not well organised and has unclear objectives or the task is not sufficiently challenging and does not build on pupils' prior knowledge.

24. Behaviour throughout the school is very good. A notable feature of the inspection was the way in which pupils were consistently well behaved throughout the week, whether in lessons, assemblies, registration periods or around the school site during the increasingly wet weather. These high standards of self-discipline result in a very orderly community where learning is rarely interrupted by disruptive behaviour.

25. Parents are aware that there are very small groups of pupils who have entered the school with a history of challenging behaviour. The majority of these pupils benefit from the school's very good strategies for dealing with them, and they usually make sufficiently good progress to be able to complete their compulsory education and achieve academic or work-related qualifications. The number of permanent exclusions is low. The number of fixed period exclusions is average for a school of this size, and the sanction is used appropriately to remind pupils that verbal abuse of staff and aggression to other pupils are not acceptable.

26. Personal development and relationships are very good. Pupils are courteous, friendly and mature. They show a high degree of respect for all adults in the school. They have a strong awareness of the needs and feelings of others, which is developed through many subjects and activities such as the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils are confident that there is very little bullying, and that the rare incidents are swiftly dealt with. They are responding well to the increasing range of responsibilities which the school has appropriately identified as an area for improvement. They are able to express their views about the school through the system of form captains and head and deputy boy and girl. Significant numbers take part in extra-curricular sports and music activities and they value the opportunities to go on trips and residential visits. Pupils are proud of the part they play in the annual celebration evening.

27. Pupils who have special educational needs have good attitudes to work and sustain interest and concentration in most lessons. They are usually well motivated by a variety of tasks and good teaching. For those with specific behavioural difficulties, effective support is provided in lessons by teaching assistants. This does much to encourage changes in their behaviour and make certain that those pupils' learning and progress, as well as that of other pupils, is not adversely affected.

28. Attendance and punctuality are good and have a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Attendance rates have improved significantly over the past 18 months and are now above average. Unauthorised absence is consistently below the national average. Some of the authorised absence is due to pupils gaining valuable work or college experience outside school.

29. The school day starts promptly with most pupils arriving well in time, unless one of the buses is slightly delayed. As at the last inspection, there are occasional delays at the starts of some lessons because of the distance between the two buildings on the school site. When pupils do arrive, the teacher is usually able to overcome the delay by injecting a brisk pace to the start of the lesson.

Sixth form

30. Sixth form students have a strong commitment to their school and to their studies. They show pride in their membership of the school community, value greatly the support they receive from their tutors and subject teachers and take pleasure in contributing to, as well as benefiting from, its success. The students work hard, are well organised and willing to take responsibility, for their own learning as well as for aspects of the wider life of the school.

31. They have mature attitudes to their life and work. Relationships, with peers and teachers, are excellent. In lessons the vast majority of students are keen and eager participants in learning. When, in a small number of lessons, there was some passivity this contributed to less progress being made. On most occasions, however, students' responses and questions in lessons resulted in the setting up and testing of hypotheses, the production of evidence to support a view that differed from that presented by the teacher, or the beginning of excellent discussions.

32. Many students have realistic aspirations and are keen to do well in their studies. They reflect carefully on their progress, are candid in self-assessment about their own shortcomings and have clear perceptions about what they must do to improve the standard and quality of their work. Their own self-discipline is one of the hallmarks of their maturity: it is also a significant indicator of their concern to help and support others as well as to be successful on their own behalf.

33. A warm welcome is provided for those students that join the school for their Sixth Form education. The majority of students respond positively to the wide range of opportunities that they are offered to contribute to the school's life and work. Sixth Form students organise sports' day, play a major part in the evening to celebrate pupils' achievements, are members of choral and instrumental groups for concerts and contribute to many other events throughout the academic year.

34. The Sixth Form students enjoy being members of this community, make positive suggestions about how life in Years 12 and 13 can be improved and are seen, by younger pupils, as outstanding role models. Their attendance is very good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

35. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and in the Sixth Form it is very good. The elements of teaching and learning are judged to be good or better across all of the evaluation criteria, and this consistency is a strong feature of the school's teaching and learning profile. There is also consistency of quality of teaching between departments. The school has successfully addressed the key issue from the last inspection concerning provision for pupils with special educational needs, and these pupils make good progress.

36. Four fifths of the teaching observed was good or better, and one quarter was very good or excellent. Good quality teaching was seen both in the main school and in the sixth form. Teaching in Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11, was of equally good quality. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching (6 lessons). Some examples of excellent teaching were also observed. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when no excellent teaching was reported. The proportion of teaching judged as good or better has also increased since the last report.

37. Teaching is of good quality across the curriculum, and in all subjects inspected Post 16. It is good in all subjects except music where it is very good. In all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, it is good. Teaching and learning seen in personal, social and health education (PSE) was of very good quality, with rigorously planned lessons including learning objectives and keywords. Pupils responded to this highly focussed approach with interest and enthusiasm, and not only acquired factual knowledge but also explored issues and opinions in some depth during discussion. They saw PSE as both interesting and highly relevant to their own lives.

38. In business studies teaching was good or very good in the lessons observed during the inspection. Good use is made of case studies, encouraging pupils to be actively involved in their work. Teachers know their subject very well. Lessons are well-prepared and appropriate strategies used to encourage students to be fully involved in the learning process. Good support is given through helpful marking and advice for coursework assignments. In a particularly effective lesson on job selection in Year 10, pupils imaginatively adopted roles as employers and prospective employees in an interview role-play. This not only supported their work in business education but also made a valuable contribution to careers education.

39. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is very good and is a significant strength of teaching across the curriculum. It is strong throughout the school and contributes significantly to the good progress pupils make, especially in the sixth form. In some of the excellent teaching seen, for example in lessons in geography Post 16 and information communication technology (ICT) in Year 10, teachers' command of the subject was an important factor in pupils' gains in understanding.

40. Teachers' methods are good, and they are able to plan successfully a wide range of activities which enable pupils to engage with the material of the lesson and learn effectively. In the excellent teaching seen in English in a Year 8 lesson, well-devised activities enabled pupils, both boys and girls, to produce impressive extended writing. Expectations of pupils are generally high, and they are expected to work hard, and make significant effort. This consistently strong work ethic sustains pupils' learning over time, and contributes to their good achievement. In another instance of excellent teaching, in physical education in Year 11, it was high expectations over a period of time which enabled pupils to be highly

motivated and very ready to learn, and so to make very good progress in acquiring skills. In an excellent lesson in geography in Year 12, the teacher was prepared to take risks that resulted in students making large gains in understanding of weather data and its interpretation.

41. Because pupils approach their learning purposefully, they concentrate well, work at a productive pace and sustain concentration. The regular feedback given to them by teachers, both orally and through marking of work, means that pupils are aware of why they are doing a particular piece of work and how to improve it. Their knowledge of their own learning is good. Teachers make good use of homework to extend learning done in class, and to help pupils develop research and enquiry skills.

42. The management of pupils is good, and their interest and concentration contribute to their learning. Very occasionally, teachers struggle to manage potentially disruptive pupils, but this is not generally the case. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, this was related to a number of different factors particular to each instance, and did not indicate generic weaknesses in the teaching.

43. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the additional individual support provided by teachers and teaching assistants in lessons. Their needs are well diagnosed through the contents of individual education plans and teaching assistants are made aware of the contents of lessons beforehand. They are thus able to provide good quality support in lessons.

44. The effective use of teaching materials and tasks that match the needs of pupils with special educational needs varies. In modern foreign languages for example, additional time was given to a pupil to listen to a language tape, and in a keyboard lesson in music pupils were given a simpler version of a musical score to perform. In other subjects, for example, English and design and technology, the use of such approaches is too rare. Nevertheless, the additional support provided for pupils still enables them to make progress equal to that of their peers. Pupils who are withdrawn from lessons to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, using information communication technology and working in very small groups, benefit from good teaching which ensures that the work matches their levels of attainment and understanding.

45. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well organised and managed. Resources are effectively deployed to ensure that the needs of pupils are met and support is provided where required. There are effective systems for recording and monitoring the progress made by pupils from a baseline established when pupils enter the school. Much has improved since the time of the last inspection, most recently through the efforts and dedication of the recently appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs. More teaching assistants are employed and a special needs area has been established. Information of good quality is provided for staff through individual education plans and the handbook of special educational needs. The use of information communication technology has become an important element in raising levels of literacy and numeracy.

46. This very good improvement is exemplified by the response already made to the introduction of the new code of practice for special educational needs which is almost fully in place only a few weeks after its inauguration.

47. The school does not have a central literacy policy, but a literacy co-ordinator has recently been appointed. The staff has undergone cross-curricular training in supporting pupils' language development in their subject, and a further session is planned for the current term. There has been an audit of provision for literacy in all departments and this has revealed good practice already established in a number of areas.

48. All departments take appropriate responsibility for focussing on the need for knowledge of technical vocabulary and terminology in their subjects. Most of them display such language in their teaching rooms. In some subjects there are particularly high expectations of the standards pupils must meet in their writing. The humanities departments especially correct work carefully and set topics for writing that give opportunities for extended work. In science and geography skills of taking and making notes are carefully taught. Most departments have a good range of textbooks available. However, there is not at present any library based teaching of reading and research skills outside the English department which ensures that pupils in Year 7 understand how to use the library.

49. The use of numeracy by subjects throughout the main school varies from satisfactory in the majority of subjects to good in the remainder. Its development and support does however lack co-ordination at a school level. Increasing emphasis is being placed, particularly during Year 7, on the further development of pupils' confidence when using number as part of the mathematics curriculum. Classes frequently start with pupils undertaking group exercises that involve the use of mental arithmetic.

50. The planned use of ICT in subjects is beginning to develop, with a growing number of examples of use in subjects, for example data analysis and research using the Internet in science, and re-creating newspaper reports on historical events in history. However, ICT is not yet used as effectively as it could be to support pupils' learning. There are significant lost opportunities to make use of ICT in the teaching of art, English and DT.

51. A small amount of teaching and learning was observed within the Way to Work programme, and this was of very good quality. Pupils were well motivated and were making very good progress in developing the skills and confidence needed to equip them for work. One lesson of Youth Award was seen, in which teaching and learning were satisfactory, and one of Careers where pupils made good progress in researching career and work experience opportunities.

Sixth Form

52. Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form is of high quality: the strength noted in the last report has been maintained. Nearly nine out of the ten lessons observed had teaching which was good or better. Over one fifth of the teaching was very good or excellent, and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching was good in all the courses inspected in detail, and also good or very good in the sampled courses of music, history, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) health and social care, French, DT and PE.

53. Teachers demonstrate very good command of their subjects, and teach in a way that enables students to develop the skills of enquiry, critical analysis and independent study that courses require. Often students are challenged to extend their thinking, by searching

questions delivered at a fast pace as, for example, in a Year 12 music lesson analysing the finale of Beethoven's fifth symphony. In another instance, this time in DT, the teacher's own knowledge enabled students to develop their design ideas through discussion based on open-ended questions which probed their thinking.

54. Sixth form students also receive regular feedback about their work and progress, and this helps them to make progress and improve. It is a part of the very good quality support and guidance which is the bedrock of their sixth form experience.

55. Communication skills are not taught as a separate subject but are incorporated into the work of all parts of the curriculum. Students use libraries well and are competent in dealing with the Internet. They organise their writing efficiently; folders seen in the sample analysis were easy to read and understand, with notes and background material useful and accessible. Skills of note making and note taking are evident across subjects and are particularly strong in geography and science.

56. The school does not make separate provision for application of number in the sixth form. Development and use are the responsibility of individual subjects. In spite of an overall lack of co-ordination at a school level, development and use of mathematics including number across the majority of subjects is good and sometimes very good. In business studies for example there is significant use particularly in the analysis of data. Good use is made of algebra in science. Extensive use is made of statistics in sociology and geography. In all other subjects appropriate use is made of mathematics including number to support the work. There is no evidence in any subject that restricted mathematical skills are impeding the progress of any of the students. Indeed in many subjects most students show good level of skill.

57. Students in the Sixth Form also have sufficient competence in the skills of ICT to support their studies.

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

58. The governing body have put in place a comprehensive curriculum policy that enables the school to make appropriate provision for all pupils, including those that have SEN. The policy is reviewed annually and the governors' active curriculum committee also monitors its implementation and impact on pupils' learning. The curriculum policy statement is supported by other policies and guidance, concerned with pupils' education about health, sex and drugs.

59. Much care is taken to ensure pupils' progression in learning from Year 6 into Year 7 and the good relationships with partner primary schools ensure that transfer arrangements are effective. The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 years is broad and balanced, and includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and RE, as well as provision for PSE. Within technology, pupils study a number of aspects including craft and design, food and textiles. All pupils study French in Years 7 to 9, but at the beginning of Year 8 the highest attaining linguists also take German.

60. When pupils enter the school at 11 years, they are organised into mixed ability tutor groups and for some subjects are placed in sets according to their aptitude and attainment. In Year 7 pupils are placed in sets for mathematics and science and, from January, also for French. In Years 8 and 9 setting is more widely used. Overall, the impact of the setting

arrangements is beneficial to pupils' learning. Those pupils who have SEN also benefit from withdrawal from mainstream classes for a "catch-up" programme and for further development of their basic skills. They also receive in-class support to enable them to be more effective learners. The provision is good, as is their progress.

61. The arrangements for pupils' progression at 14 years, from Year 9 to Year 10, are well managed. The level of information and quality of the support and guidance offered to make decisions about courses is good. Parents are fully involved in these decisions, especially in discussions that may require National Curriculum requirements to be lifted. These might be about provision for pupils who have particular aptitudes and wish to study, for example, two languages or follow a course that is not GCSE accredited. The school follows carefully the guidance offered, by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), in helping pupils and their parents make these choices.

62. The good quality curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is broad and balanced. It includes a rich core curriculum of English, which for the majority of pupils includes Literature, mathematics and science as well as ICT, PSE, PE and RE. In addition to these core subjects others, chosen by pupils in line with well-defined guidance provided by the school, make up their taught curriculum. As a result pupils can be entered for up to ten GCSE subjects.

63. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are organised for learning in English, mathematics and science, in sets that are based on their prior attainment in the subject. In other subjects there are sets formed that may arise from all pupils taking that subject, or that may be formed across a range of subjects, as a result of pupils' choices. However, the teaching and learning provided is sensitive to these various organisational features so that pupils make appropriate progress.

64. The curriculum in the main school is designed to meet the learning needs of all pupils, including those who have SEN. In addition to the setting arrangements and other specific basic skills provision, mainly for pupils on the Register of the Code of Practice, some potentially disaffected pupils can follow a Way to Work and a work experience based skill power programme as an alternative to GCSE courses. This provision is well focused on meeting the specific learning needs of these particular pupils. Occasionally, however, although they develop designated skills, the levels of challenge offered to them are insufficient to extend knowledge and understanding.

65. Careers, health, sex and drugs education is of good quality. Careers education is supported by a programme within PSE and by good quality service from the school's designated careers officer. There is also an effective resource to support pupils' independent research in the school's careers library. Health, sex and drugs education is taught within careers and through units of work in science and RE at appropriate stages in pupils' education.

66. Although the school generally complies with statute in most of its provision the governors are aware that: not all subject departments meet the requirement for the use of ICT to support pupils' learning and, although assemblies are worthwhile occasions and meet the requirement for collective worship, they are not yet provided daily for all pupils. Nor are requirements met for RE in the sixth form.

67. Across Year 7 to 11 pupils' learning is complemented by other experiences – fieldwork, day and residential visits at home and abroad, instrumental music tuition and, in Year 10, work experience in addition to a good range of other extra-curricular opportunities. These include opportunities in sport, creative and musical activities, choral and instrumental

ensembles, homework club, clubs to promote the development and use of ICT skills as well as weekend ecology visits and activities. Pupils' learning is also enhanced by the work of other professionals and by local and regional links the school has developed with industry and commerce.

68. The curriculum is further enriched by the good provision the school makes to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which has especial strength in the areas of moral and social development. Provision to support spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Provision for moral and social development is very good and for cultural it is good.

69. Provision for the spiritual development of the pupils is not yet satisfactory. After the last inspection, staff were asked to identify areas of their teaching where spiritual development could be promoted, and this has brought about some improvement in the provision. Areas of the curriculum such as art, English, history, music, and RE do enable pupils to develop their spiritual awareness in a personal and meaningful manner, and reflect on some of the fundamental questions of life. None the less, this area of provision still lacks a clearly articulated statement of its nature, what subject areas might hope to achieve, and how pupils' learning and personal development would thereby be enhanced.

