

INSPECTION REPORT

FLEETWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Fleetwood

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119771

Headteacher: Mrs M. Dudley

Reporting inspector: Gillian Salter-Smith
8329

Dates of inspection: 28th January – 1st February 2002

Inspection number: 243726

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 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Broadway
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Lancashire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Desmond Lund

Date of previous inspection: 13th March 2000

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8329	G. Salter-Smith	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13786	S. Walsh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20192	T. McDermott	Sixth Form Co-ordinator	Physical education (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
19586	W. Easterby	Team inspector	English	
30215	H. Feasey	Team inspector	Geography Vocational education	
15950	N. Godfrey	Team inspector	Art and design (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
19915	P. Hooton	Team inspector	History (Key Stages 3 and 4) Equality of opportunity	
31100	G. Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12475	S. Johnson	Team inspector	Music (Key Stages 3 and 4)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15678	J. Radford	Team inspector	Religious education (Key Stages 3 and 4) Provision for pupils with special educational needs The work of the special educational needs unit Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
3793	J. Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
30901	S. Schofield	Team inspector	Design and technology (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
17923	M. Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
31159	C. Simmonds	Team inspector	Science (Key Stages 3 and 4) Biology (Post-16)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fleetwood High is a large split-site community comprehensive school with a small sixth form. The school is due to move to a newly built school on a single site from September 2002. With 1150 pupils on roll it is growing in popularity. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. A high proportion of pupils come from areas of social and economic disadvantage. The number of the pupils identified as having special educational needs is well above average as is the number of pupils with a statement of special need. Most of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. A smaller number need help for severe learning difficulties, hearing difficulties, autism and physical difficulties. The school has a designated unit for 7 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and there is a Pupil Referral Unit on the site. A small number of pupils (12) are from ethnic minority backgrounds and these include pupils of Chinese and Indian background. A smaller number of pupils have English as an additional language but none are in the early stages of language acquisition (6). The standards of pupils on entry to the school as measured by nationally recognised tests are well below average across all year groups with boys having weaker literacy skills than girls.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fleetwood High is an effective and rapidly improving school with many good features. Although below average, standards are rising. Good teaching results in good learning. In Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement in relation to their previous low standard is good. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement, whilst satisfactory, does not match the good teaching because a minority of pupils attend infrequently. Very good leadership and management have a marked impact on raising the expectations of pupils, parents and staff. The school is inclusive in that it is committed to ensuring that all pupils, irrespective of gender, background, or ability, have every chance to succeed. The cost of running the school is above average and the overall value for money provided by the school is satisfactory.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are very good. Very good arrangements for monitoring and evaluating teaching linked with effective professional development have contributed significantly to improvement.
- Teaching and learning are good and include a significant number of very good or excellent lessons.
- Pupils' achievement in relation to their previous standards in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Pupils' behave well and relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Effective use of assessment information helps to raise expectations, aspirations and standards.
- Provision for pupils at risk of exclusion is very good.
- The range of learning opportunities are good and match pupils' needs, interests and aspirations.

What could be improved

- Standards are below the national average overall and well below average in information and communication technology (ICT), and in mathematics and modern foreign languages in Year 11.
- Poor attendance has a negative effect on pupils' achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils do not take enough responsibility for their own learning.
- Not enough parents are involved in their children's work at home and at school.

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 improved significantly since the previous inspection in March 2000 when it was designated as having serious weaknesses. It is now no longer deemed to have serious weaknesses. Very good leadership and management have resulted in improvements in almost all of the areas identified at the last inspection. The quality of the teaching has improved and is now good overall. Standards are rising at age 14 and 16. The rate of attendance remains a concern and is poor. Improvement in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The good quality of teaching is maintained but results have declined and the student numbers have gone down.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E		

In 2001, the results of national tests held at age 14 were below the average for all schools, and broadly in line with the results of schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. In English, results were below the national average and in mathematics and science they were well below average. Results in 2001 improved in all three subjects and the school outperformed the local education authority's reasonably challenging targets. The improvement was due in part to a significant improvement in boys' results in English who still remained behind the girls. Boys outperformed girls in mathematics and science. The trend for improvement over a five year period is broadly in line with the national trend.

In 2001, the overall results in GCSE were well below the national average and well below average when compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades increased significantly but the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-G grades decreased. The school outperformed its target for A*-C grades but did not meet its targets for the proportion of pupils gaining one A*-G grades or for the average points score. Girls gained better results than boys overall. The trend of improvement over a five year period is below the national trend but has begun to rise in 2001. Results in Advanced level examinations are well below average.

Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below the national average overall including English, mathematics and science. Standards are average in art and design, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. Standards are well below average in ICT and below average in other subjects. The test results at age 14 and standards of work seen represent good achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

Standards of work seen in Year 11 are below average overall, including in English, history, geography, ICT and religious education. They are above average in physical education. Standards are average in science, art and design, design and technology, drama, music, leisure and tourism and health and social care. Standards are well below average in mathematics and modern foreign languages. The GCSE results and standards of work seen

reflect satisfactory achievement overall when these pupils' well below average previous standards are taken into account. Results and standards of work seen are well below average overall in the sixth form. Numbers are small and many students enter the sixth form with low standards of prior attainment. These standards represent satisfactory achievement overall.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall especially where they receive specialist support. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language make good progress overall, including the one pupil receiving specialist support. The small number of pupils identified as gifted and talented make similar progress to other pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils who attend regularly work hard and try their best. A good proportion of pupils takes part in and benefits from the extra activities provide by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils' good behaviour in lessons creates a calm and productive atmosphere for learning. The behaviour of younger pupils in the communal areas of the school is especially good. The number of exclusions has reduced.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils are based on respect. This helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and gives them the confidence to ask questions. Pupils enjoy working collaboratively in many lessons.
Attendance	Poor. The sustained and erratic attendance of a significant minority of pupils depresses their standards, results and achievements.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good across the school. As a result pupils learn at a good rate in the main school and at a satisfactory rate in the sixth form. The learning of some sixth form students is hampered by their lack of appropriate prior learning to match the demands of the Advanced courses. Teaching is very good in art and design overall and in history in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics overall and in geography and ICT in Years 7 to 9. In all other subjects, including English and science, teaching is good.

Teachers manage the pupils well and develop very good relationships with them. Consequently pupils develop self esteem based on the satisfaction gained from learning and achievement. Pupils persevere with activities and, in response to the high expectations and demands made of them, maintain a good pace to their learning. Pupils benefit from the teachers' good level of subject knowledge in most subjects. Teachers pay good attention to teaching literacy skills and this has a positive impact on their learning. The teaching of

numeracy skills is satisfactory. Although not systematically planned, many subjects develop and improve pupils' numeracy skills as they arise. Lack of access to computers limits opportunities to learn ICT skills in some subjects.

Teaching takes account of pupils' differing needs. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and very good where specialist support is provided. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage of development. The small number identified benefit from additional activities beyond lessons. In the small number of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory it is often associated with non-specialist and temporary teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Learning opportunities are well-matched to the needs of pupils. The literacy policy and Key Stage 3 strategy are effective. A thinking-skills course enriches opportunities in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 there is a good range of options, vocational courses and work related programmes. Pupils benefit from links with community groups. The curriculum in the sixth form is too narrow.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well supported in the classroom and the behavioural centres. Most pupils make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes satisfactory arrangements for supporting the small number of pupils with English as an additional language and these pupils make the same progress as other groups of pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Opportunities to take on roles of responsibility are extensive. The approaches to teaching and learning help pupils to develop a strong sense of self worth and high self esteem. Moral, cultural and multicultural development are good. Assemblies promote the positive ethos of the school but the statutory requirement to provide a daily collective act of worship is not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The pastoral team has a clear focus on improving the achievement of pupils. Good assessment procedures and the effective use of assessment information help to raise expectations.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. The home school association raises funds and provides important links with the community. There are many supportive parents but a minority continue to condone their children's absence from school. Pupils' planners are not always used effectively. Reports to parents vary in quality.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The head teacher and senior managers give clear educational direction. The focus is clearly on raising standards. They identify the right priorities for improvement, implement policy rigorously and promote a strong commitment to improve. Heads of department and heads of year implement policy effectively. Professional development linked to performance management arrangements play an important role in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed of the school's performance. A number are closely involved in the day to day work of the school. They are supportive of the head teacher and senior management in shaping the development of the school. They take on the role of critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Academic performance is analysed closely in the main school. Core subjects evaluate their own work rigorously and teaching and learning is monitored systematically across subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is used effectively. The school consults parents and pupils about provision and applies the principles of best value well.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources.	Unsatisfactory. Although improved, non-specialist and temporary teaching affects pupils' achievement in some subjects. Science and design and technology are short of technical support staff. There are a good number of effective learning support staff. Access to computers and text books is too limited in some subjects. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school continues to be disadvantaged by the split site and much of it is in a poor state of repair.

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 expects their children to do their best. • Their children like school. • Their children make good progress. • Parents can approach the school if they have a problem. • Parents feel that the reputation of the school is growing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have a concern about the amount and consistency of homework. • The school does not always work closely with parents. • Parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress. • Some parents do not know if the school provides a good range of activities outside lessons.

The percentage of questionnaires returned at just over nine per cent was low and a small number of parents (17) attended the parents' meeting. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. Inspectors find the use of homework is satisfactory overall but agree with parents that the amount and quality is not consistent. The reports to parents on their children's progress, although satisfactory, have some areas for improvement. The inspection team found a good range of extra-curricular activities but these activities are not presented in the prospectus in a coherent way. The way the school works with parents is satisfactory but not enough parents are involved in their children's learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form consists of 43 students and is much smaller than average. It has decreased in size since the last inspection. There are more female than male students on roll. Many of the students come from areas of high social and economic disadvantage. An average percentage of Year 11 students continue with their education full time at age 16, some of them in the school's sixth form. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is well below average overall although the full range of attainment is represented. Students are currently provided with a narrow range of advanced courses, including some intermediate vocational courses, personal social and health education, general studies, religious education and key skills. There are no firm entry requirements. The majority of Year 13 students go on to higher education. A small number of visiting foreign students from countries around the world complete Advanced level courses and achieve good results.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides satisfactorily for the particular needs of most of its students and is cost effective. Students extend their knowledge and understanding of their subjects as a result of good teaching. There is underachievement by a small number of students who enter the sixth form with lower range GCSE point scores, for whom appropriate provision is not presently available because the small numbers restricts the range of courses that is offered. Students become responsible young adults with mature attitudes and they develop good relationships with staff and other students. The leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory, and there is a common vision for the future. The main strengths and areas that could be improved are:

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and enables students to learn well from the subject knowledge of the teachers.
- The attitudes of the students to the school, and to study, are very positive.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good and have a positive influence on learning.
- The support, guidance and advice which students receive whilst in the sixth form builds their self esteem, and their confidence to move on.

What could be improved

- Standards are well below average.
- The range of courses is narrow and does not match all students' learning needs.
- The recruitment of students into the sixth form is not based upon firm criteria and counselling.
- Procedures for recording the on-site attendance of students are not systematic.