70. Assemblies observed during inspection were thoughtful, sincerely presented and met the requirements for an act of collective worship. Topics were firmly rooted in pupils' own experience, or related to it in a way that made it meaningful. When no assembly takes place pupils have no chance within their tutor group to reflect, experience silence, or discuss with peers the implications of, for example, events reported in the newspaper or forming part of common theme. Opportunities to involve pupils in presenting themes or topics, either in a whole school or tutor group setting, are missed.

71. Provision for the moral development of pupils is very good. The school has clear moral values which include high and consistent expectations of the way pupils conduct themselves in class and how they behave to each other generally. Pupils behave in a sensible way around the buildings and corridors, despite the possibilities to the contrary presented by the school's widespread accommodation. The school promotes such behaviour by establishing, within an orderly community, a clear and effective code of conduct which encourages a proper sense of right and wrong. Staff provide good role models and pupils understand what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and respect and consideration for other people and for their property.

72. The work covered in RE plays a significant part in the provision for pupils' moral development, providing opportunities for pupils to study the impact of religious ideas on moral behaviour. They are encouraged to examine their own moral codes. Provision for pupils' moral development is supported by the very good programme of personal and social education. It is also supported in several areas of the curriculum, including for example, history, where pupils are encouraged to consider the moral questions associated with such diverse topics as the holocaust and slavery. Similarly, in geography students raised questions about the morality of trans-national companies who consistently exploited markets for popular brand name products in less economically developed countries.

73. The school offers very good provision for pupils' social development. The pupils are encouraged to have a sense of community both as regards the school and the wider community. Within the school, pupils are involved in work experience programmes and youth award schemes. Within the community at large, pupils are particularly involved with organising the annual Christmas party for local senior citizens. Opportunities for the pupils to develop social skills are afforded by the provision of a large number of extra-curricular

activities, including a range of creative and performing art activities. Pupils are able to participate in events such as the 1960's evening, which included speech, music, dance and fashion.

74. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities to undertake personal responsibilities, including acting as house captains or Head Boy/Girl. Pupils' social development is further enhanced by a range of residential opportunities, including foreign visits such as the trip to Disneyland in France. Social responsibility and concern are promoted through a very good programme of PSE and several subjects make further contribution to this area by helping pupils develop social skills. For example, in physical education lessons, pupils have a variety of opportunities to work collaboratively.

75. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The school teaches pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and many areas of the curriculum involve pupils in studies of diverse cultural interest. For example, in religious education, pupils study the traditions and customs of the world's major religions. Similarly in sociology a Year 13 group discussed the social and cultural implications, in terms of life-style and outlook as well as stereotypical perceptions others would have, if one chose to become a member of a religious group. There is some promotion of the awareness of the cultural development of the art, music and literature of other cultures: for example, the work done in art includes consideration of African and Aboriginal artistic traditions.

Sixth Form

76. One of the aims of the Post 16 curriculum is to meet the learning needs of students within the school, its partner school and those within the wider community. It makes a wide range of provision for Sixth Form students within its taught and enrichment curriculum.

77. The Post 16 curriculum is of very good quality. It includes GCE Advanced Level studies as well as AVCE and GCSE re-sit courses and the key skills, of number, communication and ICT, are taught within courses. The curriculum meets the aspirations of the majority of students. All students, both from within and outside the school, have every opportunity to discuss their course choices in relation to their aspirations, consider the opportunities to broaden their learning experiences through the enrichment programme and for preparing for life beyond school. There is always counselling and guidance available through the tutoring system.

78. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for progression into further and higher education as well as into employment and training. Most of those taking, for example, GCSE re-sit courses, continue in the Sixth Form following their examination success, in order to achieve grades in higher-level courses useful to their future. This flexibility ensures that those who are committed to success in a chosen course are given the opportunity to be successful.

79. The Post 16 curriculum is well conceived and is carefully planned to ensure access to the greatest number of students. Given the constraints within which the school works, the provision is rich and varied. The enrichment programme opportunities enable many students to broaden their experience through a good quality PSE, optional PE provision and the community sports leaders award, community service that can be within the locality or

the school, a high quality information technology course with accreditation, and other opportunities for music making and tuition. There is also an extensive careers programme, although there is concern amongst students about the ad hoc nature of external input to the programme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

80. The school continues to provide a secure and caring environment in which pupils' welfare and personal and academic achievements are well supported. This is much appreciated by parents and enables pupils to make good progress in their learning and development.

81. The school's arrangements for child protection, first aid and the health and safety of pupils are good. There is clear and helpful guidance in the staff handbook on child protection, and the designated teacher has had appropriate training and considerable experience in her relatively new role. Procedures for dealing with pupils who feel ill or have an accident during the school day are good. A significant number of staff has had some form of first aid training and there is good awareness of particular medical needs such as allergies and diabetes. The school nurse plays a valuable role by providing a confidential counselling service to pupils as well as contributing to the sex education programme.

82. Subject departments have effective systems to ensure the health and safety of pupils, including risk assessments and equipment checks. Pupils are taught to *give* a high level of attention to safety issues. The school commissions health and safety inspections from time to time and follows up the issues raised appropriately. It has good plans to 'buy in' to the local education authority's new health and safety service which will include training for the headteacher and site manager. The staff handbook provides little guidance about health and safety apart from fire and emergency evacuation procedures.

83. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The school has been very successful in transforming the pupils' attendance rate from being consistently below the national average to being consistently above. Measures introduced over the last 18 months include reducing the amount of study leave given to Year 11 pupils, appointing an attendance secretary, telephoning parents on the first day of a child's absence, rewarding form groups with the highest attendance, and computerising the registration system so that attendance can be more easily monitored and analysed. There are good systems for recording the whereabouts of pupils on the split site so that, for example, absences of pupils from lessons can be followed up very quickly.

84. The school works effectively and flexibly to meet the needs of pupils who do, or may, find full-time schooling difficult to maintain. It provides, for example, individual timetables, especially for those re-integrating back into education, an accredited Way to Work option in Years 10 and 11, and packages of education and training outside school. The school works very well with the education social welfare officer on a range of strategies to improve attendance even further. It has tried various methods of improving punctuality to lessons but has found that its present arrangements, although not always successful, work best.

85. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are also very good. There are clear codes of conduct and rules which pupils respect. Pupils are motivated by the system of rewards and accept the sanctions as fair. The school operates an effective isolation unit where disruptive pupils can be withdrawn from the normal activities of a school day but

continue with their work. The school has responded well to the challenge of including more pupils with significant behavioural or family problems by increasing the support provided by special educational needs staff, including the co-ordinator and teaching assistants, and by making good use of the local education authority behaviour support tutor.

86. The school has successfully created a climate in which bullying and other forms of harassment are not tolerated. Pupils comment on the value of the annual anti-bullying week and thoughtful advice is provided for them, for example in their planners, on dealing with bullying. The school's monitoring of exclusions reveals that there are very few serious incidents in the summer term when pupils have access to the extensive playing fields at lunchtime. The lack of suitable outdoor space during the winter for pupils to make constructive use of the lengthy lunch hour was evident during the inspection and in discussions with pupils.

87. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a well-founded system for the analysis of performance data to inform its work when tracking pupils' attainment and progress. All the results in external examinations and tests are systematically analysed by gender and in relation to national and similar schools, as well as against previous performance for the whole school, for different subjects and for individual pupils. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 are keenly aware of the National Curriculum level they have reached and pupils in Years 10 and 11 fully understand the GCSE target grade assigned to them. For many pupils, such information is the focus of much hard work in order that they can improve their performance.

88. The educational support and personal guidance provided by the school is of very good quality. A wide range of statistical data is used to monitor pupils' attainment and progress in their academic work. At whole school level the performance of each cohort of pupils is carefully analysed and tracked as they move through the school. The contents of the school's PANDA and the DfES Autumn Package are both used to provide analyses of performance data, value-added and to inform predictions of individual pupil performance at 14, 16 and Post 16. This systematic approach ensures that discussions with pupils and the detailed oral and written reports to parents are very well informed.

89. Subject departments also use performance data well for a variety of purposes. The analysis of external performance data as well as the results of internal assessment is used to inform curriculum development, the placing of pupils in sets for learning and the planning of teaching and learning. The performance data is also used to monitor individual pupil performance against baseline and other well-established benchmarks. Subject teachers are becoming increasingly skilled in helping pupils set targets to improve the standard of their work.

90. The special educational needs department has established effective systems to monitor progress and keep comprehensive records for each pupil. Teachers and teaching assistants contribute well to the monitoring and reporting of progress. The progress of those pupils who have SEN is rigorously monitored against their individual education plans and the objectives identified in statements of special educational need. The targets set for these pupils are usually particularly clear and achievable and help them improve their competency in basic skills. Occasionally these targets are insufficiently focused and time spans are sometimes too long. Close links are maintained with partner primary schools, to make sure transfer arrangements between schools are smooth, and with educational and other specialist support services.

91. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. In many departments this aspect of their work has improved significantly since the last inspection. Practice that is very good is now found in English and science; in mathematics, geography, history, modern languages, music, PE and business education it is good. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory in RE.

92. The quality of marking has also improved and now provides pupils with helpful comments, suggestions about improvement to their work and a clear indication of their level of attainment. Pupils find these comments, and interim reports, very helpful when they review their progress and define future targets with their tutor and parents. There is also support for academic progress through the homework club.

93. There is a strong tutorial system based on form tutors and key stage co-ordinators. Morning registration periods are used well to provide structured guidance and support to pupils through activities such as completion of personal profile booklets and checking of homework planners. The personal, social and health education programme is taught well by specialist staff and makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal and career development. There are good arrangements for supporting and guiding pupils at the points of transition in Years 7, 9 and 11. Pupils with attendance, behavioural or other difficulties are given effective help to overcome their problems through counselling, target setting, contracts, involvement of parents and access to alternative curriculum options. The school's work in this area is greatly assisted by the very good working relationships it enjoys with a number of external agencies, including, for example, the traveller education service.

94. The new role of assistant key stage co-ordinator has been successfully created to focus on the closer tracking and monitoring of pupils' academic progress from the end of Year 6 National Curriculum test results onwards. For example, a small number of pupils in Years 8 and 9 have been identified as being at risk of underachieving and individual strategies, including the use of mentors, have been put in place to help them fulfil their potential. Through the system of interim assessments before the consultation meeting with parents, pupils are generally clear on how well they are doing and have an increasing awareness of the National Curriculum levels they are attaining. The annual celebration evening is an important tool, much appreciated by pupils and parents, in recognising and valuing all forms of achievement.

Sixth form

Assessment

95. Across the curriculum there is detailed and regular assessment of students' assignments in all courses inspected. Assessment data and value-added information is shared with all students and provides them with a detailed profile of their attainment and progress. Very good practice is found in English, physics, geography and sociology where the detailed feedback provides a basis for identifying further learning needs, areas of work that could be further improved and areas of excellence.

96. All students value highly the individual feedback, as well as the individual guidance, support and monitoring they receive, which helps each of them make progress in mastering the higher order skills needed to be successful in both Years 12 and 13. In addition,

students benefit from the regular checks and review of targets with form tutors. The regular and detailed reports, which include a self-assessment of their attainment, effort and progress by each student, provide a good analysis and targets for the further development of the work of each student.

Advice, support and guidance

97. Students believe that an excellent beginning is provided to their sixth form career by the important and highly effective residential induction programme. It provides many of them with confidence to take their place in Year 12, develop good organisational and study skills and become aware of the network of advice, support and guidance available to them.

98. The monitoring of students' performance, by the head of sixth form, his assistant and team of tutors as well as within subjects, is rigorous. The monitoring process takes full account of the differing needs of students, the courses they are following and the future to which they aspire. The outstanding relationships in the sixth form, where every student is known as an individual, are central to the quality of support and guidance that each receives. Students feel very well supported by the teachers and tutors with whom they work and value the time, expertise, availability and understanding of these staff members. The "green register" system monitors, each fortnight, the attendance, meeting of work deadlines and any concerns teachers may have of each of their students. The process is well used and provides another source of support and guidance to students about their life, work and effectiveness as learners in the sixth form.

99. Overall, careers education and guidance is good. Provision made by the school, which includes a taught programme, individual interviews and support with application for higher education and employment, is very good. Appointments with the external careers adviser are available, but students are concerned about the current nature of the service for Post 16 students, especially those seeking local employment. Study and key skills are taught through subjects and the careers programme. The provision for teaching study and organisational skills is of better quality than that for key skills, especially ICT. Assemblies provide a focus for sharing information, celebrating success and reinforcing core values for the smooth operation of the Sixth Form. No act of collective worship was provided.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

100. Parents show a good level of satisfaction with the school. The modest number of parents who attended the meeting with inspectors were very positive about all aspects of school life and very pleased to be able to send their children to Malton, including to the sixth form. There was a good response rate to the inspection questionnaire, with parents expressing most satisfaction with the school's expectations for their children, the approachability of the school, and the progress their children are making. A substantial number also expressed appreciation of the good quality teaching. However, a significant minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with a number of points including the amount of homework their child gets, the school's partnership with parents, and the information they receive on their child's progress. The inspection team found that all these areas are at least good. Written comments on questionnaires reveal a concern with the behaviour of some pupils and with the range of activities outside lessons, but this was not supported by inspection evidence.

101. The school continues to have effective links with parents. Overall, the quality of information provided for parents is very good. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of reports for pupils in Years 7 to 9, which was a key issue at the last inspection. These are now clear and consistent when reporting on pupils' attainment. The school is implementing further improvements which will see National Curriculum levels reported in all subjects in Years 7 to 9. Annual reports throughout the school, including the sixth form, provide full and detailed information about pupils' achievements in both their academic and personal development. Parents have the opportunity to compare previous years' reports to track how well their child is progressing and meeting the targets set. They also receive interim assessments and have the opportunity to meet subject teachers; about three-quarters of parents take up this opportunity. The homework planners provide a useful means of communication between home and school and are checked weekly by form tutors for completion of homework tasks.

102. The information about school life provided in the prospectuses for the main school and sixth form and in the governors' annual report is of a high standard and meets statutory requirements. The annual report in particular gives an accessible and recognisable picture of the life of the school. The half-termly newsletters give very good information about school news and successes. In response to a feedback questionnaire to parents, the school is now including more contributions from pupils in the newsletter. Other forms of communication include individual letters and phone-calls by the key stage co-ordinators, and the school's website.

103. The school meets the requirements to provide information in respect of the provision made for pupils with special educational needs in the prospectus and annual report of the governors, although the governors' report on the success of the school's special educational needs policy is rather brief. Parents are fully informed of the support being provided for their children and contribute to individual education plans and annual reviews in keeping with the new code of practice for special educational needs.

104. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home. The vast majority support the school by ensuring that their children attend regularly and on time and are well turned out in their school uniform and physical education kit. A considerable number of parents pay for their children to have extra tuition in musical instruments. Parents play a significant role on the governing body. There is a small parent-teacher association committee which raises useful funds for the school, for instance for the new library and the development of information and communication technology, and it is consulted about issues such as the school uniform. Parents are pleased to be invited to events such as the celebration evening and to have their concerns listened to, such as requests for the removal of the vending machines. Overall, parents' involvement has a positive impact on pupils' and students' good achievement throughout the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

105. This is a well-led school, which has made good progress since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the headteacher and leadership group are of good quality. There is a clear educational direction for the school based on a vision of achievement for all, which is clearly articulated and widely shared within the school community. This strong commitment to providing a broad range of opportunities makes this a school which promotes inclusion.

106. Careful planning has led to improvement on a broad front. The headteacher, who is a reflective and meticulous planner, has established a very secure administrative and procedural framework, within which the school can develop. Steady and consistent improvement is a hallmark of the management practice. The school development plan identifies relevant priorities for action: however, the criteria against which success is evaluated refer to actions being completed rather than to what has been achieved and the impact of those actions on pupils' learning. Refinement of these criteria to include the intended effects of improvements, and subsequent evaluation of the actual effects, is an area where the leadership group could further improve its own practice.

107. The leadership group forms a cohesive team, and the induction into role of the most recent member of team, which was in progress at the time of the inspection, is well structured, carefully thought through and thorough. The leadership group comprises a number of complementary strengths, and these are well deployed within the team. The clear division of roles between the strategic leadership group and the operational senior management team, which is flexible in composition according to need, is a good feature of management practice.

108. The governing body has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It benefits from an experienced chairman who knows the school well. Governors take an active role in monitoring the work of the school, both through well-organised committees and through formal reports which they receive. For example, they receive detailed and informative reports of the school's performance, with an illuminating commentary, which enable them to take a view of what lies behind the examination results. Formal reporting, on the progress against the post-OFSTED action plan for example, is regularly carried out and reported to parents.

109. Governors have not ensured that all statutory requirements have been met, but overall they fulfil their wide-ranging statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. The governing body has given valuable support to improvements such as the equipping of the ICT rooms. The effectiveness of the governing body is good.

110. The use of quantitative measures and performance indicators to monitor the work of the school and promote improvement is a significant strength. Methodology is rigorous and well informed by an understanding of what underlies the statistics. This means that pointers for investigation are well founded and relevant. Clear indications are given to departments as a result of this analysis: these link into very good quality processes of departmental review. Management is aware, as a result of these reviews and the whole school analysis of results, where problems lie. For example, recent work in the science department, identified as a need through this analysis, is well on the way to improving results at Key Stage 3. The monitoring of progress within teaching groups, linked to individual performance management targets, puts learning at the heart of the performance management process. The careful interpretation of the data means that there is accountability within a realistic framework. The key issue concerning the monitoring of practice in departments has been successfully addressed.

111. The school sets itself a variety of targets, in addition to those statutorily required, across the whole range of its work. The process by which these targets are set is thoughtful, and realistic. If, on reflection, a target needs revision, perhaps in order to be more challenging, then this will be done, as in the setting of targets for Key Stage 3 in 2003. There is analysis of performance by groups of pupils, and disparities will be noted and investigated as part of departmental review. There is very good, shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to improve further.

112. Performance management is well on track and being successfully integrated into the monitoring of teaching in almost all departments. Objectives are soundly based on value added, and have also been used to forward whole school initiatives. The monitoring of work within departments is well carried out, and subject leaders make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Some recently appointed subject leaders have not had as supportive an induction process as they needed.

113. The school has a good number of teaching staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. It is largely successful in recruiting, retaining and deploying well-qualified and competent teachers. The result is a stimulating mix of new and experienced full-time and part-time staff who have specialist knowledge of their subject and who are able to contribute effectively to others. The staffing of the sixth form curriculum is an effective use of resources. However, the school has as yet been unable to appoint a subject leader for religious education and a teacher who is qualified to teach and promote drama. New staff are generally well supported when they join the school, but an opportunity was missed to provide specific induction in the role of head of department when four new subject leaders arrived together last September. The staff handbook is a helpful document. There is an adequate number of support staff members who make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school.

114. The school has a good range of accommodation. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection when the small size of the library was a key issue for action. The school has undertaken a phased and imaginative programme of work which has resulted in a pleasant spacious library and relocation of the art and music departments into more suitable spaces. Most subjects have good-sized classrooms which are enhanced by display and grouped together. Exceptions are science, whose facilities are split between the two sites, and sociology which has no base. Accommodation for the sixth form includes a social area, but space for private study is inadequate. The playing fields are extensive but there is a shortage of hard surface areas where pupils can spend their time constructively at lunchtime in the winter months. The buildings are well maintained and kept clean, tidy and secure by the new site manager and other premises staff. The governors and bursar pay good attention to accommodation issues.

115. Learning resources are adequate overall, but there are variations between subjects with resources ranging from good to unsatisfactory. A positive feature throughout the school is the provision of textbooks that pupils can take home. The book stock in the library has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory; it is supplemented by book collections in some individual departments such as history. The main library is managed well by an enthusiastic assistant. There is good provision of ICT resources in the three discrete ICT rooms and in the base for special educational needs, and these are used very well throughout the school day. However, ICT resources are not easily accessible in some departments, and the lack of them in art and design and in design and technology mean that those subjects do not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and pupils' attainment is not as high as it could be. There is not enough use of visits out to enhance pupils' understanding in religious education.

116. The school's use of resources is very good. Financial planning is prudent, thorough and deals well with uncertainty. It leaves room for opportunistic improvement, such as the new accommodation for music, or National Grid for Learning (NGfL) funding which formed the basis for improving ICT provision, or a bequest which was used as the starting point for major improvements to the library. It is a judicious blend of forward planning and seizing

opportunities as they arise. A conscious decision has been made to invest in administrative time, and this has resulted in efficient administration that effectively underpins the work of management and teaching staff. Allocations to departments are carefully thought out, and well administered.

117. There is sufficient long-term strategic financial planning to allow governors and management to be prepared for the future, and to fill in detailed planning as uncertainties gradually clarify. The school has responded well to the need to manage a change in funding balance. Monies arriving through the year have meant that flexible plans have had to be made and implemented, making longer term planning for some items challenging. The apparent surplus has been generated in part by such monies, but also contains a significant amount of expenditure committed before the year's end: it is not excessive.

118. The bursar makes effective use of resources, for example by presenting different options on computer purchase, or making use of savings by employing a central purchasing facility. There is attention to detail in the use of resources, for example in reusing materials from the old library to make boards for the new library. The use of specific grants, such as funding for Bridge project from the Ryedale regeneration budget, is evaluated against broad criteria. Financial control is good and the recommendations from the last audit report have been addressed. The bureaucracy associated with accounting for Standards Fund has been burdensome on the school's administrative resources.

119. The principles of best value are very well applied and pervade much of the thinking and procedures within the school. Comparison is made with national and county performance data, and this is a very strong area of the schools' work. Cost comparisons are made, and procedures for competitive tendering are in place. Decisions, such as using a handyman instead of a series of small contractors, are taken with best value in mind. Governors are also involved in obtaining best value, in engaging a cleaning contractor for example.

120. There is a sufficient degree of challenge within the school's thinking. Decisions are carefully thought through and have a clear rationale: for example, the provision of a broad curriculum catering for a wide range of attainment translates one of the school's aims into a reality. There has been formal consultation with parents through a questionnaire until recently, and this will be taken forward again in a structured form. Pupils' views are gathered through form captain meetings, which the headteacher holds.

121. The school works in a broadly average social context, and has a pupil intake which taken across all year groups is above the average nationally in terms of results at Key Stage 2, despite fluctuations year on year. The school achieves a good degree of consistency of quality across all the main areas of its work. Pupils make good progress, their achievement is good, and results are above average, and well above average in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are good, and very good in the sixth form. The sixth form is very effective. The leadership and management of the headteacher and leadership group are of good quality. The financial operations of the school are very efficiently run, and there is very good strategic use of resources. Overall the school is achieving a good degree of effectiveness, and value for money is very good.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

122. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The high commitment, meticulous organisation and constant pursuit of excellence by the head of sixth form has contributed to both the quality of provision and the rigorous approach adopted to matters relating to students' effectiveness and success. The head of sixth form is well supported by the headteacher and other members of the leadership group, also by his assistant and a hard working team of tutors.

123. The school adopts a coherent approach to the management of whole school issues and the implementation of policies while recognising the distinctive nature of the Sixth Form. The governing body provides a clear educational direction for the school and has taken great interest in the role of the sixth form in contributing to the achievement of that. The admission qualifications take account of the courses to be followed and of meeting the learning needs of potential sixth form students in the wider community. As a result the sixth form is growing and is increasingly playing a significant role in the life of the school and the wider community.

124. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness are very good and contribute to the constant review of the process to provide high quality support and guidance to all students. The systematic monitoring of performance and the effective use of value added data contributes to an exploration of issues that may affect overall performance of the sixth form. These issues are taken into account when establishing planning priorities for further development.

Resources

125. There is an excellent balance achieved between sixth form staffing costs and the expenditure of the main school. Within these tight financial constraints high quality provision is made. The four principles of best value are well applied to all decisions relating to Sixth Form expenditure, especially the making of curriculum provision and the staff costs. Students are consulted and contribute their views through discussion with head of sixth form, their form tutor and through surveys that are part of the Post 16 quality assurance procedures. Increasingly students are exercising leadership within the school and contributing to its effectiveness. The cost effectiveness of the Sixth Form is very good.

126. The resources provided for Sixth Form courses are good, especially in English, geography, history, ICT and PE and in the school and subject area libraries. The provision and availability of ICT is good and the networked machines are well used. Teachers are generally well qualified for the subjects they teach and highly appropriate professional development supports them in their work. Accommodation is adequate. The common room and kitchen provide sufficient social space but, in spite of the availability of free classrooms during the day, the facilities for private study are unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

127. The governing body, headteacher and leadership group should;

- Further improve the quality of pupils' learning by:
 - * raising standards and improving provision in design technology and religious education;
 - * ensuring ICT supports learning effectively across the whole curriculum.

- Improve support for pupils' personal development by ensuring that provision for spiritual development:
 - * is defined in a way that meets the needs of all pupils and embraces both curricular and other learning;
 - * allows pupils to appreciate and understand the spiritual dimension of their learning and personal growth.

- Improve the qualitative evaluation of the impact of changes on pupils' learning as a measure of success.

Sixth form

- Support pupils' independent study by providing adequate private study space.
- Ensure all pupils have enough opportunity to explore career choices.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	128
	Sixth form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	4	32	64	22	5	1	0
Percentage	3	25	50	17	3	1	0

Sixth form

Number	2	9	32	5	0	0	0
Percentage	4	19	67	10	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 two percentage points

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	486	117
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	38	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	104	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	44	40	84

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	28	35	33
	Girls	34	29	25
	Total	62	64	58
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	74 (80)	76 (79)	69(70)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	43 (41)	57 (53)	42 (38)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	35	37	32
	Girls	37	30	29
	Total	72	67	61
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	86 (80)	80 (80)	73 (78)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	62 (54)	60 (38)	42 (36)
	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	52	47	99

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	32	48	51
	Girls	30	45	46
	Total	62	93	97
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	63 (49)	94 (93)	98 (95)
	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	42.8
	National	39.0

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

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	0
White	600
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	38	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40.534
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.9

Education support staff:

Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	253.5

Deployment of teachers:

Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.6
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Average teaching group size:

Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.3
Key Stage 4	19.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	1727183.00
Total expenditure	1635004.00
Expenditure per pupil	2834.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	35747.00
Balance carried forward to next year	127926.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.11
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	13.34

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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
Number of questionnaires returned

603
308

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	57	8	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	31	60	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	59	12	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	54	18	7	2
The teaching is good.	25	61	6	2	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	46	18	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	47	8	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	43	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	27	47	18	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	27	55	7	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	56	8	3	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	43	13	6	12

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is well organised and consistent.
- Day to day assessment of pupils' work is of high quality.
- Pupils make very good progress in all years 7 to 11.
- Results at GCSE are well above average.

Areas for improvement:

- The department is not at present making the contribution it should to the development of skills in ICT.

128. The standard of pupils' English when they join the school in Year 7 varies slightly from year to year. It is generally at or above the national average. Pupils are confident speakers with a good range of vocabulary. Their writing is, for the most part, well presented with good levels of correctness. Although there is a minority who still have problems with reading, very few are unable to deal adequately with the secondary school curriculum. Reading levels of the majority of pupils are appropriate to their age.

129. Results in the English tests for fourteen year olds, taken in Year 9, are well above average, showing that pupils make good progress during their first three years at the school. From the beginning of the course in Year 7 they respond positively to the high expectations of their teachers. They enjoy the new range of activities and skills, such as examining character and situation in the literature they read, and this enables them to cope well with the demands of later tests and examinations. Exercise books are neat and well organised.

130. In Year 8 pupils are already writing at greater length, with good control of language, exercising their imagination to good effect. By Year 9 pupils in the higher and middle sets are producing work of very good quality. In the lower sets work is highly structured, giving confidence to pupils who have special educational needs. Reading skills for these pupils are considerably improved by the use of a computerised program and they cope well reading at sight from their Shakespeare play. However, there is a need for pupils in the lower sets to develop the ability to write at length; at present much of their writing is closely controlled by the teacher and is restricted to completing sentences on worksheets.

131. GCSE results in English and in English literature in the most recent examinations were well above national averages, particularly in the higher grades, A* - C. These results represent very good achievement and progress by the pupils during their time in the school and this is also evident in the quality of their coursework.

132. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, cover a range of styles and forms of writing. Those in the upper sets especially write with assurance and conviction. It is obvious that they have enjoyed and understood the literature they are analysing and commenting on, and they express opinions on these and other topics clearly and persuasively. They also work well in groups. The comments they write on their own

standard of presentation in speaking and listening assignments are perceptive and show good understanding of the purpose of the task. Pupils in the lower sets, including those with special educational needs, are less successful in developing ideas orally or in writing, but most of them have good understanding of what they read, and they do make progress.

133. Teaching is good overall, with seven out of ten lessons where it was good or better and with almost one third very good to excellent. None was unsatisfactory. Lessons are carefully planned within well-structured units and topics. There is good variety in approach, and materials used are stimulating and helpful. For instance, during the inspection pupils in Year 7 enjoyed using individual whiteboards for quick response to questions on synonyms and antonyms. In Year 10 pupils were improving their skills in descriptive writing by examining the language of commercial paint charts. A set in Year 11 analysed in detail and very skilfully a section from a film, highlighting camera technique as well as characterisation.

134. In all classes teachers know the pupils well and have high expectations of behaviour and commitment to work. Their response to pupils' writing is supportive and productive: work is marked and returned promptly with detailed comments that highlight strengths as well as areas for improvement. Differences in attainment and learning rates are catered for from Year 8 upward by putting pupils into sets according to their current level. However, in Year 7 where this is not the case, the department needs to take more account of individual difficulty and plan work that meets the full range of needs.

135. The English department fulfils most of the requirements of the National Curriculum, but it does not systematically attend to relevant skills of information and communication technology. In the past there have been some difficulties caused by limited availability of equipment but now that the school has made improvements in this area plans are underway to include opportunities for use of ICT throughout the course. There is also a need to find ways of developing aspects of learning through drama.

136. Management and leadership of the department are good. The head of department has been in post for little more than a term, but he has worked quickly and purposefully to understand the strengths and the needs of the team. The last inspection report commented on the difficulties of running a department in which all members teach additionally in other areas. Although this is still partly the case, the school has made commendable efforts to make a more coherent team and the situation is much improved.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- Well above average attainment of the majority of pupils at ages 14 and 16.
- Good progress of the majority of pupils from ages 11 to 14.
- Mainly good quality teaching and learning with some that is very good.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour of almost all pupils.
- Well managed provision.

Areas for improvement:

- A limited amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Use of ICT requires further development.

137. Standards of attainment of the majority of pupils at the age of 14 are well above the average. National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 have been well above average when compared to all schools, and above average when compared to similar schools. Although boys have performed better than girls in these tests in recent years the difference is not significant. Pupils' performance in mathematics at this stage has been better than in the other two core subjects of English and science. Attainment on entry to the school in mathematics varies from year to year. Pupils' attainment for the latest intake in 2001 was broadly at the national average level but for several intakes prior to this attainment was above average. All pupils, including those with SEN, make good progress during this stage.

138. Standards of attainment at the age of 16 are well above the average. Pupils make satisfactory progress during this stage, including those with SEN. GCSE mathematics results have been well above the national average in recent years, but not as significantly so as the test results taken at the end of Year 9. A relatively high proportion of pupils achieve the highest grade of A* in this examination. In 2001 the percentage gaining this grade was about double the national average. Pupils' performance in mathematics is about the same as it is in the other two core subjects in the GCSE. Boys perform better than girls in mathematics; the difference is greater than is found nationally.

139. Standards of work seen in classes and work scrutiny were well above expected levels throughout the main school. For example pupils in a high attaining Year 9 class were being introduced to trigonometry. During the previous week pupils had undertaken work on right-angled triangles using Pythagoras' Theorem. The basic ideas relating to the use of the sine, cosine and tangent of angles were covered together with their use in finding the unknown sides in given triangles. After an initial introduction as a group, together with completion of a number of examples, pupils were able to undertake increasingly complex examples on an individual basis from the textbook. Many pupils had sufficient confidence to undertake the examples without further support from the teacher. Standards in this class were significantly above expected levels.

140. In a Year 11 class, after an initial introduction by the teacher, most pupils were able to undertake constructions and rotate various figures through 90 degrees about a given centre of rotation. Although several pupils required additional support initially, many were subsequently able to complete examples on an individual basis. All the pupils in the class were working towards the GCSE at the intermediate level and had target grades of either B or C, and achieving well.

141. Teaching and learning throughout the main school are mainly good and frequently very good. Four out of every five lessons seen had good or better teaching. A limited amount of teaching and learning (1 lesson) was unsatisfactory. All lessons are well planned with good links being made to work carried out in previous lessons. Most lessons contain a good range of learning approaches including group and individual work, and much of the group work includes significant questioning of pupils. Teachers make good use of questions that require pupils to think through their answers and to show a good level of understanding of the topic being covered. When appropriate, examples are provided in context rather than merely as theoretical exercises. Good support is provided for pupils when they are undertaking examples on an individual basis. Several members of staff are available to give effective support in a number of classes.