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 subject areas and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory. Teachers are knowledgeable and produce satisfactory lessons which enable students to learn in lessons. Although results last year were poor, standards over time broadly reflect students' ability and prior attainment and their achievement is satisfactory. A number of students do not achieve well because their learning needs are not well-matched to the course they follow.
Biology	Provision is good. The quality of teaching is good, and students are well supported in investigative practical work. Standards achieved are average. Students' achievement reflects their prior attainment and is satisfactory.
Information and communication technology	Provision is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Standards are well below average. Progress is unsatisfactory since the course is not appropriately matched to students' prior knowledge or skills.
Geography	Provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. Students are well supported and encouraged to work independently. Students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior standards. Standards are below average due to lack of background knowledge and prior learning. A number of students did not take a geography course at GCSE.
English literature	Provision is satisfactory. Students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching is good and encourages students to find things out for themselves. Standards are below the national average both in examinations and in work seen.

Music, physical education, psychology, history, media studies, design and technology, and intermediate GNVQ Health and social care courses were also sampled. Students produce very good work in music in response to stimulating teaching. History students appreciate the frequent essay writing practice, and the opportunity to prepare and make presentations. The strength in vocational educational lies in the support, encouragement and high level of subject knowledge the teacher brings to the class. In physical education, the very clear explanations inspire considerable intellectual effort, and secure a rapid and firm grasp of theoretical concepts. The media studies students were motivated by the practical editing suite, and by the opportunity to produce a soap opera series for course work. Students achieve well in the compulsory general studies course, and rightly value it for the opportunity it provides to extend their horizons beyond the boundaries of their academic courses.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Unsatisfactory. The guidance and counselling students receive before entering the sixth form is unhelpful in too many instances, and results in a degree of inappropriate recruitment. Induction into the sixth form is good. Individual progress is well tracked, and the monitoring of achievement is good. Students are well supported personally and academically. They receive good advice concerning their options on leaving the sixth form
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. There is a developing strategic vision which places the sixth form as a centre of learning for the whole community. The rising standards and aspirations in the main school and a strong commitment to improvement ensure a capacity to succeed. Course viability is closely monitored but numbers of students at present are low. This restrains students' choices, and subject recruitment does not always result in them being well matched to the courses they take.

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"> • Good quality teaching which challenges them to learn successfully. • Teachers provide individual help and support with work when needed. • The school helped them to settle in to the sixth form. • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. • They are treated as responsible young adults in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses. • Guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. • The quality of the advice they receive about what to do upon leaving the sixth form. • The range of courses to allow them to follow a programme suited to their talents and aspirations.

Around three in four students responded to the questionnaire. The inspection team agrees with the students' positive views. The views of students interviewed did not always reflect the response in the questionnaires. Students directly interviewed were unanimous in their view that the quality of advice and guidance about post sixth form options was clear and plentiful and that they received good advice on how to improve the quality of their work. Inspectors agree with these views. Inspectors agree that the range of enrichment activities could be broader. However, many students choose not to take up the opportunities. Students felt that the range of courses and subjects currently on offer was restricted and inspectors agree with this view.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards overall are beginning to rise as the result of the improved quality of teaching and learning, and management that has focused on the right priorities and succeeded in raising the expectations of teachers, pupils and their parents and the aspirations and achievement of pupils.

2. Based on nationally recognised tests, pupils' standards when they enter the school in Year 7 are well below average. They have particularly weak literacy and numeracy skills and boys have lower standards of literacy compared with the girls. Almost half of the population of the school have special educational needs, many of whom have moderate or specific learning difficulties. Nevertheless as a result of improved teaching and learning which has focused on developing pupils' literacy skills and giving support to pupils with special educational needs, pupils are reaching below average standards at age 14 and 16 and this represents good achievement overall. Poor attendance affects achievement of a minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 especially, and achievement overall in these years is just satisfactory, despite good teaching in most lessons.

3. In 2001, the results of national tests held at age 14 were below the average for all schools, and broadly in line with the results of schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. In English, results were below the national average and in mathematics and science they were well below average. Results in 2001 improved in all three subjects and the school outperformed the local education authority's reasonably challenging targets. The improvement was due in part to a significant improvement in boys' results in English who still, nevertheless, remained behind the girls. Boys outperformed girls in mathematics and science, and girls are further behind other girls nationally than the boys are behind other boys. The improvement in results for boys partly reflects the school's work in targeting boys' underachievement and weak literacy skills. The trend for improvement over a five year period is broadly in line with the national trend.

4. In 2001, the overall results in GCSE were well below the national average and well below average when compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades increased significantly but the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-G grades decreased. The school outperformed its target for A*-C grades but did not meet its targets for the proportion of pupils gaining one A*-G grade or for the average points score. Results in media studies were above average and in Spanish were well above average, but the number of pupils entered was small. Girls gained better results than boys overall except in physical education. The improvement in the A*-C grades reflects the work of the school in targeting and offering mentoring to pupils likely to achieve these grades. The decrease in the A*-G results reflects the impact of poor attendance of a minority of pupils. In addition, the improved teaching and learning, curriculum provision and overall ethos of the school have not yet had enough impact on the attainment of older pupils. The trend of improvement over a five year period is below the national trend but has begun to rise in 2001.

5. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below the national average overall and include below average standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards are average art and design, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. Standards are well below average in ICT and below average in other subjects. Standards of work seen are below average but are higher than the national test results because pupils are responding well to the rapidly improving quality of teaching and they are learning at a good

rate in most lessons. These standards represent good achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9, many of whom start school with low standards, weak literacy skills and have special educational needs. Although achievement is good overall there are some lessons where higher-attaining pupils do not reach their full potential, for example, in English, mathematics and in art and design when not enough demands are made of these pupils. Opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to think more deeply and analyse more closely. Girls generally outperform boys but many boys start from a lower starting point in Year 7. In some subjects such as mathematics, geography, and drama, staffing difficulties have led to a lack of continuity in the teaching, or non-specialist teaching, and for some pupils this holds back their achievement.

6. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are below average overall, including in English, history, geography, ICT and religious education. They are above average in physical education. Standards are average in science, art and design, design and technology, drama, music, sociology, leisure and tourism and health and social care. Standards are well below average in mathematics and modern foreign languages. The below average standards of work seen are better than the well below average GCSE results and this is because many pupils are responding well to the improved quality of teaching and, for those pupils present, learning in most lessons is rapid. Although pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, it does not match the good quality of teaching and learning because the poor attendance of a minority of pupils adversely affects these pupils' results in examinations. Achievement in mathematics is unsatisfactory because, in addition to poor attendance, some non-specialist teaching and supply teaching affects continuity of learning and consequently pupils' overall achievement. Unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11 in French is due to lack of continuity in learning caused by inappropriate curriculum arrangements. Some pupils have a gap of two years when they study a different language to the one they will take at GCSE.

7. Pupils with special educational needs who have moderate and specific learning difficulties usually attain the standards which their teachers expect of them. Most make good progress in working towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Whereas pupils with behavioural difficulties in the main school make less consistent progress because of their volatile attitudes, those pupils who are working in the support centre and the pupil referral unit achieve well. This is because they have intensive support and a way of working which has been very successfully tailored to their particular needs. However, absence inhibits the progress of a significant minority of all pupils with special educational needs. In whole class lessons there is no overall difference between the progress of pupils with special educational needs and the progress of other pupils.

8. In some subjects not enough demands are made of higher-attaining pupils, but on the whole the needs of lower and middle-attaining pupils are well met through good teaching and they achieve well. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language and pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented also progress at the same rate as other groups of pupils. The attainment and achievement of the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is not analysed separately by the school. The inspection team did not find that these pupils attained or achieved significantly differently from other pupils.

9. Standards of literacy on entry to the school are very low. Many pupils enter the school with poor reading and writing skills. The school has in place many strategies to improve these and is successful in raising standards considerably, though they are still below those found nationally. Standards in reading, writing and speaking and listening are below average, and affect the standards reached in most subjects. Thirty-five pupils in Year 7 attend 'catch-up', classes, designed to bring those pupils who are just below average up to average, and pupils in English who are just below average are in a separate class to focus on their improvement. Teachers with experience in teaching the National Literacy Strategy bring good expertise to these classes.

10. Overall numeracy skills are below those seen nationally. Nevertheless skill levels are not a hindrance to the pupils' learning across the curriculum as a whole. In music for instance pupils evaluate musical patterns and sequences recognising music as the organisation of sound in time; and in design and technology pupils show satisfactory spatial awareness and can measure with an appropriate degree of accuracy.

Sixth form

11. Trends in the school's results over three years on completion of GCSE examinations at age 16 show students' attainment is well below the national average. The attainment of those students joining the sixth form is well below average overall, although there are a very small number of average and higher attaining students.

12. Results in Advanced level and Advanced subsidiary level examinations taken in 2001 were well below the national average. This was not unexpected, and reflects GCSE results from earlier years. Results of those students taking Intermediate GNVQ courses were closer to average. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average overall. In the subjects which were the focus for inspection, standards are average in mathematics and biology, below average in English and geography and well below average in ICT. Standards in some music and physical education lessons are above average. Students' achievements overall in relation to their prior standards are satisfactory. Students' achievements are good in biology, music, physical education and vocational courses. Generally students respond well to the good teaching they receive. However, in ICT a number of lower attaining students are underachieving because the course they are following is not well-matched to their prior attainment.

13. An average proportion of Year 11 students continue with full time education post-16, some of them in the school's sixth form. Some students are placed inappropriately onto sixth form courses which do not match their needs or aspirations. Once students are settled on courses, retention rates are similar to the national average. All students follow a key skills course to at least Level 2 and standards are below average overall. However, a very small number of higher-attaining students reach the expected levels. The majority of students who complete the two year Advanced level course go on to higher education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils have good attitudes to school. They are interested in their work and they want to learn. They are usually well behaved. Pupils settle quickly at the beginning of lessons. There are older pupils of all abilities who are working hard. For example, pupils responded well to the good teaching in sociology; hard work and application resulted in lower-attaining pupils making especially good progress.

15. Those who attend lessons are eager to learn but a significant number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough and there is some internal truancy. Many pupils are eager to

get to school but a notable number drift in during the registration period. Those pupils who attend school regularly are very interested and involved in the many available activities. Many pupils take part in musical and sporting activities; they also enjoy being involved in drama activities. The "Rocket Club", a science based activity, is well supported and pupils are willing to stay after school to attend the school council.

16. Most pupils with special educational needs respond well to the support they receive. They have positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general, and their behaviour in lessons is satisfactory. Pupils with behavioural difficulties often have negative attitudes towards school, but the high quality of support from teachers, classroom assistants, and pastoral staff enables the majority of them to make steady progress in developing self-confidence and in establishing constructive relationships with staff and fellow pupils. Pupils in the two support centres make very good progress in improving their attitudes to school and developing a sense of responsibility because of the positive ethos of the centres and the high quality of the support. Pupils with English as an additional language support each other when possible.