142. Teachers regularly set suitable homework which is properly marked and returned to the pupils. The majority of pupils make full responses to the homework that is set. Good records of pupils' progress are kept. The academic performance of pupils is closely monitored. Individual pupils have targets for National Curriculum levels in Year 9 and for GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11.

143. In a few lessons pupils are expected to copy detailed notes from the board and in others they are very closely directed with few opportunities to show initiative. The limited unsatisfactory teaching and learning resulted from ineffective management of pupils. This led to poor behaviour of some pupils. However, the attitudes and behaviour of almost all of the pupils are very good. Most pupils are highly motivated and respond well to the frequent questions that are asked of them. The exception to this was the attitudes and behaviour of some Year 7 pupils, which were notably poorer than in the rest of the school even though the teaching they were receiving was satisfactory or good.

144. Mathematics is well managed. The teachers involved meet on a regular basis and are working well as a team. Monitoring and evaluation procedures including the observation of lessons are in place. An annual review of the subject is carried out by the head of department, and this is discussed with the deputy head teacher as line manager. The last review, however, lacked structure and was insufficiently evaluative. Staff in the department are well qualified and able to meet the demands being placed upon them.

145. The specialist mathematics rooms used for teaching are of satisfactory quality and good use is made of display materials in these. However further use is made of less appropriate rooms for teaching including a science laboratory. Additionally the department lacks conveniently located storage areas for materials and textbooks that are required to support the work.

146. The curriculum for mathematics is appropriate. It meets the statutory requirements. Schemes of work have been devised that are designed to provide continuity and progression for the pupils and to closely match the needs of different pupil groups. Some use is made of information and communication technology to support aspects of the work. This includes the use of specialist software for supporting graphical work and the use of spreadsheets. Software is also available to support numeracy work. Until recently, the department has had restricted access to computer resources and pupils are expected to provide calculators to support the graphical work. Overall, the use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning in mathematics requires further development.

147. There has been good progress in the quality of provision for mathematics since the last inspection. Standards have risen throughout the main school. Teaching and learning continue to be good and monitoring and evaluation procedures have been strengthened. Although the use of number continues to be good in some subjects and satisfactory overall, there is a lack of overall co-ordination of developments and support for numeracy at a school level. The use of information and communication technology continues to be limited.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE standards are well above average.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitude to science and relationships with their teacher are very good.
- Assessment and its use are very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Raise standards by the end of Year 9 by improving schemes of work and some aspects of teaching.
- Further develop the use of ICT in teaching and learning in science.

148. By the age of 14, standards are above the national average as measured by national test results in 2001, and well above for pupils reaching at least level 6. Performance overall is below that of pupils in similar schools and below the standards achieved in mathematics and English. Standards are rising, but they are doing so at a rate which is below the national trend. Boys and girls perform equally well. Work seen during the inspection shows standards in Year 9 similar to those shown by test results, but the work done by pupils in Years 7 and 8 shows that they are acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills in experimental science at a rate faster than has been seen in recent years.

149. Some pupils in Year 9 with the highest prior attainment show understanding of some topics well above expectations for their age. For example, they can explain charge distribution in electrostatics in terms of redistribution of electrons. Pupils in the middle of the attainment range can demonstrate qualitative understanding of the pyramid of numbers and how diffusion can occur in solids, liquids and gases. Topics involving calculations such as speed and the principle of moments provide significant difficulties for pupils with low attainment and special needs. The range and quality of work seen of pupils in Years 7 and 8 is significantly better than that in Year 9. Pupils in Year 8 with low attainment had very well maintained books with work clearly set out and diagrams which were not only neat but very informative.

150. Pupils at the end of Year 11 attain GCSE results well above the national average. The results of girls are better than those of boys by an amount similar to that seen nationally. There has been a steady improvement in recent years and standards reached in 2001 were the best ever.

151. Work seen during the inspection reflects the examination results and some pupils reach very high standards in all attainment targets. In addition, some of the pupils with very high attainment have a very good grasp of the language of science and show well above average understanding of, for example, the electron structure of the elements and how this relates to their position in the periodic table. Many pupils in the middle of the range of attainment in the school show knowledge and understanding above expectations and the work of all pupils is supported by adequate skills in literacy and numeracy. Some pupils with low attainment can, by the end of year eleven, calculate the percentage mass of elements in simple compounds.

152. Gains in scientific knowledge and understanding and the development of skills in experimental science between the ages of eleven and fourteen are satisfactory.

Comparison of test results at the age of eleven compared with the age of fourteen show that pupils with high attainment at eleven achieve better than the rest by the age of fourteen. However, work seen shows that achievement is more rapid for pupils in Years 7 and 8 than in Year 9. Pupils with low prior attainment and those with special needs also make satisfactory progress. By the age of sixteen, all pupils achieve above expectations, particularly in the development of skills in experimental and investigative science. The achievement of girls is well above expectations.

153. The good achievement of pupils by the end of Year 11 is due to the overall good teaching, their own attitude to and interest in the subject and the department's very good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress. However, some aspects of teaching, coupled with some lack of breadth of learning opportunities, contribute to some pupils, particularly in the middle range of attainment, achieving less well than expected between the ages of eleven and fourteen.

154. Teaching is good and makes a correspondingly good contribution to pupils' learning. Teaching in over two thirds of lessons in the main school was good or better and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teaching staff is well qualified with a good range of experience. High expectations, good use of learning resources and lessons well tailored to the prior attainment of pupils all ensure the creation of a positive atmosphere for learning in the laboratory in the large majority of lessons.

155. Learning is good or very good in lessons which are well structured, and have good links to previous lessons so that there is good continuity in pupils' learning experiences. For example, pupils were provided with good opportunities for learning in a well-devised lesson exploring the structure and function of the heart, which led effectively on from a clear introduction to a range of linked activities with progressively increasing challenge. Questioning is well used to check on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding but also to challenge thinking and open up new avenues for learning. In a Year 8 lesson on the refraction of light, pupils' responses to questions were repeatedly used to generate further questions to give back to pupils to make them think about the mechanism of refraction

156. Experimental work is used effectively not only to develop new practical skills but also to illustrate specific aspects of the work being undertaken and to encourage pupils to learn effectively from their own experience. Allowing pupils to take part in a demonstration to show the cracking of crude oil gave them firsthand experience of an important industrial process and prompted a very useful discussion at the end of the lesson to review what had been learned.

157. As access to computers improves, teachers are using information and communication technology increasingly effectively to support learning. Pupils in Year 7 were using a spreadsheet to analyse data from an experiment. In so doing, they were provided with a well thought-out range of supplementary questions to answer which gave them opportunities to increase their understanding of the underlying science.

158. In all lessons, there is a strong partnership between pupils and their teachers which makes a major contribution to learning. Pupils arrive at lessons expecting to work. Written work is well presented and all pupils take a pride in the appearance of their books. The quality of marking is variable but, where it is good, teachers show pupils where they have made mistakes and how they can improve. Teachers and learning support assistants, when available, have a good understanding of the special needs of some pupils and support them well in their progress towards their targets. Safe procedures for carrying out

experiments form an important part of learning experiences in science and teachers and pupils work well together to ensure a safe working environment. Good dialogue with their teachers makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. In many lessons, they respond keenly to questions and some ask pertinent and searching questions about their work.

159. In some lessons, learning proceeds more slowly because the teaching lacks focus. For example, there is no review of progress at the end of some lessons so neither pupil nor teacher knows exactly what gains have been made in the lesson. In a few others, learning opportunities are limited by insufficient variety of activities and the inhibition of pupils' independence by the provision of tasks too closely linked to the textbook being used. In Year 9, some of this less effective learning is attributable to schemes of work which are not sufficiently well structured to give a great enough breadth of learning opportunities. A much wider range of learning opportunities is evident in Years 7 and 8 than in Year 9.

160. Leadership and management are very good. The enthusiastic head of science has a clear understanding of the strengths of the department and how it needs to develop in the future. Although there is more work to be done on the development of some aspects of teaching, a programme of monitoring the work of the department is developing well. Assessment of pupils is very good and the way it is used to monitor the progress of pupils between the ages of eleven to sixteen makes a very significant contribution to the drive to raise standards. In addition, careful analysis of examination results is leading to major curriculum development. For example, the rolling programme of revising schemes of work is already resulting in improved standards in Years 7 and 8. Use of information and communication technology is developing well but the department is short of up to date resources for the development of data logging. Other resources of books and equipment are adequate. Resources are efficiently deployed by the two well-qualified technicians who provide good support in servicing the laboratories, which are inconveniently situated on two sites.

161. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall. GCSE results have improved steadily, teaching overall has improved from satisfactory to good and ICT is being used as effectively as current resources permit. Assessment and the way in which it is used are now very good. Some weaknesses in schemes of work remain but a complete programme of revision is well established.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Improved attainment.
- Improved teaching and learning.
- Improved accommodation.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve resources to allow a broader curriculum to include more three-dimensional work, printmaking and textiles, and use of ICT.
- Improve teaching of basic skills, personal investigation and experimentation from Year 7.
- Introduce systems to improve the accuracy of teacher assessments in Year 9.
- Improve the rigour of monitoring teaching and learning.

162. Teacher assessments indicate that attainment at the end of Year 9 is poor. These results reflect the lack of moderation seen nationally. However, GCSE results for pupils aged 16 in 2001 were above average. When compared with national trends the boys' results were well above average while the girls' results were below average. None of the candidates gained the highest A* grade but every pupil was awarded a pass between A and G. These results reflect the steady improvement since the last inspection. Fewer than average numbers sat the GCSE examination.

163. Pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment: at the end of Year 9 the standard of pupils' work is well below average. Sketchbooks are used to record pupils' observations or to develop their ideas in a range of materials but basic skills of drawing from observation are under developed, a weakness which has an impact into Year 11. Pupils gain an understanding of the work of famous artists, both European and multi-cultural, including Pop Art, David Hockney, North American Indian and Aboriginal art.

164. Pupils are meeting expectations by the age of 16. There is a strong emphasis on work being highly finished and there are attractive exhibitions, such as that of paintings of woodlands. Observational drawing continues to be central to the pupils' work although there is insufficient experimentation to permit pupils to discover individual ways of handling materials. Pupils look at pictures of the work of famous artists, but without gaining enough knowledge of these artists to allow them to influence their own work. Improvement in personal investigation and experimentation would raise standards of work further.

165. Even allowing for the varied experience of art the pupils have had in their junior schools, their achievement by the age of 14 is unsatisfactory due to their weak drawing and investigative skills and the narrow, poorly resourced curriculum. However, achievement by the age of 16 is good. Teachers have higher expectations of these older pupils who respond to more challenging work. Overall, achievement in art is satisfactory.

166. A Year 10 class made very good gains in technical skills when investigating the possibilities offered by clay, which they were using for the first time. Pupils were interested in their friends' work and appreciated their creative efforts, but were unsure how they might improve: pupils depend on their teachers for guidance rather more than is usual. Those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress in art, but the narrow curriculum and undeveloped research skills prevent gifted and talented pupils making satisfactory progress.

167. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory, while they are good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was good or better in two thirds of lessons. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching (1 lesson) was seen.

168. Teachers have good subject knowledge and present their lessons well. Pupils learn quickly at the beginnings of lessons when previous learning is recalled, and when their teachers circulate, assessing work and suggesting ways forward. Year 7 pupils made good gains in knowledge when considering the weaving crafts of North American Indians. The way the teacher led them in discussion enabled them to further their understanding and tolerance of other cultures while improving their literacy skills. They then made very good progress using strips of paper to weave symbols they had designed in the style of North American Indians. The pupils were proud of their work. There is also good work based on painted compositions based on robot-like tin men.

169. In the only unsatisfactory lesson seen, a small number of Year 9 boys decided to interfere with the learning of others by behaving in an immature and unacceptable way. Firmer strategies are needed to manage those pupils who call out or misbehave in classes. Although attention to safety is generally good, in a class making lino-prints pupils were using incorrect methods to cut the lino and ran the risk of cutting themselves.

170. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, but there are still weaknesses to address. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory with the head of department providing leadership which teachers and pupils are pleased to follow, although at present the monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour. The accommodation has improved since the last inspection and there are areas for sixth form students to have their own studio space. Displays of work in the department and public areas of the school are stimulating and improve the status of the department. That this work remains undamaged is an indication of the pupils' good attitudes. There has been a steady improvement in results since the last inspection and teaching and learning have improved.

171. However, as at the last inspection, the curriculum in art provides limited opportunities to work with printmaking and textiles. Although pupils do produce three-dimensional work in clay and mixed media, painting and drawing is central to the department's work. The resources for learning remain unsatisfactory and result in the narrow curriculum. The absence of computers and specialist software prevents the department meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum, and schemes of work lack plans for the use of ICT. Information gained from assessment is not used to modify the curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- The experience, skills and subject knowledge of the teaching staff and how well matched they are to the curriculum.
- Some very good enthusiastic and energetic teaching.
- Good relationships with pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- Quality of teaching in textiles.
- Planning and use of assessment to inform target setting.
- Meeting statutory requirements in the use of ICT.
- Co-ordination and formal links between subject areas.

172. Overall, the quality of provision in design technology is unsatisfactory because there are significant weaknesses in the use of ICT to support the curriculum and pupils' learning, and there are weaknesses in the teaching of textiles. In spite of this, much of what the two departments which make up design technology do, is of good quality.

173. Pupils' attainment in Year 9 in lessons and work seen is broadly in line with national averages, but varies between good and unsatisfactory across the different activities within the subject. Compared with levels of attainment expected, pupils' work is below average in textiles, average in resistant materials and graphical skills and above average in food technology. Pupils' practical skills are well developed and the use of practical tasks, for example in the snack project and the desk tidy project, develops within pupils a secure grasp of the use of basic tools and processes.

174. Achievement in relation to prior attainment by the age of 14 is at least satisfactory in all subjects within design and technology, with the exception of textiles. Many pupils make good progress. The development of skills is best where projects are well designed and differentiated, as is the case in food technology or in the resistant materials bridge building project on materials. Pupils with special educational needs are able to make at least satisfactory progress overall, and some make good progress.

175. At the end of Year 11, attainment is in line with the national average for pupils of this age, although results in 2000 and 2001 were below those in the higher A*-C grades than in other subjects within the school. A*-G grades were in line with those in the rest of the school. The results within the separate subject areas of technology vary significantly and are best in food. Results in textiles and short courses are below average.

176. In food technology throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils have good skills, and produce work of a good quality prompted by imaginative and lively teaching. They show the ability to mix and prepare ingredients and to use a range of processes to complete dishes. They have a good awareness of the need to prepare food safely. They have good basic skills in measuring and in designing.

177. Work in textiles in Years 7 to 11 is comparatively weak, largely because of weaknesses in the teaching. Basic sewing skills are generally very limited and pupils are not confident in the use of equipment.

178. Some good work is evident from higher attaining pupils in graphics products and electronics where pupils are designing and making products using a range of techniques and processes. The low level of drawing skills limit the scope of the lower attaining pupils in their designing both in resistant materials and graphics, but making skills are often good. Pupils use a range of hand and power tools with confidence and pay good attention to health and safety rules. In graphics, some pupils are able to draw and measure with a good level of accuracy to produce a range of different types of drawings and then translate these into finished models, as in work on constructing model bridges.

179. In general, across all subjects and for all pupils in all year groups, the skills of analysis and evaluation lack the rigour needed to achieve the higher levels. Criteria are not sufficiently objective. Design specifications and subsequent analysis are not being used as effectively as they could be as the basis for performance criteria within projects. This is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects, and sometimes leads to superficial design. Pupils of all levels of attainment follow this pattern, but the impact on attainment is greater for more able pupils as it precludes them from achieving the highest GCSE grades. Greater attention to ensuring continuity and progression across the separate subjects in design technology, and in the common technological skills such as designing, drawing and evaluating, would also help to raise standards.

180. The majority of current pupils are achieving higher standards than national test and examination results show previously. This is in part due to recent changes in the curriculum and staffing which have helped to promote some very good teaching. In food and resistant materials pupils have good skills in design and good practical skills, for example in cutting and shaping materials, and in processing foods to make cooked products. In graphics the highest attaining pupils show a good understanding of the way drawing may be used to develop design. These are higher standards than previous results would imply.

181. Overall the quality of teaching across all Years 7 to 11 is good; much of it from the teachers in charge of departments is very good. Two thirds of lessons seen had good or very good teaching. A small amount of teaching (2 lessons) was less than satisfactory: this was in textiles. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate enthusiasm and interest throughout. Relationships are very good and teaching strategies such as group and paired activities positively support pupils' personal development. Lessons are well planned and the pace of lessons is often brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of pupils of all levels of attainment including those with special educational needs. In the best lessons teachers work hard to meet the needs of individual pupils, but in a minority of lessons more needs to be done to challenge the higher attaining pupils. In Years 10 and 11 teachers make a strong effort to ensure that pupils maximise their achievement. They demonstrate their commitment to pupils' success by planning work carefully and by taught "Catch Up" sessions outside of the school day.

182. In textiles lessons there are weaknesses in behaviour management and in gaining and holding pupils' attention. There was one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, and one where it was poor. Explanations are not clear enough, some activities do not merit the time spent on them and expectations of what pupils know and can do are too low. There is too little emphasis on teaching how to improve.

183. Across both departments, the use of ICT is severely limited by the range of resources available to staff and consequently its use is almost non-existent. For pupils of all ages there are few opportunities to use ICT. Whole areas of the statutory curriculum to do with control and design using ICT are not being taught. This is unsatisfactory, particularly as it was an issue for the department at the last inspection and represents poor progress.

184. The system of time allocated to each subject area, which is used to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study in Years 7 to 9, allows for pupils to make good progress, but there needs to be a greater level of collaboration across subject areas to ensure continuity and the greatest amount of progress for individual pupils. Gains in learning in other subject areas within design technology are not taken into account leading to repetition and omissions.

185. The standard of marking is good and constructive feedback is given to pupils. A well-developed system for monitoring pupil's performance up to the age of 14 is in place, but it has yet to be used consistently to set individual targets for pupils in order to raise performance. For pupils in Years 10 and 11 the standard of marking is also good. Where assessment is most effective for this age group, realistic grades and targets for improvement are shared on a regular basis, and pupils' performance is regularly monitored against their predicted examination grades. These systems need to be employed more consistently and rigorously, with greater use of shared small step specific targets to raise attainment. Analysis of examination performance is carried out, but staff are not always clear about the next step to take to raise standards.

186. The leadership and management of the two areas that make up design technology are sound. Teachers have a clear view of what constitutes a good provision for education in design technology. The head of food and textiles has only recently taken up post but has made a very good start on updating the taught curriculum. However, as was the case at the time of the last inspection, the two departments do not have a history of working collaboratively. Both departments meet regularly, but separately, and two handbooks exist. With the high quality mutually respectful relationships which now exist, the departments are

in are in a good position to move forward together in the drive to raise attainment. There is a positive working relationship in the departments. Staff are making use of departmental self-evaluation as a tool for improvement and standards are in line with national expectations, demonstrating satisfactory progress made since the last inspection.

187. The amount of accommodation is adequate, but in food there is a need to update both equipment and to provide adequate ICT resources to teach the re-planned up to date curriculum. The rooms used for resistant materials and graphics are in need of modernising to take account of changes in the curriculum, and ICT resources to teach the statutory curriculum need to be in place.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is never less than good.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good as are their relationships with each other and their teachers.
- The leadership, management and strategic planning of the department are consistently good.

Areas for improvement:

- The schemes of work need to be reviewed to take account of National Curriculum requirements.
- The use of ICT to support pupils' learning is insufficient, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- There needs to be more effective involvement of pupils in the development of the use of enquiry based learning activities.

188. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in the subject that are variable. Overall attainment is generally in line with that for pupils of a similar age nationally. However, the good quality of the teaching enables them to make good progress and achieve well as they move through Years 7 to 9. By the age of 14 their attainment, as judged by teachers' assessments, is above that for pupils of a similar age nationally.

189. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving good standards in their work and show increasingly good levels of understanding of physical processes and are developing appropriate skills and technical terminology. Teachers have high expectations and provide consistent challenge to which pupils respond enthusiastically. In Year 9, particularly high standards are being achieved that are supported by consistently good teaching. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is very secure and, among higher and middle attaining pupils, good thinking and writing skills are being developed. All pupils, including those that have SEN, make good progress. In a Year 7 lesson pupils made very good progress in their understanding when exploring weather patterns using temperature and rainfall data graphs they had produced on the computer.

190. In Years 7 to 9 pupils make significant progress and have good knowledge and understanding, for example, of maps of varying scales, their interpretation and analysis. They also have good understanding of climate and weather patterns in a variety of regions,

as well as of natural environments and the current impacts on them. The approaches to teaching and learning build on pupils' curiosity and interest. As a consequence, teachers encourage high levels of pupil involvement and support this by using a variety of teaching methods and a range of carefully selected resources.

191. GCSE results have varied over the past few years, as have the number of pupils studying the subject in Years 10 and 11. Standards, however, are generally above average. In the 2001 examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher A* and A grades increased and was close to the average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A* to C and A* to G ranges was, as in previous years, above the national average. Most pupils gained or exceeded their predicted grade.

192. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and are producing work of a good standard. Pupils build on their prior attainment and show secure knowledge and understanding of, for example, changes in urban provision, especially in housing through regeneration projects, and of the impact of the environment on the extraction of natural resources. Their geographical knowledge, understanding and skills are enhanced by good local and residential fieldwork opportunities.

193. All pupils certainly make good progress and grow in their confident use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Word charts in each classroom show the important technical terminology pupils need to master in each topic studied. Although the current level of use of ICT is satisfactory, it needs further development and integration in the schemes of work.

194. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching is good in four-fifths of lessons and very good in the remainder. All of the teaching is well planned, expects that pupils will work hard and benefit greatly from being fully involved in their learning. Effective approaches and tasks are designed to help pupils acquire knowledge quickly and to develop and extend their understanding through the selection and use of a variety of resources. The level of challenge is usually high. This was particularly apparent in a Year 10 lesson when pupils were challenged to explore the environmental hazards presented when oil is extracted from Alaska and the possible solutions to overcome these difficulties. The videotaped material and other resources challenged *pupils* in their enquiry and assisted in its successful conclusion.

195. In many lessons a variety of methods were used to review previous learning: carefully targeted questions, brain storming, a brief pencil and paper test, and comment and analysis on a text all ensured that pupils were confident in proceeding to the next stage of learning. This approach to gaining the commitment of pupils was particularly successful, especially in Years 10 and 11. There was an occasion when not all pupils were ready to move into their new learning: a further and more detailed review in the area of uncertainty ensured that all pupils made good progress in the remainder of the lesson.

196. The careful planning of teaching and learning often enabled pupils to pose and test their own hypotheses, for example, in exploring the manufacture of cars in this country. Lower attaining pupils in Year 8 found this demanding but made good progress in their understanding after they had analysed their data gathered by classifying vehicles on the school's car park by make and country of origin. On the very few occasions when pupils were not fully involved in learning from the beginning of the lesson, questions were used that required only one-word answers or information was given to and not elicited from the pupils. However, the level of pupil involvement quickly increased when more demanding

tasks were set. Pupils responded well to high demands and levels of challenge. They worked hard in pairs and small groups and often concentrated for long periods of time. Peers often challenged the occasional minor disruption by a pupil so that the pace of work was not affected. Relationships, between pupils and with teachers are very good and based on mutual respect.

197. Homework is well used to extend pupils' understanding and marking of it is thorough and includes helpful comments about how the work can be improved. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 know what National Curriculum level they have reached and those in Years 10 and 11 what predicted grade is assigned to their work. The attainment and progress of each pupil is carefully monitored and appropriate targets are suggested.

198. The curriculum is well designed to meet statutory requirements and the GCSE examination objectives. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 need updating to take account of revisions to the National Curriculum requirements and the increasing use of ICT. The schemes for Years 10 and 11 also need to be reviewed in the light of the department's clear vision for its future development.

199. The department is well managed. The new subject leader has already had a significant impact of the organisation, teaching and learning of geography and he is well supported by four enthusiastic teaching colleagues. The teachers are very well deployed and the accommodation and resources are good: together they support the provision of a positive learning environment. All pupils studying the subject now have their own basic text to support them in their class and homework.

200. This is a department that has made good progress since the last inspection and, with its strategic planning priorities is poised to raise standards and improve the quality of geographical enquiry that pupils undertake.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Quality of teaching.
- Attitudes, behaviour and relationships in classrooms.
- Leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for development:

- Variety of teaching and learning styles to promote greater independence and self-reliance in learning at GCSE Level.
- Breadth, balance and relevance of the subject curriculum.
- Analysis of attainment in teacher assessments and external examinations by gender.

201. Attainment at grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations has usually been well above national expectations over recent years, although in 2001 it declined to only slightly above, possibly partly as a result of staffing problems. There appears to be little difference in the relative attainment of boys and girls. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level is in line with national expectations but work seen during the inspection suggests that attainment is currently above the national average.

202. By the end of Year 9 pupils have completed a good quantity and variety of well presented work on a range of historical topics. They are able to select information from a range of sources, including some accessed using ICT, in order to advance lines of argument supported by historical evidence. Lower attaining pupils produce smaller quantities of work, some of which is incomplete or reveals weaknesses in the technical accuracy of their written English. Overall, however, the standard of literacy is good which reflects the work done by the department in developing comprehensive subject specific glossaries and correcting errors in spelling and grammar.

203. A pupil with special educational needs showed good understanding of 17th century warfare and a grasp of numeracy in his explanation of how a 5 metre pike would be used during the English Civil War. In a Year 9 lesson on anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany a girl was able to describe in some detail how the culture of Hasidic Jews resulted in them being an easily identifiable target for persecution. In a different lesson on interwar Germany, a boy offered a convincing explanation of how the onset of economic depression resulted in voters turning to extremist political parties. Attention to a range of teaching and learning styles, selection of tasks matched to abilities, and detailed knowledge and support of individuals, means that all pupils, including those with SEN, make good progress to reach the standards that they do.

204. There is great variation in the standards of work seen at the end of Year 11 but overall they are good; that is to say, above and in many cases well above the national average. All pupils make good progress in the acquisition and deployment of source handling and evaluation skills, although lower attaining pupils are less likely to cite their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with a particular source, and sometimes fail to see the need to do both. They have a good understanding of different interpretations of history and comment perceptively on the extent to which the Treaty of Versailles met the aspirations of its creators. The majority of pupils develop good study skills, although in lessons seen few displayed the initiative to take notes without being prompted. Pupils have a detailed knowledge of most aspects of the modern world syllabus and demonstrate good numeracy skills in graphs charting the varying fortunes of the political parties in Weimar Germany between 1925 and 1933. As in Years 7-9 there is no significant difference in the standards attained by boys and girls.

205. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school and only one lesson did not quite reach that standard. Teachers' very good subject knowledge, clear exposition and high expectations about commitment and effort all lead to good achievement. In a Year 8 lesson on the English Civil War pupils made good progress in understanding how conclusions depend on evidence as a result of the staged and selective disclosure of information about "uniforms" worn by the two sides. Lessons are well planned and very well managed; relationships in the classroom are based on enthusiasm, warmth and mutual respect and make an important contribution to the good quality of learning.

206. The department is making good use of the school's expanded ICT facilities to extend the range of information available to pupils and develop their skills. In Years 7 to 9, there is a broad range of teaching and learning styles which enhance pupils' independence and self-reliance in learning. In upper years, there is a tendency towards a more didactic and anecdotal approach and pupils are supplied with copious detailed notes in order to ensure that they are as fully informed as possible before sitting examinations. Question and answer is often very well used to extend, consolidate or challenge pupils' knowledge, as it was in a lesson on the Nazi treatment of the Jews, to establish the difference between race and religion. Pupils benefit from very detailed marking of their work which gives them a clear understanding of their attainment and offers helpful guidance on how their work might be improved.

207. The department is well managed and led. The head of department is a very experienced teacher who has been at the school a long time and knows pupils well. She has a clear focus on raising attainment and has revised schemes of work to take account of the latest guidance, although the curriculum remains rather Eurocentric at all levels. A notable feature of the department is the close collaboration between staff who jointly benefit from each other's areas of expertise. There is a good variety of educational trips and visits and both teachers have worked hard to make their classrooms attractive educational environments. There has been a good degree of improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths:

- Attainment in ICT by the Year 14 is in line with the national expectation for the subject.
- Attainment at GCSE in ICT is well above the national average.
- The teaching of pupils aged 11-16 is good or better in seven out of ten lessons and very good or excellent in four out of ten lessons. ICT is a well-resourced, well-managed and well-taught subject of the curriculum.

Areas for improvement:

- The requirements for computer control and data logging are not currently met.
- Not all requirements for the use of ICT in subjects are currently met.

208. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a popular and rapidly developing subject. Recent investments in resources are beginning to promote good standards in the subject and there is a growing use of ICT as a medium for pupils' work in other subjects of the curriculum.

209. Attainment in ICT by the age of 14 is in line with the national expectation for the subject with increasing numbers of pupils achieving at the higher levels. Attainment at GCSE and RSA CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology) is high in relation to national averages.

210. Attainment in the most recent GCSE examinations was well above the national average for this subject. Current levels of attainment by pupils are also high in relation to national norms. School data suggests that above average progress is made by pupils between the ages of 14 and 16. In a Year 11 GCSE IT lesson where attainment was judged as good, pupils reviewed their performance in a mock examination, checking their work carefully and asking questions to improve their understanding. Their written work demonstrated a good understanding of the subject.

211. Attainment in RSA CLAIT as indicated through lesson observation is good in relation to national norms for vocational subjects. In a Year 11 lesson pupils worked at a good pace, demonstrating a good knowledge of the application of a desktop publishing program. Good standards were promoted by the provision of a well-organised sequence of activities in a well-resourced working environment using up-to-date ICT systems.

212. The teaching of ICT is good and is a strength of the subject. The teaching of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is good or better in seven out of ten of lessons and very good or excellent in four out of ten lessons. There was one unsatisfactory lesson.

213. In a Year 10 lesson where the teaching was judged to be excellent, the teacher illustrated the difference between analogue and digital signals by the use of musical instruments. An effective presentation held the interest of all pupils and subsequent questioning revealed clear understanding. During the practical work that took place during this lesson, pupils demonstrated good familiarity with the advanced features of a database application and were able to work independently in downloading a database from email, create a query and generate a report, with reference to text drawn from an online book. Talking with pupils revealed a good clarity of understanding about the subject and the criteria for achieving higher grades. The quality and pace of learning for all pupils in this class was well above average.

214. In a Year 7 lesson where the teaching was judged to be very good, a well structured and clearly-planned lesson challenged pupils to develop their ideas further and promoted good progress towards high levels of attainment. Good lesson management ensured all pupils were fully engaged with the evaluation of three styles of presentation. In a lesson where progress was unsatisfactory, the teacher did not make full use of the features of the computer network for presenting the topic to pupils, and organisational choices by the teacher resulted in a disjointed lesson where pupils made slow progress at a level below their capability.

215. Overall, the strengths of the teaching significantly outweigh the few weaknesses observed. A strong feature was the good subject knowledge of the teachers, and the effective way that lessons were planned and managed in order to involve all pupils. Teachers place good emphasis on ensuring pupils understand what is required for attainment at the higher levels. In one lesson observed the teacher provided a personalised revision programme to every pupil, based on an analysis of a mock examination.

216. The leadership of this subject is very good. There is a clear direction for ICT developments and recent investments in resources have led to rapid improvements in opportunities to use ICT and to the quality of their use. ICT systems work well and are well managed by an effective technician. Few technical problems were observed during the inspection. There is a good range of up-to-date software and a growing and effective range of electronic learning resources on the school's Intranet.

217. ICT is a well-resourced, well-managed and well-taught subject of the curriculum. The availability of GCSE ICT and RSA CLAIT offer good scope for pupils to acquire ICT qualifications at different levels. The above average number of computers in the school provides opportunities for all pupils to make use of ICT in their work.

218. Areas for development of this subject include the planned use of ICT in subjects of the curriculum where there is an expectation to use ICT, and the planning of ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 to ensure that the subject programme of study is covered at the appropriate level. The requirements for pupils to experience the use of ICT for computer control and data logging are not currently in place. Not all requirements for the use of ICT in subjects are currently met although recent participation by teaching staff in a national ICT training programme has started to promote developments in using ICT in subjects.