17. There are a small number of pupils in each year group who are very demanding of the teachers' time. For example in a Year 11 lesson a poorly behaved group of boys needed constant intervention and the teacher had to keep refocusing their attention. Most teachers handle these pupils well, discipline is firm and fair and pupils are kept under control.

18. There have been significant improvements in standards of behaviour since the previous inspection and behaviour is now good. Pupils are courteous and well behaved. Younger pupils are very keen to help visitors; they are welcoming and cheerful. Pupils are starting to develop a pride in their school. In the lower school behaviour is good on the crowded corridors and dining room. Pupils are particularly well behaved in the library where pupils play chess and other quiet board games in addition to reading books or doing their homework. Exclusion rates have dropped substantially. Pupils have been excluded for violence and bullying and threatening behaviour is not tolerated. Bullying occurs occasionally and is usually restricted to name calling. However the school has very good procedures to deal with bullying.

19. Pupils do understand the impact of their actions on others and most respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. During a personal and social education lesson about friendship pupils understood the concept of friendship well and were able to make sensible contributions to class discussions. Unfortunately a minority of pupils have immature attitudes. For example, during thought for the day in a registration group pupils were asked to reflect upon the Holocaust and a very small number of boys were disrespectful and made silly noises. During a personal and social education lesson the tutor was concerned that some pupils were unable to empathise with the plight of refugees.

20. Relationships between pupils are good. In music lessons pupils collaborate well and share instruments. They respect each other's work and listen well when fellow pupils are performing in class. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good; there is often good humour and mutual respect. Pupils develop the confidence to ask relevant questions. Relationships are very good in physical education lessons. Co-operation is good and pupils support each other well.

21. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils respond well to responsibility. Younger pupils are particularly keen to be helpful. Year 9 pupils who act as prefects and those Year 8 pupils who are vice-prefects, take their responsibilities very seriously. Many pupils are proud to help in the library. They have to undertake a formal training course and both boys and girls are equally involved. Pupils value the school council and it is very well attended. The pupils are mature enough to discuss educational matters such as the teaching of boys and girls in separate groups and bullying, in addition to day to day matters such as the condition of the toilets.

22. Although pupils are given many opportunities to develop initiative and responsibility outside lessons, during lessons they have limited opportunities to develop independent learning skills. Independent learning is good in music but limited in mathematics, information technology and geography. However, the thinking skills course in Years 7 to 9 encourages pupils to work independently and analyse how they learn and how they work together in groups. In a Year 8 thinking skills lesson, the teacher's constant reference to the shared learning objectives which emphasised different ways of thinking and learning helped the pupils to become very aware of how they were learning. Pupils were also encouraged to see if boys and girls approached problem solving in a different way.

23. Attendance rates are poor. Attendance rates are only satisfactory in Year 7, they are unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9 and are poor in Years 10 and 11. Although education provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection many pupils are failing to take advantage of the good teaching and the relevant range of learning opportunities. Some pupils fail to complete their coursework and others do not turn up to sit their exams. Pupils find it hard to learn when they miss odd lessons here and there. Unfortunately poor attendance has a serious effect on older pupils' achievement and their examination results.

Sixth form

24. Students have very good attitudes to their education. They are mature young people, growing in confidence, who enjoy their learning and their responsibilities within the school. In the best lessons, they are active participants, willing and able to exchange views and opinions, and to give the views of others consideration and respect. They often find the work a challenge, for example in an Advanced Subsidiary biology class, Year 12 students concentrated hard on understanding glycoside bonds in disaccharides. After the first few weeks of the autumn term when some students drop out of courses, most students persevere in their studies. Many students are very involved in the life of the school. Students support musical activities, there is good attendance at choir practice and students act as helpers in music classes in Years 7 to 9. Students are particularly well motivated in their music lessons and their attitude is often excellent, demonstrating a high level of motivation and independence.

25. The relationships between students and teachers are very good and give students the confidence to ask questions and to recognise where they need help. Students are loyal to the school and appreciate the efforts of their teachers and the good quality of the teaching they receive. In design and technology the very good relationships result in mature interaction which encourages students to think independently and make decisions. Students are friendly and outgoing.

26. Students' personal development is good. They clearly enjoy life in the sixth form, and the completion rate for those on appropriate courses is broadly in line with national averages. Sixth formers display great initiative and form a responsible group of citizens. They have productive links with younger pupils throughout the school, and they make a valuable contribution to the ethos of the school community. Many act as learning mentors for younger

pupils, giving help and support in several subjects, particularly in music, English and science. They give first hand advice to Year 9 and Year 11 pupils about life in the sixth form and what the different courses entail in terms of content and personal commitment. Sixth formers produce the school newspaper, and are active in charitable fund raising for worthy causes they choose to support both at home and abroad. A sixth form student supports a younger student who is learning English as a second language in a very mature way. A sixth form student chairs the school council. Several overseas students are fully integrated into sixth form life and add a valuable dimension to the social and cultural milieu.

27. Attendance rates are generally satisfactory. Attendance in examination course lessons is usually good in both Year 12 and Year 13, though there is no consistent procedure for registering on-site attendance. Absence affects continuity of learning in geography and English lessons. Some students fail to complete their Year 12 course. This is related to incorrect advice prior to starting the course rather than unsatisfactory attitudes. Many others continue with courses even though they find the work very challenging.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. The quality of teaching is good across the school and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The improved quality of teaching is a highly significant factor in raising the expectations, aspirations and achievement of pupils. As a result of good teaching pupils learn at a good rate in lessons and are growing in their self-esteem because they are experiencing success and achievement in many of their subjects. In the main school one in every four lessons is very good or sometimes excellent and three out of four lessons are good or better. Examples of excellent teaching are found in art and design, history, science and drama. Almost all the teaching of permanent staff is satisfactory or better. Of the five unsatisfactory lessons observed three were associated with non-specialist short-term supply teaching. There is little difference in the quality of the teaching between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, although there were a few more unsatisfactory lessons observed in Years 7 to 9.

29. Teaching is very good in art and design overall and in history in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics overall and in geography and ICT in Years 7 to 9. In all other subjects, including English and science, teaching is good.

30. The use teachers make of assessment information has been a major priority for improvement across the school and is now a key strength in the teaching. Based on secure assessment information, teachers know what every pupil is capable of and this knowledge guides their teaching. Groups are organised in class to enable teachers to target pupils' different levels of prior attainment appropriately. Pupils know what their target grades and levels are and, in most subjects, they know what they have to do to improve. Teachers' regular and helpful marking of class work and homework helps pupils to understand how well they are doing. In class work, teachers constantly question pupils to check on their developing knowledge and understanding. Praise is used effectively and teachers make useful suggestions as to how to improve. Occasionally marking of work, although regular, lacks depth and is less helpful to pupils. In some subjects pupils are not involved enough in assessing their own progress, for example, in design and technology.

31. Through the improved use of assessment teachers ensure that work is well-matched to pupils' individual needs. Higher-attaining pupils are often required to work at greater depth, for example, in history where pupils are expected to analyse evidence from a wide range of sources and to present their arguments for drawing on each source. In English, higher attaining pupils are expected to find and use precise quotations to back up their ideas. This greater expectation of higher-attaining pupils is not present in all lessons. In some lessons teachers expect higher-attaining pupils to complete a greater quantity of work but not necessarily reach greater depths of understanding or appreciation.

32. Many of the pupils come to the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills. The school pays good attention to improving literacy skills across subjects and this work in English lessons and across subjects is a major influence on raising standards. Teachers carefully introduce new vocabulary that is relevant to their subject, so that pupils in science, for instance, learnt 'foliage', and 'deciduous', at the appropriate time. Important words are displayed on walls, and referred to in teaching. Spelling is usually corrected in written work and spelling tests are given, for example, in English and business education. It is less common for writing to be taught, but some good practice was observed. In history pupils are taught how to begin paragraphs and in mathematics they are encouraged to write in full sentences. In English they are taught how to use connecting words to link phrases and help to structure and develop their thoughts. There are opportunities to use writing in a variety of ways and for different purposes. In music, pupils have outlines to help them develop ideas and they write song lyrics. In science and English they redraft their writing to improve it. Opportunities to develop reading are occurring, though not yet sufficiently. In history, pupils have to read aloud before embarking on written work about the how the Plague of London started. Pupils doing GNVQ have to read to gather information and in design and technology, they read information on the internet. Lots of group and paired work occurs, for example in English, where pupils develop their speaking and listening skills, but answers are sometimes undeveloped, for example in science and geography. There are lots of opportunities in GNVQ lessons for pupils to develop their speaking and listening through role play and oral presentations.

33. The teaching of numeracy skills, although satisfactory, has not been a focus for development across subjects and the attention paid to supporting pupils in improving their use of numeracy skills is variable across subjects. Many subjects develop numeracy skills as they arise. In science, for instance, there is good provision for improving the pupils' skill levels in those areas needed specifically for the study of science. In English, history and art and design opportunities are missed. Lack of access to computers and the limited knowledge of some teachers restricts the extent to which ICT skills are taught and used across subjects.

34. In almost all lessons pupils are willing and enthusiastic learners. This approach and positive attitude is very much the result of well-established good relationships that teachers have developed with pupils, based on respect and high expectations. Pupils are lively and demanding but accept clear procedures established with good humour. The variety of teaching approaches used is another important factor in maintaining pupils' interest and motivation and helping them to learn in short manageable steps. Carefully structured tasks and a brisk pace enable boys and lower-attaining pupils to learn and are key features in many lessons, for example in English. In geography the inclusion of many practical activities is crucial in maintaining the interest of pupils and the pace of learning. In drama, the use of a wide variety of activities helps pupils to gain confidence and self control. Teachers' questioning often encourages pupils to think for themselves and correct each other's misunderstanding, for example, in mathematics lessons. Clear demonstrations and explanations of techniques are key features in the success of art and design, design and technology and physical education lessons.

35. Potentially volatile pupils are managed well by teachers with effective support from classroom assistants. As a result of the overall good discipline pupils settle down quickly to activities and learning, enjoy lessons and work hard. There are isolated incidents where behaviour management is not effective in controlling low level disruption. These are sometimes associated with a small number of boys who show a reluctance to learn and whose overall achievement has been affected by poor attendance.

36. In almost all lessons good planning underpins the success of lessons. The school's policy for teaching and learning sets clear procedures for starting and finishing lessons. These are followed in almost all lessons and pupils respond well to the routines and high expectations. What is to be learnt is set out clearly at the start of a lesson so that pupils know what they are aiming to achieve. Teachers refer to these lesson aims throughout the lessons and at the end of it so that pupils are in no doubt as to their success.

37. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in the support centres and in the small class sets and withdrawal groups where teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' needs and are well versed in the means of meeting them. They are generally well taught in main school classes. A strength of the most effective teaching is the efficient way in which teachers and support staff work together. For example, pupils in the referral unit made very good progress in understanding how to develop different kinds of communication skills. A range of carefully planned, practical and challenging group tasks was clearly explained and demonstrated by the teacher and then closely monitored by the support assistant. Similarly, in a Year 9 lower-attaining group in history, pupils with special needs achieved well because of the skilful support work and the subject teacher's own well-judged handling of individual needs. Pupils had learnt the technique of taking information from pictures, they were able to refer accurately to what they had learned in previous lessons, and their questions showed a good grasp of the issues arising from the passage of time.