219. At the last inspection, attainment by the age of 14 was reported as similar to the national average. Attainment by this age now shows an increase in the number of pupils attaining at the higher levels. Teaching was reported as almost always good and this remains the case. Requirements for using ICT were not fully met at the last inspection and this is still so. Monitoring of the use of ICT across subjects still needs further development. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- GCSE results in German are very good.
- Results in French have improved considerably and are now above the national average.
- Teaching is good.
- The department is ably led and managed;
- Procedures for assessment and monitoring are good.

Areas for improvement:

- The provision of differentiated tasks for both the highest and the lowest attaining pupils.
- The development of writing and speaking skills, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- The use of ICT.

220. In 2001, National Curriculum teacher assessments at age 14 indicated standards well below the national average. However, inspection evidence indicates standards which are at least average and that the assessments were too low. In the GCSE examinations, the results in German have been well above the national average for a number of years and were very good in 2001. After a period of decline, the results in French have improved considerably, and in 2001 were above the national average. Teachers are skilled at preparing pupils for GCSE examinations, and in 2001 they targeted borderline candidates and held additional lunchtime classes.

221. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average in French and above average in German. In both languages, listening skills are well developed, partly because the lessons are conducted in the target language and partly because pupils have plenty of opportunities to hear native speakers recorded on tape. Pronunciation is generally good because pupils constantly hear good models and for the most part teachers insist on accuracy. Most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, are able to take part in brief exchanges about themselves, their daily routines, their birthdays and their weekends but higher attaining pupils do not have enough opportunities of speaking at length. In the best example, Year 8 German pupils who were meeting the past tense for the first time were able to take part in dialogues of five or six exchanges about how they had spent their birthdays. In both French and German, written work, in the form of grammatical and comprehension exercises, is generally accurate and pupils have a sound grasp of grammar. Their extended writing is not as accurate and more practice is needed.

222. In Years 10 and 11, the standards in listening comprehension continue to be good in both languages; pupils are able to extract specific detail from a mass of information spoken at near normal speed. Extended writing, particularly in German, is not as accurate as the competence in grammatical exercises would suggest; pupils are not able to apply their grammatical knowledge well enough to free writing. Lower-attaining pupils and those with

special needs write simply but with reasonable accuracy. Because they have the time to redraft their coursework, pupils in French achieve a good standard overall. Pronunciation is generally good in both languages but higher attaining pupils are still not able to speak at length. Achievement in French is satisfactory at age 14 and good at age 16. In German, it is good at age 14 and very good at age 16.

223. Teaching is good in both French and German. In three-quarters of the lessons seen, the teaching was good or better, in one, it was very good and in one, it was unsatisfactory. The teachers are fluent and conduct their lessons almost entirely in the foreign language, with the result that pupils' listening skills are well developed. Lesson planning is detailed but lesson objectives are not always made clear at the beginning nor reviewed at the end. Teachers make good use of visual images to explain meaning and prompt the pupils without recourse to English. Their expectations are high; pupils respond with enthusiasm and make good gains in their learning. In a good French lesson in Year 9, conducted at pace and including much new material, pupils showed surprising command of the different forms of the past tense. Nevertheless, the tasks set do not always provide enough challenge for high-attaining pupils and not enough account is taken of the needs of low attaining pupils. The few occasions when the pupils were not engaged and became restless were when the teaching was pedestrian and lacked pace and challenge. The marking of pupils' work is regular and usually helpful; some of the marking in French is particularly detailed and constructive.

224. Modern languages have a reasonable amount of curriculum time but the option arrangements in Years 10 and 11 do not allow all pupils to be grouped effectively according to prior attainment. This makes teaching more difficult and has a negative impact on results. The assessment, monitoring and recording of pupils' progress are good and teachers are able to demonstrate the real gains made by pupils.

225. The department is ably led and managed by a relatively new subject leader, who has a clear vision for the future direction of modern languages. She has assessed priorities and has already brought about some improvements. Schemes of work have been largely rewritten and resources improved. The department works well as a team and its work is monitored regularly and effectively.

226. Since the last inspection, good standards have been maintained in German and standards are beginning to improve again in French. Teaching and assessment remain good but progress in the use of ICT in the teaching is unsatisfactory and this remains a priority for the future. More thought also needs to be given to developing a range of tasks to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly in speaking and writing.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching is uniformly very good across the school.
- Pupils make very good progress from Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11, both of which contribute to good results in GCSE examinations.
- There is a full provision of extra-curriculum instrumental and choral music activities.

Areas for improvement:

- To review assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9, in order for them to relate to National Curriculum levels of attainment. This will enable more precise individual target setting to be undertaken.
- To review the use of ICT, so that it may be used more extensively for extension work in Years 7 to 9, and for composition work in Years 10 and 11.
- To review the provision of accommodation for music.

227. Levels of attainment are above the national average at the end of Year 9, as confirmed by the most recent department assessments. Standards are in line with the national average for the majority of pupils, when they enter the school. Very good standards of achievement across Years 7, 8 and 9 are the direct result of carefully prepared, structured programmes of study, delivered through very good quality of teaching. GCSE results in the past few years have been consistently above the national average, with reasonable numbers opting. These results reflect the firm grounding pupils receive in Years 7, 8 and 9, the quality of individual instrumental tuition many of them receive, and the very good progress they make in Years 10 and 11, due, again, to very good teaching.

228. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards overall are above the national average in Years 7, 8 and 9. By the age of 14, pupils have a thorough knowledge of musical literacy, and use this very effectively for composition and performance. Even by Year 8, they fully understand how intervals work, when composing, and are able to accurately identify, visually and aurally, all of the major and minor intervals. Aural skills are well developed, as shown through pupils' ability to sing either the upper or lower notes of intervals. Technical skills in using keyboards are very competent. Pupils use the correct fingering, and accurately read musical notation, and this makes them fluent performers. By Year 9, they know how to form major and minor triads, and are confident when adding chords I, IV and V above a melody. By studying 12-bar blues, as an example, pupils gain a thorough knowledge of styles of music, and can successfully adapt these styles to their own compositions. The quality of singing in class is very pleasant.

229. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 currently have good standards of practical performance, which should contribute towards most of them gaining good results at the end of their GCSE course. Most have well-developed analytical skills when listening to music; by the time they are ready for their examination, they can correctly identify instrumentation, rhythm and harmony, and from which periods of history the musical examples come. They have a good working knowledge of harmony, being able to confidently use devices such as intervals of the seventh, first and second inversions, and passing and auxiliary notes. They can compose in keys up to, and including, those in five sharps or five flats. They understand such challenging concepts as serial music, having studied in detail, for example, the music of Webern; and they can accurately compose in that style, using the twelve-note scale.

230. Pupils of all ability make very good progress. There is a great emphasis on gaining skills and knowledge from a practical base, and this contributes towards very good achievement by the ages of 14 and 16. Tasks for practical work are always challenging, and are sufficiently open ended that all pupils are able to extend themselves. A considerable proportion of pupils learn instruments through visiting teachers, and privately, and these pupils use their instruments in class ensemble. This extends their skills, and adds an extra dimension to the quality of ensemble work. Less able pupils can be successful when composing, by using less demanding but equally effective techniques. Members of the support staff are used well with pupils who find lessons challenging. The insistence that pupils must learn the correct notes of the treble clef from the beginning aids the quality of progress, and eventually leads to them playing fluently. The use of headphones in practical work contributes towards very good progress being made within lessons. Pupils' very good attitudes, and frequently excellent behaviour, also contribute to the progress made in lessons.

231. The quality of teaching was uniformly very good in every lesson observed during the inspection. Lessons are well prepared, with appropriate aids and worksheets being provided, which challenge pupils of all ability. The introduction of new skills is undertaken very clearly, and the excellent system of closely relating practical work to theory ensures that pupils understand exactly what they have to do. Similarly, the successful integration of vocal with instrumental work ensures that pupils develop consistently in both areas. Teachers have secure subject knowledge when delivering curriculum for the examination courses. They have high expectations of what pupils should be able to achieve, and insist upon pupils working out the answers to problems by themselves. Assessment procedures are very thorough, though in Years 7 to 9, pupils are not aware of the National Curriculum levels they are working at, and what they must do to raise their levels of attainment. Part of the departmental development plan addresses this. There has been some development of information and communication technology since the last inspection, though there is still room for further development in the provision of more computer resources to provide extension work for the least and most able in Years 7 to 9, and for composition work in Years 10 and 11.

232. There has been good progress in a number of significant areas since the last inspection. The department has moved into a very appropriate specialist suite, though accommodation problems still occur when both music specialists are teaching at the same time, and especially when visiting instrumental teachers are also using the music suite. A computer has been obtained which is effectively used in Years 10 and 11. Programmes of study for Years 7 to 9 have been regularly reviewed, and contain attractive modules of work, including new ones covering world music. The department has recently changed examination boards in Years 10 and 11, in order to *fit in more closely with, and develop further, the work covered across Years 7 to 9.*

233. The department is very well led, and through a range of vocal and instrumental extra-curriculum ensembles, contributes very positively to the ethos of school life.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning in physical education is good, and often very good.
- Pupils have a positive attitude towards PE and are very well behaved in lessons.
- Standards are above national expectations and pupil achievement is good.
- Pupils are assessed regularly, know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

Areas for improvement:

- The development and implementation of policies on numeracy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in PE.
- The development of a formal training plan for both specialist and non-specialist staff.
- More opportunities in lessons for pupils to demonstrate, lead activities and evaluate their own and others' performance.

234. The overall quality of provision in PE is very good. This is as a result of good, often very good teaching and the setting of high expectations for pupils who are invariably positive and enthusiastic about the subject. As a consequence pupil achievement is good. Pupils are regularly assessed in terms of National Curriculum levels and generally know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. All teachers have developed firm but friendly relationships with pupils providing an environment in lessons in which pupils feel valued for both effort and achievement. The new head of department has made many improvements to the process of assessing, recording and evaluating pupil progress, particularly at entry in Year 7, and provides clear direction and support for both specialist and non-specialist staff. However, policies on numeracy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in PE, as well as a more formal training and development plan for staff teaching PE, need to be drawn up and implemented to make further improvements. There are also many instances in lessons where pupils could be given more opportunities to demonstrate, lead and evaluate their own and other pupils' performance.

235. GCSE results in physical education are well above the national average with 85 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C grades. In this first GCSE entry for the subject, pupils were able to match their very good practical performances with the demands of the theoretical components of the examination. This is an excellent outcome considering that theory lessons were taught for just one period per week. In the examination lessons observed and in the analysis of pupils' work, the majority of the current GCSE groups are performing at or above the level of national expectations (grade C) with several pupils demonstrating aspects of exceptional performance, particularly in year 10. Pupils observed in this year group were able to demonstrate increasingly refined techniques and are consistent and effective in their performance. In the two theory lessons observed, the Year 10 pupils could identify the relevant parts of the respiratory system and understood how it worked and the Year 11 pupils understood very well the effects of drugs in sport and other relevant issues associated with this topic.

236. The majority of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are achieving at or above the level of national expectations. They are able to adapt and refine existing skills and apply these to new situations and are able to work constructively in pairs and groups. Both examination and non-examination pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also achieving at or above the level of national expectations. They show a good understanding of how to improve individual skills

through practice as well as being able to participate effectively in team games, where knowledge of tactics and positional sense is required. In all years there is a wide spectrum of attainment but teachers accommodate this through the planning of effectively differentiated activities.

237. Teaching is a major strength of the department; teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and are very well prepared for lessons, which are well structured, use a variety of teaching methods and are conducted at a lively pace. Teaching in all lessons, except one where it was satisfactory, was judged good or better, with one excellent Year 11 boys trampolining/badminton class. In this lesson all pupils arrived on time, in kit and prepared to work; clear objectives were set by the teacher, and in trampolining every pupil made clear progress with their chosen routines.

238. In one very good Year 10 football lesson, pupils were taught how to improve their passing skills with a variety of well-structured practices. As a consequence pupils passed with accuracy and effective timing. In a good Year 11 girls basketball lesson all pupils were able to dribble under control and execute a range of passes; most were able to pivot properly. Pupils in a very good Year 8 dance lesson worked collaboratively, were able to demonstrate control, extension and balance in their movements and produced well-structured and aesthetically pleasing outcomes. Analysis of pupil performance and appropriate pupil demonstrations in a good Year 9 gymnastics lesson on vaulting enabled all pupils to execute a safe take-off and landing, with some pupils able to demonstrate more advanced vaulting techniques.

239. Teachers set high expectations of pupils, both in terms of performance as well as behaviour. As a consequence, pupils stay on task and progress well in lessons and over time. Despite classes being generally lively, pupils are very well behaved and respond to the firm but friendly control exercised by teachers. Instances of unruly behaviour are dealt with efficiently and with a minimum of fuss.

240. The timetabled curriculum, which includes swimming for Year 7, meets statutory requirements and the many extra-curricular activities, clubs and teams provide additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy sport and improve their skills. Lessons are inclusive with good provision for SEN pupils. In addition the open access to clubs and activities provides further enriching opportunities for these pupils. School teams and individual competitors have enjoyed success at a number of sports at both local and higher levels.

241. The department has continued to make good progress since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- Good achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Good attainment by the end of Year 9.
- Pupil response is good and there are very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Good teaching leads to good learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Establish an appropriately challenging course of study in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11.
- Produce effective and appropriate schemes of work for all stages.
- Institute effective assessment and monitoring procedures against nationally recognised RE criteria.
- Introduce appropriate visits out and visitors to school which will deepen pupils understanding.
- Establish specialist leadership in the subject.

242. The quality of provision in religious education is unsatisfactory, because the subject is not offered in the sixth form, and there is not adequate coverage in depth of the Local Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 and 11. There are, however, some very positive features within the department, notably the good teaching and learning evident in lessons.

243. By the end of Year 9, attainment is generally above the standards expected by the local agreed syllabus. Pupils know and understand the religious symbols, practices and beliefs of the world's major religions and can use the appropriate religious technical language correctly and effectively to describe and evaluate them. For example, in their study of Hinduism, pupils in Year 9 not only know the name of the different forms in which, on different occasions, the god, Vishnu, comes to earth, but they also correctly identify all such forms as avatars.

244. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in Years 7 to 9. The department makes very good use of individual education plans. The work of learning support staff also makes an effective impact on pupils' learning. Both these factors help to ensure that all pupils are taught and acquire investigational skills which lead to better understanding and interpretation of some of the facts they learn. Although higher attaining pupils are well provided for, additional provision for gifted and talented pupils is not yet sufficiently developed.

245. By the age of 16, pupils' attainment, as seen in their books and in their lessons, is in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Pupils are able to begin considering some of the fundamental questions about life with an understanding of a religious and moral perspective. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on relationships in society, pupils effectively traced back, to their religious origins, crucial and fundamental rules about killing and stealing. However, because of the lack of depth of coverage in Years 10 and 11, pupils do not make sufficient progress in their knowledge and understanding and their achievement is unsatisfactory. They are not able to build on their good progress and above average attainment in Years 7 to 9.

246. Pupils' response is good. They work both diligently and joyously. They sustain interest and intellectual rigour well. They work well with both their peers and the adults with whom they come into contact. The very good response of the pupils is a direct result of the good, and occasionally very good teaching which they receive. In all the lessons seen teaching was good or very good, except on one occasion when it was satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is well planned, exciting and stimulating. It challenges pupils and motivates them, thus enabling them to learn effectively. The teaching is characterised by imaginative use of resources and a considerable amount of humour and fun. Another characteristic of the teaching is the enthusiasm that is displayed for the subject. This is infectious and impacts favourably on pupils' learning.

247. Religious education contributes very effectively to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject provides pupils with knowledge and insight into spiritual concepts, and asks them to apply these concepts to the range of fundamental issues which confront them in real life, such as the role of prayer within religious belief as a means of offering explanations or solace for human suffering. There is some study of other faiths which teaches pupils to appreciate the diversity of those faiths.

248. Most of the teaching is currently carried out by the very recently appointed newly qualified teacher. She is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed to raising standards throughout the school in religious education. She is supported in the school by a member of the leadership group, a mentor and an experienced member of staff.

249. Provision for RE has declined since the last inspection, when good standards and progress throughout the main school were reported. In a very short time, within the last year, the school has established the basis in Years 7 to 9 for the successful re-establishment and development of religious education in both Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The leadership of the school has made decisions which show their strong support for the subject, such as the accommodating of the main RE room on a main corridor.

250. However, the subject has several outstanding areas for development, many of which stem from a lack of subject specialist leadership. There is insufficient coverage in depth in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, and an associated lack of appropriately challenging courses of study at both stages of the pupils' and students' education. No stage, including Years 7 to 9, has effective or appropriate schemes of work. There is insufficient use of visits to nearby places of religious interest, which would add immeasurably to the pupils' experience of religious education. There are no clear policies for the use of ICT, and, as yet, there is insufficient access to, use of and training in the use of ICT to support the subject. These deficiencies will need to be addressed to enable the provision to be on a secure basis to meet the learning needs of pupils.

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

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

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

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Chemistry	1	-	43	-	5	-	0.77
ICT	2	100	N/A	0	N/A	1.00	N/A
Sociology	1	100	63	-	7	1.00	1.17

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	9	89	87	33	43	6.22	5.80
Biology	16	81	88	25	34	4.25	5.25
Chemistry	7	100	90	29	43	4.86	5.90
Physics	6	100	88	33	40	6.00	5.67
Business studies	11	82	92	36	32	5.09	5.50
ICT	11	100	86	9	23	4.55	4.62
Art and design	10	100	96	40	46	5.60	6.57
Music	1	100	93	-	35	6.00	5.74
History	3	67	88	-	35	2.67	5.45
Geography	17	100	92	29	38	5.53	5.74
Sociology	11	82	86	45	35	5.64	5.32
English	11	100	95	36	37	6.18	5.91
French	2	100	89	50	38	7.00	5.59
German	4	100	91	50	40	7.50	5.81

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was mathematics and GCSE re-sit courses were also sampled.

Mathematics

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

Strengths:

- Well above average attainment of the majority of A Level students.
- Good progress of the majority of students.
- Good teaching.
- Very positive attitudes of students.
- Well managed provision.

Areas for improvement:

- Variable levels of attainment for AS Level students with a number of students not completing the course or failing to achieve pass grades.
- Limited use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

252. The inspection covered the A Level courses in mathematics including further mathematics and courses leading to AS Level taken by Year 12 students. In addition the re-sit GCSE course taken by students wishing to improve the grade already achieved was also inspected.

253. A Level results have been well above average in recent years. Only one candidate has failed to achieve a pass grade out of the 26 candidates entered over the last three years. Several of these candidates have achieved high grades including As in each of the years. As expected, few candidates are entered for further mathematics and none were entered in 2001. However results in previous years have been good including several students achieving the highest grades. AS Level results have been more variable. In 2001 five students obtained grade A passes, but a further six candidates failed to achieve pass grades, with a number failing to complete the course. GCSE re-sit results are satisfactory with a number of students making good improvements on the grade achieved at the first sitting. Overall progress and achievement of the majority of students in the sixth form is good.

254. The standards of work seen in lessons and in students' files are above average. Although standards for AS Level students are more variable, those for A Level students are well above average and higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. A small group of Year 13 A Level students, for example, showed a good understanding of the work involving the parametric equations of a parabola including the use of these in finding tangents and normals. During the group work students made substantial contributions and were able to make reasoned answers to relatively complex questions. On the other hand some students in a Year 12 AS Level class undertaking group and individual work on definite integration showed a limited understanding of a number of basic aspects. Additionally several of the students who had started the programme had found the work too difficult and had withdrawn from the course.

255. Teaching is good overall. All lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives. All contain an appropriate range of learning approaches with group and individual work. The small size of some of the groups allows significant discussion to arise during the development of aspects of topics. In several lessons the students are encouraged and are able to make extensive contributions during the group work. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and A Level students in particular respond well to the greater opportunities that are provided for them to think for themselves and to work independently. Lessons are conducted at an appropriately brisk and challenging pace. Very good relationships are developed between the students and with the teacher. Work is regularly set, marked and returned to the students. Where appropriate an indication is made of how the work might be improved. Students re-sitting GCSE attend the classes that are held when other subject commitments allow. This leads to a lack of continuity for some students in terms of the teaching and their learning.

256. The mathematics provision in the sixth form is well managed. As with the main school monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place and the teachers concerned work closely together. There is a wide range of courses available for students who wish to study mathematics in the sixth form. These include AS Level, A Level and further mathematics. A GCSE re-sit course is also available for those who wish to attempt to improve the grades previously achieved. Some of the groups that are formed are small. Although the curricula of the courses that are available are appropriate limited use is currently being made of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning.

Sciences

257. The focus was on physics, but biology and chemistry were sampled. Two lessons were seen in each of these two subjects and teaching in them was uniformly good. Work seen in school shows that students achieve well in both biology and chemistry, although the recent examination results show a more variable picture. Practical and investigative work in which independent learning is strongly developed makes a particularly good contribution to learning in chemistry. Students are strongly motivated in both subjects and relationships with teachers are very good.

Physics

Overall, the provision for physics is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Students achieve well and standards at AS and A Level are above average.
- Teaching is good.
- The majority of students who start in Year 12 complete the A Level course.
- Strong subject leadership creates a positive learning environment in which students are keen to learn.
- Students enjoy the subject and make a significant contribution to their own progress by their positive attitudes.
- Progress towards targets is monitored effectively by very good assessment procedures.

Areas for improvement:

- Continue to further develop the use of ICT in teaching and learning.

258. The standards achieved by students at the age of 18 are above the national average. Although numbers studying the subject are generally small, recent results at A Level have been consistently above the national average and the department has a good record of all students passing the examination. Results of students in year twelve taking the AS Level examination in 2001 were above the provisional national average.

259. The standard of work seen in school reflects the standards reached in the recent AS and A Level examinations. Higher attaining students in Year 13 show a uniformly high standard of knowledge and understanding across a range of topics such as, for example, electromagnetic induction, properties of gases and wave-particle duality. Although students with lower attainment find conceptual difficulties in a number of topics, all have a good grasp of the vocabulary of the subject and most can use appropriate units for physical quantities and calculate accurately. Independent practical skills are well developed in investigative work and the high standard of assessed coursework contributes significantly to the standards achieved in the examination. The use of mathematical techniques is very secure and gives good support to students work in physics.

260. Students in Year 12 show very secure knowledge of technical vocabulary and develop an above average understanding of, for example, the concepts of stress and strain in dealing with the properties of materials. In a data analysis lesson on this topic using ICT students rose to the challenge of applying their knowledge and understanding to determine the best material from which to manufacture cables. Most could use the data correctly to calculate maximum stresses but some had difficulty in dealing with the very large and very small physical quantities involved. Most have a working grasp of the basic principles of direct current electricity and high attaining students can successfully apply, for example, Kirchhoff's circuit laws to solve some challenging circuit problems. Vectors are well understood by students with high attainment but some others have difficulties with all but the most straightforward situations.

261. Students achieve well during the course. The development of knowledge and understanding of physics and the corresponding experimental skills proceeds consistently throughout Year 12, and into Year 13 for those who complete the two-year course. All students, including those who have started the course with relatively modest GCSE grades, have succeeded in recent years in achieving at least grade E. This represents a good performance as a result of good teaching and strong commitment from students themselves.

262. The good teaching is lively and enthusiastic, and promotes high standards as a result of a very effective and informal partnership between teacher and students. Learning proceeds in a relaxed but always purposeful atmosphere. Students are given work to do which encourages them to think for themselves and, in some cases, support each other in their work. For example, ICT is being used very effectively for developing students' ability to apply existing knowledge to new situations using data analysis on spreadsheets. The teacher's very secure subject knowledge gives students confidence in very effective one-to-one and group discussions in lessons. Students learn very well from very good marking in which their work is well annotated with comments giving good guidance on its standard and how to improve it.

263. Students enjoy the course and make very good contributions to their own learning through their positive attitude to lessons and to written work. Most are very articulate and lessons in which difficulties and working techniques are being discussed provide good learning experiences because teacher and students interact effectively in a two-way

process in which the focus is always on developing new knowledge and understanding. In the last year, most students who started the course in Year 12 continued their physics studies into Year 13 and, in recent years, several have gone on to follow physics related courses in higher education. The number of students taking physics in the sixth form has risen significantly in the last two years.

264. The course is very well led. The enthusiasm of the subject leader, who is also the head of science, is infectious and rubs off on the students. Assessment of students during the course is very good and prior attainment data is used constantly and consistently to monitor progress and to set achievable but challenging targets. Accommodation and learning resources, including textbooks, are adequate and access to ICT facilities has improved significantly since the last inspection but there is a lack of up to date data-logging equipment.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

265. The provision of A Level is a positive aspect of the design technology curriculum. One lesson of design technology was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning Post 16 was very good. Individual pupils' results were in line with national expectations.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on business studies.

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

Strengths:

- The provision for the subject is very well managed.
- Levels of attainment are above national averages.
- Teaching is good; effective use is made of case studies.
- Students are actively involved in learning.
- Systems to monitor the progress of students and the work of the department are good.

Areas for improvement:

- Seek further ways to establish a wider range of business links with the department and opportunities for professional development for teachers.
- Seek to widen further the resources base for students, including the provision of departmental information and communications technology.

266. The school provides advanced courses in business education for its own pupils and others who join the school at the beginning of Year 12. Examination results at A Level are above national averages, apparent fluctuations being due to the small numbers taking the subject in recent years. Teaching is good and pupils are fully involved in learning.

267. Standards achieved are good and above national averages. In GCE A Level business education the examination results have been above average for the past three years. During this period 38 per cent of candidates from the school achieved the higher grades A or B in each examination. This is above the national average as was their

average points score of 4.3. The small number of candidates taking the examination in 2001 resulted in an apparent decline in standards being magnified as each student represents 10 per cent of the total. Over this period boys results are better than those of girls but not significantly so.

268. Students' achievements in business education at this level are better than those in several other subjects in the school. These high standards are confirmed by the work of students seen during the inspection. They have a good grasp of the main principles of business organisation, price mechanism, distribution, types of retailing, theories of place and supply and demand, including elasticity. They are able to apply this knowledge to well chosen case studies and to calculate break-even points. They understand and use business terminology well.

269. The quality of coursework produced is good. It is well organised and makes effective use of information technology to present and analyse data. Current students in both years are making good progress. Year 13 students add considerable value to their achievements at GCSE and to results achieved in AS Level examinations at the end of Year 12 as they prepare purposefully for further external examinations. The above average achievement and good rates of progress are the outcome of good quality teaching, helpful practice of examination techniques, realistic case studies that apply and extend knowledge, and much greater involvement in learning than at the last inspection. Pupils' confidence and oral participation are also much improved as they respond to provoking questions from teachers and work collaboratively with their colleagues.

270. Teaching, which is overall good, and sometimes very good, is the result of thorough preparation by teachers, informed by very sound knowledge of the subject and the demands of examinations. In particular, teachers use a variety of strategies including case studies, to develop students' analytical and investigative skills. Teachers provide good support and advice for students on an individual as well as group basis, and especially in relation to the demands of coursework. Work is regularly marked and helpful comments provide encouragement and indicate how it may be improved. Students are well motivated to learn. They show interest and purpose in their studies and this is exemplified by the very good quality of presentation in folios of work and coursework assignments.

271. The leadership and management of the department by a dedicated head of department, is very good. Effective systems to assess and monitor the work of students, to analyse examination results and to set targets are in place. Assessment is linked to external examination grades and levels and includes self-assessment by pupils with mutually agreed targets for improvement. There are regular reviews of the work of the department and its staff. All these activities are used to plan teaching and the future development of the department. Professional development for teachers and external advice is difficult to achieve in the rural setting of the school. Overall a good climate for learning has been created within the department.

272. Since the previous inspection the department has established a wider selection of resources for pupils to use in their studies and for research but limited finance restricts further growth, particularly in relation to current journals and other information from the media. Much use is now made of ICT, including the Internet, for research, analysis and the presentation of work, but the department lacks its own dedicated computer. The school library still contains only a limited amount of texts but the generally improved resource base in the department and the good bank of case studies support learning and help to maintain above average standards. The good use of ICT by the department makes a significant contribution to the development of key skills, as does the consideration of business ethics and organisation to the social and moral development of students. While every effort is

made to utilise the local business community to enrich the experience of students, the relative isolation of Malton as a centre of business, together with its restricted range of enterprises make this difficult to achieve. In this respect the department has to look further afield, for example to Brussels, to provide limited contact with the world of business.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The focus of the inspection was on information communication technology.

Overall the quality of provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Attainment at AS Level in the most recently reported examinations was very high in relation to national norms.
- The standard of project work produced on computer by students is good.
- The quality of teaching was consistently good in each of the five lessons observed. The teacher has an exceptional, up-to-date technical knowledge of the subject, particularly in the newer areas relating the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web.
- The quality of learning was judged as good in four-fifths of the lessons seen.
- Resources for teaching and learning in this subject are very good. The network of up-to-date computers makes available a full range of application software and electronic course materials.

Areas for improvement:

- Attainment at A Level is below the national average as measured by the proportion of A and B grades, although all students who entered the examination gained a pass grade.
- Students were seen to be more confident when undertaking practical work than when participating in the theoretical aspects of the subject.
- Students need to be encouraged to be more systematic in taking notes that will aid revision at a later date.

273. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is offered at AS, GCE A Level and NVQ Level 3 (Cisco Academy Networking Course). The most recent examination results for AS Level were high in relation to national norms but GCE A Level results were below the national average. In the five lessons observed at this level the teaching was of a consistently good standard. ICT resources for the subject are of good quality and are effectively managed. ICT makes a contribution to the sixth form curriculum both in taught courses and as a facility that students choose to use for their studies. Many students have computers of their own and hence will often use these rather than school computers.

274. Attainment at A Level in the most recent examinations was below the national average for the subject. All students who took the examination gained pass grades but the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades was low. There was no difference between the attainment of male and female students. Current levels of attainment, indicated by lesson observation, work scrutiny and discussion with pupils suggest a similar distribution of results as last year. The prior experience of students who undertake A Level is variable. Some students started GCE A Level without having taken GCSE ICT or having studied the vocationally orientated RSA CLAIT course. For these students the course has been challenging. Despite this disadvantage, the good quality of teaching on this course, and the

progress that students are making, indicate that students are reaching their potential in this subject.

275. Attainment at AS Level in 2001 was very high in relation to national norms. Progress made on the new CISCO Academy Networking course is good, suggesting that attainment will be at least satisfactory. Good quality, substantial online learning materials and appropriate practical activities aid learning towards this qualification, equivalent to NVQ Level 3. Attitudes to learning on this course are very positive and these studies are leading to the development of high-level technical skills in the use of computer networks.

276. The standard of project work produced on computer by students is good. There is a clear emphasis on the stages in the project cycle and the grade criteria for each stage. Students were able to talk with understanding about how they were undertaking the project and planning the separate stages in the project. Several students have found the 'Access' application to be more difficult than other applications studied to date, and were likely to find the implementation stage of their project difficult when they came to it at a later date. The recording of notes by pupils that would aid revision at a later date is currently unsystematic. Developing this aspect of learning would be of benefit to those students who find this subject difficult.

277. The quality of teaching was consistently good in each of the five lessons observed. The subject leader has an exceptional, up-to-date technical knowledge of the subject, particularly in the newer areas relating to the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Additionally, the teacher's knowledge of how to teach this subject to students with varying prior experience of the subject is also very good. A strength of the teaching is the use of assessment for learning; written and verbal feedback to students is detailed and geared to personal target setting. All lessons seen were well planned and structured to make the most of the time available. Questioning is used effectively to draw out understanding from students.

278. A detailed project guide was produced for pupils to guide them towards maximising their grades for each stage of the project. There is a good emphasis on ensuring students have a clear understanding of the grade criteria. Good progress was seen to be promoted by this approach to teaching the course. During lessons, students receive a high level of personal attention from the teacher, who encourages students to reflect and evaluate their work as it proceeds.

279. The quality of learning was good in four-fifths of the lessons seen. In one theory lesson it was satisfactory rather than good. Students were seen to be more confident when undertaking practical work than when participating in the theoretical aspects of the subject. However, the nature of the teaching, which seeks to involve students fully through discussion, good lesson pace and lesson structure, was seen to promote good learning in this subject, overall. Practical lessons demonstrate that students have very sound ICT skills, particularly when integrating the use of different applications. Students demonstrated a good degree of self-sufficiency when undertaking their project work. This was due to good planning, clear understanding of the criteria, and having an overview of the stages in the development of their project.