38. The good use teachers make of assessment information helps them to identify higher-attaining pupils and in most subjects more demanding tasks are planned for pupils such that they learn at a good rate and achieve the standards of which they are capable. There are lessons in, for example, art and design, history and English, when more demanding tasks are not given to pupils and although pupils might produce a greater quantity of work they do not necessarily reach a greater depth of understanding.

39. In satisfactory lessons there are features which can be improved. Homework is not always set consistently and regularly across teaching groups within a subject. Homework tasks sometimes do not make enough demand of higher-attaining pupils and too often consist of finishing off class work. Opportunities to use homework to encourage independent learning are not always taken. Parents also noted these deficiencies in the setting and nature of homework. In a small number of lessons teaching lacks pace and excitement and does not make enough use of resources and teaching aids such as overhead projectors and computers. Approaches lack variety and interest and do not fully engage pupils in learning. Occasionally a lack of planning results in too little being demanded of the pupils. In some lessons pupils do not have enough opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning or to take an active and creative part in learning. Opportunities are missed to use ICT as part of independent study. In some lessons there is plenty of discussion but all ideas are shared with the teacher and there is no opportunity for pupils to respond to each other's thoughts or to give pupils the chance to discuss their ideas with each other rather than with the teacher. The exploration of individual pupils' thoughts and feelings to historical situations is not always explored in depth. In some lessons pupils are not as fully involved in planning, assessing and evaluating their own work and they become too dependent on the teacher.

40. In the small number of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory it is often

associated with non-specialist and temporary teaching. Lack of specialist knowledge results in a lack of progression and continuity in learning. Occasionally specialist knowledge is not used well and explanations are not helpful to pupils and expectations of presentation of pupils' written work are too low. On occasions the tasks set are not sufficiently challenging so pupils do not find the work interesting. As a result they lack concentration and therefore do not achieve as they should.

Sixth form

41. Teaching is good overall. It is characterised by high levels of subject expertise which is used very effectively to support learning through the clarity of introductions and explanations. For instance, in a Year 12 psychology lesson, clear exposition enabled students to carry out successfully an experiment to investigate bilateral functioning of the brain, and to test their own initial hypotheses developed through discussion before the experiment. This enabled students to gain a firm grasp of the principles of transfer of traffic within the brain. Good subject knowledge is also the foundation for the thorough planning of lessons, which ensures good pace and appropriate challenge in the work. Students respond with interest, curiosity and ambition to high levels of challenge. This was clearly shown in a Year 12 general studies lesson on the historical context of literature, when the students were provoked to work at a brisk pace to develop and test their thoughts and ideas on an examination text within a limited time frame. In this lesson, and in many others, tightly focused and probing questions enabled students to extend their knowledge and understanding. Key skills are taught effectively through a well-structured programme that all students follow.

42. Learning is satisfactory overall. The small size of the sixth form limits the range of courses on offer. In some cases where recruitment is not made against established criteria, some students find themselves following courses where the syllabus demands are at odds with their learning needs. Some students, although working hard and trying their best have difficulty in meeting the demands of sixth form advanced level studies. In the best lessons, for instance in music and biology, discussion and independent learning are distinctive features, and enable subtle and sophisticated nuances to be fully appreciated and understood. On the other hand, some opportunities to learn in this way are missed as the learning becomes very dependent on the teaching. This is particularly evident in mathematics and ICT, where students are inappropriately placed onto advanced courses. Their underpinning knowledge is weak, the rate of progression is too demanding, and the students become passive learners. In these situations, attendance sometimes becomes erratic. The overall effect is to slow down the rate of learning which consequently does not match the good quality of the teaching.

43. Good teaching allied to very good student attitudes to school are effective in promoting an environment of mutual respect. Students perform well, with clear enthusiasm for their work in response to challenging and demanding tasks set by energetic and committed teachers.

44. Students' work is marked regularly, but in some instances the marking lacks the thoroughness necessary to help students improve their standards. Homework is set consistently, and the best examples clearly act as an extension to learning and build independent study skills.

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

45. The school has continued to make the good progress reported at the last inspection and now provides a curriculum which is of good quality and range, and which fulfils statutory requirements. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils. In Years 7 to 9 all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and the curriculum is enhanced by the addition of drama, the thinking skills course, and personal, social and health education. The imbalance of time allocations between different groups of pupils has now been corrected. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a good range of options including subjects such as sociology, media studies and various vocational courses. The science curriculum has improved since the last inspection with most pupils now taking double science and the remainder taking single science and other science related courses including GNVQ. The school also provides a work-related curriculum for disaffected pupils and has effectively exploited links with the local college of further education in creating its own courses. The teaching of ICT now fulfils statutory requirements both as a separate subject and with regard to its use in subjects across the curriculum.

46. The school offers a good range of curricular opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. The policy for special educational needs sets out the school's stance on inclusion and clearly explains the different opportunities available for pupils with special educational needs. The curriculum is accessible to all on the special needs register although a small number of pupils are appropriately disapplied from modern foreign languages in Year 11 in order to consolidate their work in chosen subjects. Grouping arrangements enable pupils to achieve well because of the smaller than average class sizes, the good quality of the classroom support and the tailoring of work to students' needs. Withdrawal sessions give pupils good opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through small group tuition and the use of an interactive learning system. Individual education plans provide useful information for subject staff about pupils' attainment at entry but the lack of precise information in some areas, for example on current reading and spelling ages, hampers teachers' efforts to provide well focused support and evaluate progress. There are good opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to achieve success in examinations because they are able to choose from a range of accredited courses, as alternatives to GCSE. The thinking skills programme has a positive impact on the ways in which pupils learn and communicate with each other. There is satisfactory provision for the small group of pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented in Years 8 and 10 and the school is planning to extend the programme to include more year groups.

47. The school makes good provision for developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. Standards of literacy on entry to the school are very low. The school has in place many strategies to improve these and is successful in raising standards considerably, though they are still below those found nationally. Thirty five pupils in Year 7 attend 'catch-up' classes, designed to bring those pupils who are just below average up to average, and pupils in English who are just below average are in a separate class to focus on their improvement. Teachers with experience in teaching the National Literacy Strategy bring good expertise to these classes. A dynamic co-ordinator is in place and the school has a well-established literacy policy. Departments have analysed ways they can contribute to the improvement of literacy through their teaching and effective methods are being used.

48. Whilst there is, as yet, no whole school policy for the teaching of numeracy, the appointment of a specialist numeracy co-ordinator at the beginning of this year shows the school's commitment to improvement in this area. He has established a cross-curricular numeracy group, which has met regularly, formulating the basis of a policy and creating a detailed action plan towards its implementation. An audit of numeracy use in Years 7, 8 and 9 has been carried out and the national Springboard materials are being used to help pupils whose skills are below average to catch up. Provision for pupils to improve their numeracy skills is included in some but not all subject areas. In science, for instance, there is good provision for improving the pupils' skill levels in those areas needed specifically for the study of science. In English, history and art and design, opportunities are missed. Overall procedures for the teaching of numeracy skills are satisfactory.

49. The teaching of mathematics is based on the National Numeracy Strategy in all years. This is having a positive effect on the pupils' ability to handle numbers. Each lesson begins with a short sharp introductory session which the pupils are involved with mental arithmetic in various forms. Most lessons end with a plenary review of what has been covered in the lesson and how it relates to previous learning.

50. The provision of extra-curricular opportunities continues to be a strength of the curriculum. There is a range of clubs in many subjects, for example art and design and ICT. The music department undertakes a wide range of rehearsals and concerts after school and has very good links with primary schools and the community. The drama department offers clubs and productions, often combining with the music department in a major production. Trips are arranged to concerts and theatres as well as overseas visits. For example, a geography trip and the schools band visit to Holland. The physical education department provides a wide range of sporting opportunities and pupils can also enrol for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

51. The programme of personal, social and health education has improved substantially since the previous inspection and is now good. The programme covers a wide range of subjects and issues such as citizenship, racism and diversity, the environment and health education. There is adequate drug education and a sensible programme of sex education which contains all the elements required by law. The programme builds up year by year, except for Year 8 where there is extensive emphasis on programme of activities carried out in the local community referred to as the "Real Game". Pupils enjoy these activities and teachers value the realism it brings to lessons.

52. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. Form tutors teach the lessons. They depend upon worksheets that are unattractive and some pupils find dull. The acting careers co-ordinator has recognised that the curriculum is not inspiring and has introduced a wider range of outside speakers to enliven lessons and raise pupils' aspirations. An industry day has been developed for Year 9, together with drama presentations to encourage pupils to consider employment opportunities beyond Fleetwood. A careers bus visited during the week of inspection. Limited careers advice in the past has resulted in pupils making ill-informed decisions about post-16 education and as a consequence some pupils select unsuitable courses when they enter the sixth form.

53. The school has improved its links with local colleges. Blackpool and Fylde College and the school are active partners in promoting community learning. Speakers from the college now inform pupils about opportunities for post-16 education. Small groups of pupils from Years 10 and 11 attend vocational courses at college. The school has sustained good links with its feeder primary school. English, mathematics, science and other teachers have visited lessons in the primary schools and organised specific events for primary age pupils. Pastoral links are good. The special needs staff and pastoral staff visit the primary schools to

ensure that they get detailed information about individual children.

54. The school has continued its very good links with the local community. By working alongside local community groups, it raises aspirations and improves the quality of life for local residents including pupils. Substantial work has been done to encourage old and young people to work together. The school has worked closely with Age Concern. Pupils have worked alongside older people on using computers including use of the Internet. Friendships have developed and these activities have enhanced pupils' social development. There has been extensive involvement with resident groups from local estates. Pupils are involved in local co-operatives growing food, and groups on local estates work with disaffected youngsters in preventing juvenile crime. At present the school is helping a local group set up a homework club.

55. The quality of the provision for pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall indicating satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

56. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and continues to improve as a result of raised awareness through a whole-school survey of what is provided and in-service training for teachers. Teachers define more clearly where they can enrich provision in subjects to allow pupils to reflect on feelings stemming from the heart and spirit. Well-prepared teachers and attentive pupils mean that most of the twice-weekly assemblies for each year group make a good, at times very moving, contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. During the inspection week pupils reflected on the Holocaust, and guided by prayer, poetry and readings, considered their own response to injustice and life's challenges. Teachers are well supported with material to link the form-based "Thought for the Day" to the central theme although some teachers appear to lack commitment so not all pupils benefit from this provision. Some assemblies, although promoting a positive school ethos, do not give the opportunity for reflection and spiritual development.

57. Music makes a particularly strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development where large numbers of pupils know the joy of performance and the tranquillity of listening to music expressing mood and emotion. In art and design and geography, pupils learn to appreciate the power and beauty of the natural world. In Year 9 history, pupils feel the poignancy of letters and poems written by soldiers almost certainly facing death in World War One. Choral speaking, movement and dance in a drama lesson brought together the skills and emotions of creating something special. The central focus of the school to raise achievement is on nurturing feelings of self-esteem in pupils through praise and encouragement by teachers and sensitive support from mentors and counselling groups.