280. Resources for teaching and learning in this subject are very good. The network of up-to-date computers makes available a full range of application software and electronic course materials. Students are able to make full use of these systems plus the benefit of email and use of the Internet for research purposes.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

281. Two lessons were sampled, the Sixth Form PE option and a Community Sports Leadership Award (CSLA) lesson, and three pupils discussed their work on the latter. In the former lesson, pupils participated with enthusiasm and commitment in hockey and badminton as part of a structured programme of PE activities. In hockey, pupils could strike the ball with precision and knew the rudiments of team play. In badminton pupils demonstrated a range of strokes in match play. The CSLA lesson, a fitness circuit, was organised and effectively led by the pupils themselves with their peers working hard throughout the session. Teachers have developed friendly and productive relationships with sixth form students and the CSLA programme especially is much valued by them as a worthwhile and enjoyable qualification.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

282. There are no results as yet from the AVCE course in health and social care. One lesson in Year 12 was sampled and the work discussed with two pupils. Teaching and learning was of good quality, with pupils demonstrating effective development of communication skills through role-play.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

283. The focus of the inspection was on art and design but music was also sampled.

284. Overall, the provision for music in the Sixth Form is very good. In the most recent examinations, one student gained a C pass at A Level, and two students gained C passes in the AS examination. Currently, there are three students in Year 12 and two students in Year 13. Year 12 students were observed in one lesson during the course of the inspection. The quality of their work, demonstrated through a finely focused analysis of the last movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, demonstrated that they are on line to gain good results. Scrutiny of Year 12 and Year 13 work revealed that students make very good progress in each year. The quality of teaching is very good, being thorough and challenging and this, together with the students' very good attitudes to work, ensures high standards of achievement.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Improving standards.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students.
- Displays of work around the school.
- Separate studio space for students.

Areas for improvement:

- Opportunities for independent learning.
- Experimentation and investigation through drawing and a range of materials.
- The breadth of the curriculum.
- Research into famous artists to allow a more personal view of their work.
- Resources for learning, including ICT.

285. The A Level results in 2001 were close to the national average and above the average performance of the other subjects in the school. Ten students were entered for the examination, more than in recent years. Every candidate was awarded a pass; though none gained Grade A, four were awarded Grade B passes. These results reflect a slight improvement since the last inspection.

286. Standards are close to the national average. Students are committed to their studies and bring industry and interest to their work. They are introduced to sixth form work through the well designed "Drawing is Discovery" programme, requiring them to draw natural objects in a wide range of materials, methods and sizes: this is a very good springboard for sixth form study. Allowing for the varied prior attainment of the students and the shortage of A* grades they gained in their GCSE examinations, their achievement is satisfactory.

287. Students are inquisitive and have good technical skills when handling paint in the manner of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Alberto Giacometti and John Piper. However, the uneven balance between finished work, investigation and experimentation results in students relying more than is usual for guidance and inspiration from their teachers. Few, other than the highest attainers, know how to draw for different purposes or how to make connections between their own work and that of famous artists or designers.

288. Teaching and learning are good and occasionally very good, an improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are very well planned and students respond to their teachers' high expectations with interest and creative energy. Teachers have a genuine feel for their subject leading to very warm relationships between teachers and students. Students were pleased to comment when their teacher explained the quality of a Henry Moore drawing, offering well-considered interpretations of its contents and the artist's methods. They then went on to make their own drawings, using those same techniques as identified in Moore's work. Not all of the students took maximum advantage of this exercise by referring to information in their sketchbooks.

289. As at the last inspection the curriculum in art is narrow and lacks balance. The unsatisfactory range of learning resources limits opportunities to work with printmaking and textiles. As at the time of the previous inspection, none of the students use computers and specialist software to generate or manipulate their work. While there is evidence of three-dimensional work in clay and mixed media, painting and drawing makes up the bulk the

students' work. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department provides leadership which teachers and students respect and follow. The accommodation has improved since the last inspection and students have their own studio space. Displays of work in the department and public areas of the school are stimulating and improve the atmosphere of the building and the status of the subject. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen and teaching and learning have improved.

HUMANITIES

290. The focus of the inspection was geography and sociology, but history was also sampled.

291. In history, one Year 12 lesson was seen in the sixth form and AS and A2 work was extensively scrutinised. A Level results have fluctuated considerably over recent years from well below to well above average, although the small number of candidates magnifies the degree of variation. Students are well taught and in the current year are making good progress to reach standards above the national average.

Geography

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

Strengths:

- Standards are above average and achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and commitment to the subject are excellent.
- The leadership, management and strategic planning of the department are consistently good.

Areas for improvement:

- The schemes of work need to be reviewed to take account of priorities in the departmental strategic plan and the increasing use of ICT.

292. Students enter the Sixth Form with prior attainment in GCSE ranging from grade A* to C. The standards reached in their homework and class work are good and over the last four years all of these entered for A Level have gained pass grades in the A to E range. Over the same period about a quarter of students entered have gained A or B grades and there has been an upward trend in the average points scored. However, the number of students entered for geography at A Level is so small that further statistical comparisons would not be valid.

293. The work of students currently in school confirms the standards shown in the most recent examination results. Students in Year 12 have successfully bridged the gap between GCSE and AS Level, are making good progress and are achieving good standards in their work. All students work with interest and enthusiasm and are developing secure understanding, for example, of glaciation and peri-glaciation, by exploring natural environmental hazards and through studying weather patterns and developing the skill of reading and interpreting weather images from satellite data. In this Year 12 lesson, where the teaching was excellent, students looked at satellite data, suitably marking fronts and occlusions before setting out a hypothesis for weather in the following 24 hours, before

checking their response against the printout from the satellite. The successful completion of this task involved all students in applying previous learning to recent and new images, rather than the well-used synoptic charts. Many showed their considerable level of understanding of this topic.

294. Students develop very good levels of writing, and use of number and ICT. These skills, as well as an excellent range of study and organisational techniques, are very well taught within the subject and support much of the very good learning that happens in both Years 12 and 13. In a Year 12 and Year 13 lesson students explored the higher writing skills needed to respond to an examination question to ensure that they gained maximum marks. The progress made in this lesson was greatly influenced by the degree of challenge provided by both the teacher and other students as oral responses were shared and explored. Students are also challenged to develop higher order thinking skills. In a Year 13 lesson the classification of hazards using basic information relating to a hurricane and its impact on New York was explored. The level of discussion about how to classify hazards challenged some to think of other methods and criteria that could be taken into account when producing and applying such taxonomies.

295. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. It was excellent in half of the lessons seen and very good in the remainder. The deployment of teachers' subject expertise in planning the teaching and managing the learning was crucial in ensuring that levels of expectation, challenge and pace were maintained throughout the lesson. Students came to each lesson with positive attitudes to the subject, high levels of commitment and expecting to work hard. Their outstanding relationships with their teachers, based on mutual respect, and with their peers, ensured that question and answer sessions were highly productive and that the level of challenge to the teacher was well founded and informed by cogent and persuasive evidence. Teachers consistently used a wide range of teaching methods and resources in order to further extend and challenge the existing levels of students' understanding.

296. Some of the teaching methods were innovative and included a high-risk approach to exploring the topic. This was the case in the Year 12 lesson exploring weather satellite images. In a Year 13 lesson, where the teaching was excellent, students were challenged by the demands of questions about trans-national corporations to develop higher order responses to examination questions. The quality of their discussion and the standard of their work benefited from the provocative nature of the oral questions to which they were responding.

297. Students are set a variety of well-formulated tasks for class and homework. These are carefully marked and graded with extremely helpful comments and suggestions for improvement. Regular assessment and the monitoring of their attainment and progress contribute to students' high levels of motivation and achievement.

298. The curriculum is of very good quality and is supported by helpful schemes of work, regular assessment and monitoring systems. The teaching staff members are very well deployed, resources are of very good quality and teaching accommodation provides a good learning environment. The schemes of work need to be reviewed to take account of priorities in the excellent strategic plan and to include the increasing use of ICT.

299. The department is well managed and provides a very good service to its students. Strategic planning is very good and identifies priorities for the deployment of financial resources.

SOCIOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching.
- Attitudes to the subject.
- Students' personal development and relationships.

Areas for development:

- Accommodation.
- The school's support for leadership and management in the subject.
- Assessment procedures.

300. Results at A Level have fluctuated around the national average over recent years. In 2001 the percentage of students gaining A and B grades at A Level was some 10 percentage points above the national average. In terms of average points score per candidate, attainment was in line with national expectations. Results in the AS examination in 2001 were somewhat disappointing, perhaps as a result of disruption caused by long-term staff absence during the last academic year. In common with national trends the overwhelming majority of candidates in this subject are female.

301. The subject attracts a number of students whose attainment on entry is below average and who, in work seen, make good progress to achieve standards in line with course expectations. Students work hard to acquire a knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts and theories. In coursework on topics such as Anglo-American manipulation of the media in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, and the media representation of women, students apply different sociological perspectives and methods well to develop their independent learning skills. There is an appropriate focus on key skills; ICT is regularly used for research and communication when students word process information they have accessed through the Internet. Numeracy skills are an integral part of the subject, as students are required to analyse and interpret sociological data from statistical sources such as Social Trends. Higher attaining students demonstrate well developed personal and learning skills through their logically structured notes and carefully organised files.

302. Lower attaining students' organisational skills are less developed and their grasp of literacy less secure, so that errors in the technical accuracy of their written English sometimes detract from the quality of their work. Scope exists for wider reading and improving the evaluative skills of all students.

303. The quality of teaching is good throughout the sixth form. One of the two current staff was absent for the week of the inspection, but the school is fortunate in being able to secure the services of a supply teacher who has considerable experience of teaching A Level sociology. Students learn well throughout their courses; however, in the second year their wider knowledge and greater maturity of study result in a more sophisticated understanding of sociological concepts and an appreciation of the links between different aspects of the subject. In a lesson on the social profile of churchgoers the teacher used stimulating materials well to promote lively discussion and offer valuable practice in deriving information from statistical data, and using it to identify social trends. Open and challenging questions such as "Why won't anti-positivists like official statistics?" are well used to explore, extend & consolidate students' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students benefit from valuable guidance which helps to raise their attainment in areas such as study skills, coursework and examination techniques. In a lesson on sociological methods the teacher's

response to the question “Well isn’t everyone a criminal then?” enabled students to understand the social action perspective which emphasises the importance of being defined as a criminal. Students would benefit from more practice in essay writing and structured response questions, including clear attainment grades and detailed evaluative comment on their performance. Overall teaching methods seem to be well suited to the wide ability range the subject attracts.

304. At the time of the inspection the appointment of a subject leader for sociology was a recent innovation. She has already had an impact on the department’s teaching through her rewriting of the existing schemes of work and her vision of a move towards more student-based teaching and learning styles. The school would benefit from updating its current procedures for the induction and support of new subject leaders, especially if they are also staff new to the school. Leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory. The current lack of a departmental base is frustrating the implementation of current development plans and making it very difficult to raise the profile of the subject.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

305. The focus of the inspection was on English and German. French was also sampled.

English

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is good and in some cases very good.
- Students of a wider than usual range of ability make good progress over the two-year course.
- Examination results at A Level have been above the national average for some years.

Areas for improvement:

- In some classes there is a need to find strategies to raise confidence in oral discussion.
- Results for some students in the recent AS Level examination did not reflect satisfactory progress.

306. English is a popular subject, attracting enough students to form two teaching groups in each year. In the current AS and A Level courses in years 12 and 13 there are seventeen boys and thirty-six girls, who together make up nearly half the sixth form. The school has a policy for entry requirements to these courses, but exceptions are made to cater for particular interests and there is consequently a comparatively wide range of competence in the groups. The course currently followed is English language and literature: until this year it has been English literature.

307. Results in the most recent AS Level examination cover a wide range, which includes some unclassified grades as well as success at the higher grades. Over the last four years A Level results have been above the national average, with all candidates passing in the A – E range and an above average proportion of A and B grades. This represents good achievement and progress for all students over the two-year course.

308. Standards seen in the course folders were impressive. All students write with clarity and conviction, sharing their discoveries and their enthusiasm with the reader and developing their own perceptions and understanding as they do so. Standards of literacy are good and in Year 13 especially essays are of appropriate length. Linguistic knowledge acquired through the language part of the course has a positive effect on all the writing; students are able to analyse both language and literature in a useful and often sophisticated way, using precise technical terminology. There are illuminating examples of comparison of texts, for instance of 'Measure for Measure' with David Hare's 'Murmuring Judges', and higher attainers in Year 13 produce very good written exploration of character and motivation, again from 'Measure for Measure'.

309. There is more variation in the quality of class discussion. One of the groups in Year 12 sustained a vigorous and most productive examination of a poem by Simon Armitage – first working in smaller groups and then as a whole class. They showed very good knowledge of the poet's work already studied and applied it perceptively to the new poem. Their oral expression was unusually articulate and mature. Other groups were less forthcoming, needing more support from the teacher and showing less confidence and conviction. Overall, classwork on literature topics was more assured than that based on language study.

310. The teaching of A Level English is good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, and their enthusiasm for it is infectious. They are highly skilful in enabling their students to develop personal response based always on sound knowledge of the language and the literature studied. They expect the students to read widely and to use the Internet and give practical advice on how usefully to do this.

311. The quality of teachers' written responses to students' work is exceptionally high. Essays are carefully read and annotated throughout with final comments that give an accurate assessment with clear advice on improvement and further considerations. Texts chosen for language study are topical and stimulating, giving opportunities for moral and cultural consideration. Two notable examples were a Year 12 lesson based on the current press handling of drug and alcohol abuse by young people, and, in Year 13, a rhetorical passage denouncing the writer Salman Rushdie. In both cases students were invited to consider the issues themselves as well as the prose style of the articles.

312. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The new head of department has joined a team of highly experienced and competent teachers. The courses in both years are well structured. There is good balance between the language and literature elements, and the teaching is shared by the team, so that the students experience variety of approach and point of view. Teachers are in close touch with each other and are very familiar with examination requirements, enabling them to adjust the courses for groups and individuals as the need arises. The department benefits from the excellent statistical records kept by the school which give the teachers a realistic view of the possibilities for each student.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

313. The focus of the inspection was on German but French was also sampled. The number taking French fluctuates; there is only one student in Year 13 and seven in Year 12. Over the last five years, results have been largely above the national average. Written work was scrutinised and three lessons were observed; in two, the teaching was good and in one, it was satisfactory.

German

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

Strengths:

- The teaching is good.
- Results over the last five years have been above the national average.
- Students' attitudes in Year 12 are positive and they are making good progress.

Areas for improvement:

- The standard of students' written work is uneven; the grasp of grammatical structures and vocabulary they show in their short answers is not reflected in their extended writing.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT for personal research and as a source of material for students' own writing.

314. Over the last six years, low numbers of students have been entered for A Level German. In that period, only one of the 31 candidates has failed and nearly half have achieved A or B grades. In the most recent year, 2001, all four candidates passed, with one A grade, one B grade and two C grades. The standards of the present Year 12 are in line with the average of recent years, whilst those of the present Year 13 are well below.

315. Standards of work in Year 12 are in line with those indicated by past results, although the students are still adapting to the demands of AS Level. Their knowledge of grammatical forms and structures is good and exercises using them are mostly accurate. As yet, students have had little opportunity to write extensively on A Level topics and in the writing they do, they make unnecessary errors and do not always apply the language skills they are acquiring in the grammar and topic work. Listening skills are developing rapidly as a result of the weekly individual listening sessions. Students are steadily acquiring a specialised vocabulary and are beginning to use it in class discussion, though they are still hesitant. Pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory and sometimes good.

316. Standards of work in Year 13 are well below average. Pronunciation and intonation are satisfactory in conversation, but the reading of text is sometimes inaccurate: answering questions about a text is challenging. Listening skills are satisfactory and benefit from a weekly session listening to tapes and summarising them. Reading comprehension is below average and is hampered by limited vocabulary and grammatical understanding. Written work is below average in standard; the range of structures and vocabulary used is limited and there are elementary errors.

317. The quality of teaching observed was good. Preparation and planning are thorough, though the learning objectives are not shared with the students. Teachers use German almost exclusively, which has a positive impact on the development of the students' listening skills. Students, particularly in Year 12, respond well to the encouraging teaching and are prepared to make an attempt even when they are unsure. Teachers plan a variety of activities and some, though not enough, use is made of the Internet as a source of topical material. In one Year 13 lesson, the teacher made effective use of a cartoon of the sinking Titanic to prompt the structure, 'The captain should have...', and the point was quickly absorbed. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the syllabus and its demands. Marking is thorough; it is based on A Level criteria and provides guidance to the students on how to improve their work. Students are enthusiastic and work well. They show some capacity for independent study, working individually to improve their listening skills with taped material.

318. The teacher responsible is well organised and has a clear view of the development of

modern foreign languages in the sixth form. The scheme of work has been revised once but will be revised again, following an evaluation of its first year of operation, to shorten the transition stage and advance the introduction of A Level topics. Insufficient use is made of ICT for research and source material. Both teachers are very enthusiastic and competent linguists and work well together.