58. The school is a strong moral community founded on high expectations of good behaviour. Effective anti-bullying strategies are in place involving trained pupil mentors linked to the Safer Schools Partnership with the Youth and Community Service. The school's participation in this is regarded as a model of good practice in the local education authority. Youth and Community Service involvement helps pupils to understand their own behaviour. Further funds have been secured to continue this project. The study of Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" in English lessons provides opportunities for reflection on these important issues.

59. Behaviour management is coherent and pupils respond very well to the policy of rewarding good behaviour and achievement. After assembly, for example, a Year 10 boy, reflecting on the celebration of the 100 per cent attendance achievers said " You think to yourself, 'I can do that !'" Pupils know they are valued and respond well to the many opportunities to express concern for others in action through, for example, fundraising for a number of charitable groups. Pupils in business studies, health and social care and leisure and tourism confront moral issues about ethical practices and quality of life. In geography, pupils discuss inequalities of life in less economically developed countries; in history, they examine conflicting views about conscientious objectors.

60. Pupils' social development is a strength of the school and provision is very good. There is a wide range of opportunities for taking responsibility, many of which are featured in displays around the school. Many of these first hand responsibilities have a real impact on other people's lives and demand sustained commitment from pupils. They include activities such as running the breakfast club, library duties, school council, Dream Scheme, where pupils learn new skills alongside the elderly, the Wyre Young People's Council, writing and acting alongside residents with disabilities at Lakeland View. A highlight of the year for some was to interview the Director of Education. Opportunities for working in teams and groups occur in a full programme of after- school activities to which physical education and music contribute consistently enabling pupils to visit other schools, concerts and the theatre. Around 80 pupils took part in "Bugsy Malone", one of the school's annual productions, and the school band has toured abroad. Some pupils take part in the Fleetwood Arts Festival which includes drama, choral speaking and music.

61. Opportunities to work independently in lessons are not so well developed though there is good practice in drama for co-operation in groups. Fieldwork is lacking in history, as are theatre visits in English. Pupils around school are spontaneously sociable and contribute to the school's vitality. Pupils with special educational needs have very good opportunities for involvement in activities which develop their social skills, such as class and group discussions in lessons, and taking part in sport, music and drama. They are actively encouraged to have a very positive view of their individual potential and to achieve success in the different areas of school life.

62. Provision for cultural development is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection when it was judged too Euro-centric and unsatisfactory. The multicultural dimension has broadened since the school carried out an audit and in-service training, and made links with a school which is recommended for its good practice. Library books which give multicultural insights have been specially listed for easy reference. Subjects, including personal, social and health education, confront issues like racism and identify the strengths of other cultures and their contribution to global culture and the development of civilisation. Pupils in history lessons recognise the civilised values of the native peoples of North America. Issues of racism are central to pupils' study of "To Kill a Mockingbird" in English lessons. Parents say their children talk at home about classroom discussions on race. Religious education puts pupils in touch with the beliefs, practices and values of world religions. African, Chinese and Japanese art feature in lessons. African music, reggae, jazz and the techniques of Asian and Indonesian composition ensure a very rich diet in music. A small number of students from around the world follow Advanced level courses in the sixth form.

Sixth form

63. The small size of the sixth form restricts the range of subject combinations which the school can offer. The curriculum at present is narrow and provides a limited range of academic and vocational courses. It does not fully meet the aspirations of students at present. Plans are in hand to develop the breadth of course offered as the numbers of pupils with raised aspirations and wishing to continue their education starts to increase in partnership with other local Post-16 providers of education.

64. A structured and well thought out programme for teaching key skills is compulsory for all students, at levels which well match their individual needs. All students follow a well-planned general studies course which is enthusiastically taught by experienced teachers. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements for religious education.

65. The personal, social and health education programme in the sixth form is focused on the need to prepare students for higher education and employment, but also includes experiences based on feelings and meditation. Students find the programme well balanced, thought provoking, and reassuringly helpful.

66. There is a strong moral and social dimension across the whole of the sixth form. The ethics of cloning, biotechnology and genetic research have been examined both in personal, social and health education lessons, and in some examination course classes. The sixth form as a whole is very aware of modern issues, and individual students have clear personal understanding of the concepts of responsibility, equality, and equity.

67. There is a good range of voluntary extra-curricular activities provided by the staff, and through the initiative of the students themselves. The uptake of these opportunities is limited by the small size of the student body, by the unappealing accommodation, and by the insular geographical location of the school itself. The sixth form will move to a new building at the beginning of the new academic year, and the school is at an important starting point in developing its strategy for growth.

68. In addition to those subjects which were the focus of the inspection, a number of other subjects were sampled and are reported on in the following paragraphs.

69. The one AS-level lesson observed in design and technology was very good. There are presently no A-level students. In the lesson seen, the effects of different forms of stress such as tensile and torsion were explained in an interesting and lively way, by relating them to the building techniques being used in the construction of the new school. Students were encouraged to think independently and to make their own decisions. Design folders were well presented and reflected a high level of pride. Examination results from the very small entry have been below the national average for the last two years but most students have achieved their predicted grade. A number of the AS-level students support lower school students at the after school design and technology club.

70. Physical education was sampled, and one lesson of sports studies was observed. The quality of teaching was good, and students' learning was good. The psychological aspects of preparation, attention and motivation of participation in sport were clearly understood. Students are involved in coaching and supporting pupils in games lessons in the lower school.

71. One lesson of nutrition and food hygiene was seen in Year 12. The teaching was excellent, and students were able to make clear gains in knowledge and understanding of the different dietary requirements of the elderly and the very young. Students made good use of ICT for research and for the completion of written work

72. In music, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The very effective practices used in Years 10 to 11 are continued and the tutorial style of teaching enables a close match of work to the students' individual needs to be achieved. There is good exploitation of students' talents. Very good opportunities for performance are provided, both in lessons and in extra-curricular work, which maximises the students' acquisition of skills and performance techniques. ICT is used very effectively for composing and recording and this helps those students who have difficulty with notation. The management of students is very good. Assessment is thorough and gives the students good knowledge of their progress. Planning and organisation are very good and pupils are encouraged to work independently; in this way the department overcomes the considerable problems caused by having to teach different year groups and different subjects, i.e. music and music technology, at the same time.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

73. There have been substantial improvements since the previous inspection when the monitoring of academic performance, personal development and personal support and guidance were described as unsatisfactory. These aspects are now good. Year heads and form tutors are now very actively involved in raising pupils' aspirations and levels of attainment. Care has moved from being kindly supportive to a dynamic system, which tries to ensure that pupils achieve their best. For example, underachieving pupils are identified and can spend up to five weeks on an effective achievement support programme. Pupils' attitude, effort and quality of work are carefully monitored and as a result of the additional support they receive, they improve their efforts and make better progress. However, the school has not lost its commitment to provide individual pupils with personal support. Pupils confide in many staff whom they find approachable and sensitive to their needs if they have personal problems. These include form tutors, year heads, a counsellor and the school nurse. In addition, pupils report that many individual teachers and support staff will provide pupils with both academic and personal support.

74. The monitoring and support of pupils' academic progress are good and are key reasons for the improving standards and aspirations of pupils. Assessment procedures and the effective use of assessment information are crucial elements in the school's overall strategy to raise attainment. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Procedures for the transfer of assessment information from feeder primary schools are good, and staff are more confident in using the results of national tests at the end of Year 6, for example, to place pupils in suitable teaching groups. Departments assess pupils twice a year and a centralised computer system gives senior and middle managers ready access to the information. This information helps most teachers to set realistic and achievable targets for pupils and to give them guidance on what to do to improve. As pupils move through their first three years they become familiar with National Curriculum levels. However, assessment and target setting are not fully embedded in all subjects, and further development is needed in ICT and music. The school and individual subjects analyse GCSE results thoroughly and use what they find out to inform future planning. The school is aware of the underachievement of boys, but it has also detected through the use of assessment a degree of under-performance by some girls.

75. The school monitors the performance of pupils with special educational needs in an effective way. The systems for identifying and supporting students in need of extra help are good and pupils are provided with targets which they understand and can refer to easily.

However, the ways of measuring pupils' success in meeting some of the organisational and basic skills targets are not sufficiently clear and subject targets are still at an early stage. Pupils' progress in improving standards of work, behaviour and attendance is monitored on a regular basis by teaching and support staff and year tutors who work together closely to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision. The quality of the learning support is very good. Support staff have a strong commitment to promoting the well-being of their pupils and they are successful in creating relationships based on stability and trust which give pupils the confidence to succeed. As well as supporting pupils in lessons they are efficient tutors of withdrawal groups in the progress programme and in the computerised interactive learning system. The school's effective liaison with the local education authority and the specialist agencies ensures access to a wide range of support and monitoring for pupils' different needs.

76. The monitoring of personal development is good. Wherever possible year tutors stay with the same tutor group from Year 7 to Year 11 and tutors get to know pupils very well. They have regular mentoring interviews with their pupils where attitudes and academic progress are discussed in detail. Pupils in Year 11 have an additional mentor, sometimes a member of the local business community, who helps pupils to manage the demands of GCSE examinations. Members of the senior management team mentor pupils who are finding the challenge of GCSE very difficult. Pupils value the system of mentoring, older pupils find it especially useful as it helps them organise themselves and meet their coursework deadlines.

77. The school follows locally agreed procedures regarding child protection. There is a named person who has had appropriate training for child protection and for ensuring that pupils who are in local authority care are catered for. Year heads have a significant amount of responsibility for child protection. Whilst they feel well supported by senior staff at present they have not received local authority child protection training. Staff new to the school receive training in child protection as part of their induction process. A new school is being built on one site and the other building is in a poor state but will be closed when the new school is completed. The school has worked very hard to ensure that both school sites remain safe in the interim period.

78. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour have improved substantially and are now good. A new behaviour policy has been developed based on pupils working hard, doing well, praising children and valuing their efforts. Pupils value the new rewards. Expectations regarding behaviour have improved significantly. Permanent members of staff have good skills in managing pupils' behaviour and consistently apply the school's policy. Departments and classroom teachers now have more responsibility for managing behaviour and minor incidents are rarely referred to heads of year or senior management. The school has established a successful learning support centre and an internal pupil referral unit where pupils who are at risk of exclusion can be effectively taught in small groups. They are often successfully reintegrated into the main school. The results of a new ethos regarding behaviour management can be clearly seen; behaviour around the school and in classrooms is now good. Incidents of poor behaviour rarely disturb lessons and it is now much easier for pupils to learn.

79. The school continues to have very good procedures in place for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. There are annual bullying surveys in every year groups. This effectively identifies both bullies and victims. Once the school has identified the problem, year heads and pastoral staff takes steps to rectify the situation. Pupils and staff are very proud of the peer counselling system and the school is very actively involved in the safer schools initiative. Pupils who have been bullied are encouraged to develop more assertive strategies.

80. The school is well aware of the individual prejudices that a number of pupils bring to school with them and the school's extensive programme of personal, social and health education addresses such issues as bullying, racism and tolerance. There have been substantial improvements in the school's programme of personal, social and health education. The programme is still delivered by form tutors; teaching is almost always satisfactory and often good. Pupils appreciate the useful information that they glean from these lessons. Form periods have improved and now form a useful, brisk and businesslike start to the day.

81. The monitoring of attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. There have been many recent initiatives to enhance the monitoring of attendance. The school has recently appointed assistant year heads who have a direct responsibility for monitoring and improving attendance. The school is also involved in local initiatives that promote good attendance. There are many rewards for good attendance. Although the monitoring of attendance is satisfactory there is room for further improvement. This includes ensuring that the school's systems to contact the homes of pupils on their first day of absence is used to good effect. At present the system focuses on pupils with unsatisfactory attendance levels. The school has not yet developed an effective system of managing the contacts made with families on the first day of absence to ensure that it helps to improve the attendance levels of all pupils. Unfortunately the school has suffered recently from many changes of personnel in the educational welfare service and this has effected continuity of care; this has made it difficult for the school to tackle more serious attendance problems. The attendance rates that have been reported to the DfES are inaccurate. In order to measure the effectiveness of the school's systems for monitoring attendance and to set realistic targets it is important that the school uses a consistently reliable method of calculating attendance figures.

Sixth form

Assessment

82. The assessment of students' academic progress in subjects is good. Teachers' ongoing assessment of students' progress is accurate and teachers' guidance provides students with the advice they need to improve further. Students and their parents are kept well informed of their progress. The mechanism for measuring how the sixth form as a whole adds value is imprecise, and there is no recognised method for comparing this with other institutions.

Advice, support and guidance

83. Educational guidance provided for students is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils who are looking to join the sixth form are provided with advice booklets, attend open evenings, and look at the work done by sixth form students. They speak directly to sixth formers, and can discuss the merits of each course. However, the counselling they receive prior to joining is not always based upon set criteria for entry, and too many students are allowed to be recruited onto courses for which they do not have the requisite levels of knowledge, skill and

understanding. The procedures for diagnosing the learning needs of individual pupils at this early stage are unsatisfactory. Insufficient consideration is given to GCSE results to guide sixth form curriculum planning. This is the direct cause of high initial levels of drop out. Once the students have settled into Year 12, retention rates within subjects and within the sixth form as a whole are broadly comparable with other similar institutions.

84. The sixth form management and tutors give good guidance and support to students. There are both formal and informal systems by which students can seek help with any personal or academic issues they have. Teachers are unstinting with their time. The school provides plentiful careers education and guidance, and advice and guidance on future courses or vocational opportunities through the full range of media. Students are able to arrange appointments with the local careers adviser, and the sixth form management team is always on hand to help with applications to higher education establishments.

85. Health and safety regulations are met, but the method of registering students onto the site is not systematic. The school cannot easily identify the whereabouts of all students at any given time in the school day when they are not in lessons. Sixth form students are very considerate of all other members of the school population. The school makes good provision for the meeting the personal needs of its sixth form students. They are helped to become very sensible young adults, with good relationships all round, and with very positive attitudes to the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

86. Parents are generally satisfied with the education that the school provides. Parents are happy that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best and they appreciate that their children like school. They feel that their children make good progress. Parents are confident that they can approach the school if they have a problem or question. They feel that the reputation of the school is improving. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views.

87. Parents are concerned about homework. They feel that the setting of homework is inconsistent. The inspection found the setting of homework to be generally satisfactory but some subjects set undemanding homework tasks. Some parents do not feel that the school provides a broad range of activities outside the school day and others feel that they do not know enough about these activities. Many parents appreciate the wide range of musical opportunities. The prospectus does not present information about opportunities outside lessons in a coherent way but parents are told about their children's achievements outside lessons in their annual report. The inspection found that the school provides a good range of activities.

88. Some parents feel that the school does not work closely with parents. There is a very active home school association who have raised substantial sums of money for the school. A number of parents provide useful links between the school and the local community but they have little involvement in educational initiatives. There are many supportive parents but a minority of parents do not have a positive view of education. These parents continue to condone their children's absence from school and in extreme cases do not support the school's behaviour policy. The school has organised educational opportunities for parents. A small number of parents have attended "Parents as Educators" courses and some are now employed in education. There are parents who provide very useful support in the classroom. A parent with qualifications in music provides good support in some keyboard lessons. In the past the school has organised courses to help parents learn more about how to use computers to support their children's learning. However, at present there are no courses designed to improve parents' own literacy, numeracy or ICT skills. There are too few informal

opportunities for parents to come into school and parents have to make an appointment if they wish to see a member of staff. The school has considered establishing a parents' group and drop in centre but this did not materialise due to changes in support from outside agencies. Although the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory, as stated in the previous inspection report, there is still room for improvement.

89. Information for parents is satisfactory. An attractive brochure is supported by a separate booklet containing important day to day information about the school. The section on the sixth form contains photographs of girls but no images of boys. There are some omissions in the governors report to parents. For example, there is not enough information about the admission of pupils with disabilities. There are regular informative newsletters edited by sixth form students.

90. Parents do not always feel well informed about progress. They are concerned that some teachers do not use planners enough and inspectors found that these are not used consistently well by teachers across the school. The inspection team found the reports to be satisfactory overall but there are some weaknesses. The school provides an interim report about attitudes and progress, a subject based parents' evening and a detailed end of year report. The interim report can confuse parents as National Curriculum grades are translated into a different numerical system of attainment grades. National Curriculum grades are reported on final reports which also give parents very detailed information about their children's attendance. Form tutors provide a good summary of pupils' personal development but information about what has been taught in each subject is sometimes brief. Subject reports vary in quality. The targets for improvement teachers set for pupils in lessons are usually specific, attainable and helpful to pupils. In contrast, those targets set out in annual reports to parents are often too general. Subjects such as religious education, physical education and technology often set very general targets such as "maintain high standards". Attendance at parents' evening is improving but there are still too many parents that the school is not managing to communicate with regularly, nor involve closely enough in supporting their children's progress. Pupils do not contribute to their own reports until they are in the sixth form.

91. The school's partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. It has improved substantially since the last inspection. There is now a good attendance at parents' evenings and the school has effective arrangements for enabling parents to contribute towards their children's annual and transitional reviews. Parents contact the school to discuss their children's progress and the special educational needs co-ordinator also makes home visits. Parents are generally supportive of their children's efforts in improving academic work and behaviour.

92. The sixth form students have a very positive view of what the sixth form has to offer, and they express their satisfaction with pride and certainty. They feel that they are involved with the decision making process, and that their collective views are heard by the school. They acknowledge their own responsibility as a group in not taking up the full range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. Sixth form students are not happy with initial recruitment onto Advanced courses, nor are they happy with the general accommodation. Inspectors agree with these views, and note in particular the very positive attitude the present student body has to sixth form education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

93. The quality of the leadership and the rigour of the management at all levels within the school have had a significant influence on raising the expectations of staff, pupils and parents. As a consequence, the teaching and learning have improved and standards are beginning to rise. The school is well placed to make further improvements and is no longer deemed to have serious weaknesses.

94. The head holds a clear vision for development which places the school at the centre of the community, providing a base for lifelong learning and contributing towards the regeneration of the social and economic circumstances of the area. With the support of a strong and effective senior management team the right priorities have been identified and have focused clearly on raising standards for all pupils and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The head teacher has gained the support of the staff as a whole. The staff across the school share a determination to raise standards and there is a firm belief in what young people in Fleetwood can achieve and consequently a strong commitment to succeed.

95. Improvements have been brought about by the development of carefully considered priorities and strategic planning that are set out clearly in the action plan which followed the previous inspection and in the more recent Raising Achievement Plan. Staff across the school have contributed towards these plans. Priorities include the need to improve the overall quality of staffing. Hard decisions were taken, some very good new appointments were made and an effective staff absence policy was implemented. The quality of the staffing has consequently improved and this has had a major positive influence on development. Some staffing difficulties remain and the school has had difficulty in recruiting staff and in finding supply teachers. As the school's reputation improves it is having more success in attracting appropriate staff.

96. The school monitors its academic performance closely. The use of assessment information to set clear targets for individual pupils, groups of pupils and the whole school has been a major priority and a significant influence in raising the expectations of staff, pupils and their parents. In addition to raising expectations, groups of pupils are identified as underachieving and support is given. This reinforces the school's commitment to inclusion, namely, to ensure that all pupils regardless of background, gender or ability has the chance to succeed. For example, boys' under-achievement was identified and the school is piloting a number of different teaching approaches and grouping arrangements to help to raise boys' standards. The pastoral staff have usefully extended their role to monitor and support pupils' academic progress alongside their support for pupils' personal development.

97. Since the previous inspection a priority has been to encourage heads of department to become more accountable. They are now accountable for the quality of teaching and learning and the standards pupils achieve in their areas of the school. The quality of learning and teaching is monitored and evaluated systematically across the school by both senior management and middle managers and staff have received training in carrying out this role. Well-focused professional development activities linked to performance management arrangements and threshold assessment all contribute to improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The staff have worked on developing a policy for teaching and learning across the school and this has underpinned and supported the increasing good practice across subjects. The next step is to ensure that the very best approaches to teaching and learning are recognised and shared on a regular basis both within subjects and across subjects.

98. Improvement in the provision for pupils with special educational needs has been a major priority both in making additional provision to support pupils at risk of exclusion and in

improving support for pupils with learning difficulties. This area of the school is very well managed. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages her responsibilities in a very efficient way and gives very good educational direction. Department staff work together well as a team and complex daily routines run smoothly. In the short time since the previous inspection the school has made a great deal of progress in improving all areas of provision. The number of specialist teachers and support staff has been increased and members of the department have developed specific responsibilities within their area of expertise. Information systems have improved and staff now use data more effectively in monitoring and evaluating progress. A substantial investment has been made in an interactive learning programme which has enabled pupils to improve their basic skills. A Pupil Referral Unit and a lower school base have been successfully established. Accommodation and resources in the two behavioural support centres are very good and have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to work and self-esteem. Learning support resources in terms of books, learning materials and computers are good. The flexibility in the organisation of classroom support ensures that available hours are used to maximum effect. Statutory requirements in respect of pupils with special educational needs are met. The specific grant is used effectively for its designated purposes. The department now plays a strategic role in the raising of attainment across the whole school. Future priorities include staff training in the implementation of the revised Code of Practice, working with subject departments on the setting of subject targets and extending the range of teaching and learning methods for pupils with special educational needs.

99. Alongside the focus on provision for pupils with special educational needs has been the priority to improve pupils' weak literacy skills. In addition to the many activities designed to support pupils who do not reach the expected standards when they enter the school, the literacy policy has been implemented effectively across most subjects and consequently there is a rise in standards.

100. A further priority has been the improvement in the range and relevance of the learning opportunities especially in Years 10 and 11. A broader range of optional courses including vocational courses and work related educational activities means that more pupils are following courses matched to their interests, needs and prior attainment. The impact of this more relevant curriculum has not yet helped to increase the overall attendance rate for older pupils, many of whom have well-established poor habits of attendance.

101. The governing body has improved significantly since the last inspection. They have undergone training and have become more closely involved in the day to day life of the school. They provide effective support to the headteacher and senior management. They are committed, hard working and there is a useful range of expertise that the school can draw upon. Governors are kept well-informed of the performance of the school and are in a good position to guide the school's future development. The post-16 education provided by the school although cost effective has weaknesses related to its size and course provision. The governing body and the senior management have rightly focused on improvements in the main school and they recognise that it is time to ensure that the sixth form provision is developed to make it relevant to the changing aspirations and needs of older pupils and students in the school. Not all statutory requirements are in place. The requirement for a daily collective act of worship is not fully met and there are some omissions from the governors annual report to parents.

102. The school receives above average levels of income. The budget is securely linked to the development plan and reflects the school's identified priorities. A surplus is planned in accordance with the policy of the local education authority. Stringent security measures are in place to ensure that overspending does not occur. The school receives a number of specific grants and these are well spent for the intended purpose. The most recent audit report found no concerns whatsoever with the school's finances.

103. The Bursar is a member of the senior management team, exemplifying a good link between finance and the educational purpose of the school. The governing body monitors spending carefully and is fully involved in decisions such as that to increase the number of teaching groups in Years 7 to 9.

104. Although the sixth-form is small in numbers, it is not drawing on funds allocated to other parts of the school and is consequently cost-effective. The head is working closely with other agencies to explore ways in which the school can make the most appropriate contribution to post-16 education for the area.

105. Currently based on two sites, the school incurs many inefficiencies, including duplication of support staff and resources. Additionally, teachers time is not always used to optimum effect due to the need to move between sites. The new building, financed through Public Private Partnership, exemplifies the school's sustained commitment to identifying and reducing inefficiencies whenever possible. The head is taking sound steps to ensure that the move to the new building progresses with minimum disruption to pupils' education.

106. The school applies the principles of 'Best Value' effectively. It consults with stakeholders, including parents. One example is the way the cycle of departmental evaluation was constructed. The school compares its performance critically with other schools. It provides satisfactory value for money.

107. The quality of the staffing has improved significantly since the previous inspection but staffing difficulties in mathematics, geography, drama and ICT remain. Since the last inspection the school has successfully managed a high turnover of staff. A whole staff absence policy has been effectively implemented and this has significantly reduced the level of staff absence. Absence through illness remains a problem but less so than at the time of the previous inspection. However the recruitment of supply teachers for short-term absence can prove difficult, particularly when matching teachers to specialist subjects. Lower achievement is the result in some areas, notably geography, mathematics, ICT and drama in Years 7 to 9. The previously reported serious understaffing of special educational needs has been improved and the provision for the learning support department is now very good. There is still insufficient technician time in science and design and technology, to cope with the demands of the curriculum and the split site accommodation.

108. Staff training and professional development needs are well organised and managed by a senior member of staff. They are largely, though not exclusively, linked to the school's and departments' development plans and the effective performance management structure. The approach to performance management, threshold assessment and professional development has been instrumental in changing the ethos across the school and raising the expectations and aspirations of staff and pupils. The programme is fully inclusive of all members of the school and includes, for example, learning support staff, administrative staff and governors. A thorough and well-managed support programme results in the successful induction of newly qualified teachers. There are also structures of induction and support for supply teachers. The school has recently been re-awarded the Investors in People Award.

109. The level of accommodation is poor. The school operates from two sites approximately one quarter of a mile apart. The majority of staff teach on both sites and this present situation creates some logistical problems and fatigue, although these are much reduced since the last inspection. The fabric of the buildings is generally poor. The school is due to close and reopen on a new single site in September 2002. However, the school is repairing and maintaining present buildings in accordance with health and safety requirements until the new school building is ready for occupation.

110. The quality and quantity of resources is satisfactory overall. There is a lack of textbooks in modern foreign languages and insufficient access to computers. In mathematics there are insufficient textbooks in Years 10 and 11. There is a good range of resources in music but more books are required on popular music and culture and also on multicultural music. The ratio of books and computers to pupil numbers is in line with national averages. The learning resource centres are used extensively by the pupils and are a major influence upon the quality of education provided to the pupils. The centre staff are active in providing support for teachers. A web-site directory has been compiled to provide Internet support for all areas of the school curriculum. An induction programme in how to make the best use of the learning resource centre has been designed and taught to all Year 7 pupils.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

111. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The teachers plan their lessons very well, and they cope easily with the demands of the advanced curriculum. Overall professional development is well planned and is a significant factor contributing to the quality of teaching. The sixth form is cost effective and is not subsidised by any other area of the school. The sixth form receives financial inputs from external sources which support its educational priorities well. The governors and senior staff have a good overview of the recent downward trend in results, but are only beginning to take remedial action. There has been insufficient attention paid to the well below average standards, which in the main derive from low prior attainment on entry to the sixth form. The low standards are often the result of inappropriate recruitment onto courses that do not match the learning needs and aspirations of all students.

112. There is a clear, shared, vision for the future of the sixth form, though the method for implementing the vision remains to be fully developed. Standards are monitored and the value the school adds to students is validly calculated, but neither are directly compared with the results other institutions achieve, nor do they directly inform curriculum planning. There is a clear focus on supporting pupils at the transition age of 16 years, but there remains a significant amount of inappropriate recruitment onto Advanced courses. Whilst the school has been working hard to raise the aspirations and achievement in the main school, there has not been a clear focus on developments in the sixth form. With rising standards, expectations and aspirations in the main school the headteacher and governors are poised to tackle the much needed broadening of the post-16 provision. There is solid evidence that the sixth form is now a focus for improvement, and clearly there is the capacity to succeed.

Resources

113. Resources to support learning in the sixth form are satisfactory at present. The sixth form is due to move to the almost completed purpose built new school in September 2002.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

114. In order to improve further the quality of education provided by the school, and the standards achieved, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) raise the overall below national average attainment, and well below average attainment in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and mathematics and French in Years 10 and 11 by:
 - developing further the successful strategies for improving pupils' weak literacy skills, and in particular include more opportunities for reading across subjects;
 - implementing the policy for teaching numeracy across subjects;
 - securing specialist and stable staffing for all subjects;
 - ensuring that higher-attaining pupils in all subjects work at greater depth;
 - ensuring that pupils with special educational needs, have clear short term targets related to the subject which are achievable yet challenging;
 - improving the access to computers and the knowledge, skills and understanding of staff in using ICT in their own subjects.

(Paragraphs: 2-6, 8-10, 31-33, 35, 39, 47, 48, 74, 75, 87, 95-99, 107, 118, 120-122, 124, 126, 127, 131, 132, 135, 137-142, 147-150, 152, 157-159, 161, 164, 167, 169-173, 175-177, 184, 187, 188, 190-194, 196, 197, 208)

- (2) increase the rates of attendance, especially in Years 10 and 11, by:
 - making the most effective use of the system to make contact with families of absentees on their first day of absence;
 - continuing to develop relevant courses and learning opportunities that encourage pupils likely to become disaffected to make the most of educational opportunities;
 - making sure that attendance rates are reported accurately.

(Paragraphs: 2, 7, 15, 23, 35, 81, 100, 122, 142, 150, 165, 172, 178, 184, 194)

- (3) encourage pupils to take greater responsibility for and take a more active and creative part in their own learning by:
 - finding ways of sharing the best practice in teaching and learning within and across subjects on a regular basis;
 - using homework more consistently to provide opportunities for independent learning;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for elements of their learning such as planning, evaluating and independent research;
 - giving pupils more opportunities to talk, discuss and debate issues with each other;

(Paragraphs: 5, 22, 30-33, 39, 40, 61, 127, 144, 150, 152, 156, 157, 161, 164, 167, 173, 177, 180, 187, 188, 191, 198)

- (4) increase the involvement of parents in their children's work at home and at school by:
- using pupils' planners for more meaningful communication with parents;
 - improving the attendance of parents at review days;
 - improving the quality of the reports to parents by making targets for improvement more specific and by simplifying the grading systems so that comparisons to national standards can be made;
- (Paragraphs: 88-90)

Sixth form

- (1) In order to improve further the quality of the educational provision and standards achieved in the Sixth Form, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- raise well below average standards by:
 - ensuring that students follow courses that match their prior attainment, needs and aspirations;
 - using ensuring that all teaching is as good as the best and succeeds in using a range of teaching and learning strategies that strengthen students' powers of analysis and evaluation, develop students' abilities to work independently and ensure that all students have enough guidance on what to do to improve.
- (Paragraphs: 11, 12, 27, 42, 44, 83, 92, 101, 111, 229, 230, 233, 236, 242, 244, 250, 252, 253, 255, 258)
- (2) broaden the range of courses offered in order to match students' learning needs by;
- developing the range of vocational courses offered;
 - providing support where needed for lower attaining pupils following AS and A level courses.
- (Paragraphs: 64, 101, 112, 230, 243, 244, 251)
- (3) improve the quality of the guidance and counselling given to students by:
- taking into account students' prior attainment when counselling students on their choices;
 - having clear criteria for entry on to courses;
 - developing the role of the careers co-ordinator, subject teachers and form tutors in offering relevant individual guidance;
 - involving students with experience of the courses in counselling Year 11 pupils and helping them to make the right choices.
- (Paragraphs: 27, 52, 83, 92, 101, 112, 230, 243, 247, 249)
- (4) improve the arrangements for recording the attendance of students by providing consistent procedures for registering on-site attendance.
- (Paragraph: 101)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT (THE LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE)

115. The Support Centre was set up in May 1997 and has been successful in reducing short term and permanent exclusions among younger pupils. A small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, whom the school has identified as being on the verge of exclusion, are admitted to the Centre for half a term to undertake a carefully devised

programme of academic work and personal development. They are then slowly reintegrated into main school lessons. This highly structured programme is based upon pupils learning to use time effectively and remaining on task for full sessions, and a key element to the success of the provision is intensive monitoring carried out by the staff. Pupils continue with their normal work in the different areas of the curriculum and the close liaison with subject departments ensures that pupils are not at a disadvantage when they return to their usual classes. Emphasis is also rightly laid on helping pupils to improve their basic skills of literacy and numeracy. There is a good match of staff to the needs of the pupils. The Centre is managed by the assistant special educational needs co-ordinator with responsibility for behaviour. There are two experienced support assistants, one of whom helped to set up the Centre five years ago. The Centre was originally resourced for six places. However, the number has now been increased to seven. This additional place is reserved for pupils whose needs are too urgent to allow for the normal admittance procedures to be followed.

116. Provision for pupils in the Centre is very good. The daily routine is very effectively planned to enable pupils to develop positive attitudes towards their work and constructive relationships within the classroom. The emphasis is on establishing study routines which help pupils to achieve successfully and in creating a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere in which pupils feel calm and at ease. This was evident in a mathematics session at the beginning of the day. After a short time for social conversations with teachers and support staff, pupils settled down promptly to their personal interactive programme and then moved on to the work on division which had been provided by the mathematics department. Pupils achieved well because of good teaching. High expectations, confident management and skilful support brought about positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour in pupils who had been disruptive in main school classes. Staff moved around quietly, checking on progress, helping where necessary and giving praise for work well done. Resources were well used in this small group with pupils at different levels of learning. There was a studious atmosphere in the classroom. Pupils kept on task throughout the session. They made good progress in learning how to concentrate for considerable periods of time and in establishing the routines of independent working. Observation of written work shows that pupils successfully complete a substantial amount of course work and it is well set out and tidily kept.

117. Management of the Centre is very good. Teachers and support staff form a strong team. They are well aware of the needs of their pupils and monitor them closely for progress in work, personal development and attendance. They have established an effective partnership with the school's pastoral staff and also encourage parents to visit the Centre and work with their children. Accommodation and resources are very good. They boost pupils' self esteem and give them a sense of responsibility and the motivation to achieve. There are very effective arrangements for helping pupils to settle in when they return to the main school. The Centre is very successful in its work. Of the one hundred and forty nine pupils who have been admitted to the Centre since its establishment in 1998 only three pupils have subsequently been excluded. The school has acted on the recommendations of the previous report to expand the provision and has opened a Pupil Referral Unit which is based upon the Support Centre model and is developing very well. The provision for pupils at risk of exclusion is a strength of the school and an impressive example of its commitment to social inclusion and achievement for all.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	140
	Sixth form	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		120

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	7	28	70	30	5	0	0
Percentage	5	20	50	21	4	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	8	8	5	1	0	0
Percentage	4	35	35	22	4	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 four percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1107	43
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	229	5

Special educational needs	Y7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	45	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	532	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	53
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	65

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	117	102	219

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	68	64
	Girls	68	54	49
	Total	128	122	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (59)	56 (54)	52 (37)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (25)	24 (16)	17 (13)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	70	67
	Girls	72	58	57
	Total	135	128	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (42)	59 (42)	57 (42)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (10)	22 (17)	18 (20)
	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	89	109	198

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	21	65	78
	Girls	35	89	97
	Total	56	154	175
Percentage of pupils achieving	School	28 (15)	78 (79)	88 (94)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	27.1 (25.7)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	23	50	73

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for GCSE A/ AS examinations			For candidates entered for GCE VCE / Advanced GNVQ examinations		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	8.9	8.5	8.7	0	6	5.3
National	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for GCE A/ AS/VCE/ Advanced GNVQ examinations			The average GCE A/AS/VCE/Advanced GNVQ point score per entry		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	8.3	9.5	8.9	2.3	2.8	2.6
National	16.9	18	17.5	N/A	N/A	5.5

Other Vocational Qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or	School 10	90

units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	National	76
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Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	7
White	1138
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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	84	9
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 –Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	375

Deployment of teachers: Y7 - Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.0
Key Stage 4	21.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3 465 654
Total expenditure	3 350 287
Expenditure per pupil	2 898
Balance brought forward from previous year	66 361
Balance carried forward to next year	181 728

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	24

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1150
Number of questionnaires returned	105

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	53	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	8	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	46	11	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	49	16	10	4
The teaching is good.	29	58	7	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	51	12	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	48	8	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	45	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	58	13	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	29	50	11	5	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	58	7	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	41	12	3	17

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

- Good teaching develops positive relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 especially in the development of basic literacy skills.
- Good assessment procedures support pupils and encourage them to improve.
- Good leadership provides clear vision for future developments.
- Good strategies help boys to improve performance.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average, especially in Years 10 and 11
- Higher-attaining pupils work at greater length, but not always in greater depth.
- The teaching of the work of Shakespeare lacks excitement.
- Learning resources to support teaching are not sufficiently detailed and are not pooled together enough to support teachers newer to the school.

118. Standards of work seen are below the national average, in both Years 7 to 9 and 10 to 11. Pupils' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7 is satisfactory. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. These standards are achieved because teaching is good and those pupils who attend regularly have good attitudes.

119. Standards in the work seen in Year 9 are below average. Pupils enter the school with standards well below average and achieve well in their first three years, improving in all areas of their learning. They develop greater confidence in speaking and listening because of frequent opportunities for discussion and group work. They read better and more widely. Writing is much improved, both in accuracy and in developing ideas, because of the attention paid to improving basic skills such as spelling, and in providing support in extending writing. This is especially helpful in improving boys' writing. Much is done in Year 7 to improve the low standards of literacy of pupils on entry to the school. Pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language achieve in line with the rest of their class, as do the gifted and talented pupils. Learning support assistants give good support in lessons and work closely and sympathetically with pupils.

120. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils read well. They read Shakespeare's work with reasonable understanding and can find precise quotations to support their ideas. They do not analyse language and how it is used sufficiently. Written work is accurate and interesting. Middle-attaining pupils build up points using paragraphs in their writing, but have problems with apostrophes and punctuating speech. They read well enough to understand the complexities of the love triangle in, 'Twelfth Night', but do not respond enthusiastically to it because teaching methods lack excitement. Lower-attaining pupils read with understanding at a literal level, including Shakespeare. Their writing lacks development, and spelling and punctuation are weak. Girls' standards are better than boys', especially in writing, but boys speak more confidently and are not as far behind as they tend to be nationally.

121. Results in the national tests for Year 9 in 2001 were below average, confirming inspection findings. In comparison with schools with a similar intake, they were average.

Over the last four years results have risen at a greater rate than they have nationally. Though girls did better than boys, the difference was not as great as it is nationally, and boys did better this year than they did last. Pupils did better in English than they did in mathematics and science.

122. Standards in the work seen in Year 11 are below average. Though pupils often achieve well in lessons, there is too much pupil absence, causing discontinuity to learning and adversely affecting achievement over time. Thus achievement in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory, rather than good, overall. Difficulties in finding teachers to cover for absent teachers of classes with lower-attaining pupils also adversely affects achievement, as these teachers do not always have the skills and knowledge needed to help pupils learn effectively. However, absence problems are less severe than at the time of the previous inspection. Standards are higher than last years' results would indicate because of good teaching. Greater opportunities for developing ideas through speaking are now given and pupils are motivated by the greater use of ICT in lessons. For example, Year 10 made great progress in a lesson, preparing for talks using 'PowerPoint', working hard for the whole lesson and taking pride in their presentations. ICT is now better used than at the time of the previous inspection, but is still not integrated into the programmes of study sufficiently. The gifted and talented and those pupils with English as an additional language achieve at the same rate as other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in smaller groups, getting much individual attention and with work appropriate to their needs. They make satisfactory progress towards their targets.

123. Higher-attaining pupils, most of whom are girls, are articulate and speak confidently. They are able to discuss their reading and analyse precisely, for example when looking at the imagery surrounding Lennie in, 'Of Mice and Men'. They write accurately and at length, but not many pupils attain the highest grades. Middle-attaining pupils are shy in addressing the whole class, but ask and answer questions sensibly. They read with understanding and use reference effectively. Coursework folders show that some work is incomplete. Lower-attaining pupils can remember details of plot and character in their reading, with constant probing, but do not retain the knowledge. They see the differences in the schooldays recounted in, 'Jane Eyre', and 'Kes'. Written work is short and has basic errors such as in the spelling of common words. Girls' standards are higher than those of boys. One of several methods used by the department to raise the attainment of boys that is working well is to make sure that there are equal numbers of boys and girls in the higher-attaining teaching groups.

124. Results in the GCSE examinations in English and in English literature in 2001 were well below average. When compared to schools with a similar intake, and compared with pupils' prior attainment, they were average. Though girls did better than boys, it was by less than is usual, nationally. Results went down in 2000, but have risen again in 2001, though not to the level they reached in 1999. Pupils' results were average, compared with their results in other subjects.

125. Teaching and learning are good, across Years 7 to 11. Sometimes they are very good, but never below satisfactory. The way teachers use assessment to improve standards is very good. Constant questioning assesses understanding in class and good marking of work, including oral work, praises and suggests ways forward. Pupils are given clear targets to aim for and are made aware of how they can get there. Thus, pupils know what they are good at and how they can get better. Teachers develop good relationships with pupils which means pupils enjoy the lessons and work hard. They volunteer to ask questions and read aloud enthusiastically, especially in years 7 to 9. Pupils in year 8 took on various roles from the poem, 'The Bully Asleep', with imagination and showed good understanding of the characters and their motivations. Because lessons are well planned, with clear objectives

that are effectively communicated, pupils are sure about what they are doing and why, and get down to tasks immediately. Usually lessons are rounded off with questions on whether objectives have been achieved, so that knowledge from the lesson is successfully reinforced.

126. Teachers plan lessons so that tasks and resources are appropriate for the various levels of attainment in the class. Pupils with special needs made good progress in a Year 8 class, working on large pieces of sugar paper, developing ideas for writing their horror stories. Good open-ended tasks are set to give pupils of different abilities the chance to do work at their own level and the class is often split into smaller groups to target different abilities more closely. Although higher-attaining pupils are often required to do more than others and receive some challenge, they do not always explore in greater depth. So pupils in Year 11 studying, 'Of Mice and Men', were expected to find more points about character than other groups, but not encouraged to explore style or language sufficiently. Teachers choose good resources to stimulate pupils' interest so that they make gains in knowledge. Interesting modern myths stimulated a Year 7 class to read carefully and explain the stories to the rest of the class. Though the teaching is competent, the methods used, for example, when teaching "Twelfth Night", do not inspire in pupils a love of Shakespeare. Resources are not gathered together centrally to give teachers enough support in preparing their lessons. Consequently, too much time and effort is required of individual teachers to ensure lessons fulfil their high standards. Homework is regularly set, with varied and interesting tasks that link in well with lessons.

127. The teaching of literacy is good, with special attention paid to improving spelling and extending vocabulary. Pupils are given very good support in how to structure essays, and make their points clearly with relevant quotations. However, little is done to deliberately develop numeracy skills in English. The use of ICT is improving, with pupils researching on the internet in Year 7, for example, but is not sufficiently used in lessons, as yet.

128. Pupils behave well in class. In the earlier years they are keen and well motivated. By Year 11, however, though behaviour in class is good, regular absence of a significant minority adversely affects the continuity of pupils' learning. Lots of group work is planned into lessons and pupils work well together. Year 11 supported each other well, giving presentations for and against the building of a factory in a quiet village. Pupils develop good awareness of others and appreciate how others might feel by studying, for instance, 'To Kill a Mockingbird', in Year 11, or, 'The Bully Asleep', in Year 8.

129. Good leadership and management gives the department clear direction and new systems are brought in effectively. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and adversely affects pupils' achievements. Teachers teach on two sites and often rooms are away from the English area. There is a lack of a large enough communal room for interchange of ideas, and communication is made more difficult. The move to the new site, complete with computers in every room, should rectify these problems.

130. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards in Year 9 have risen a little, and remain about the same in Year 11. Weaknesses pointed out have been systematically attended to. For instance reading has been improved by encouraging pupils to use the library for project work and homework. Several strategies to raise standards have been tried, for example, having separate boys' and girls' groups in Year 11, and having equal numbers of boys and girls in higher-attaining classes. These are having a beneficial effect on raising boys' standards. The department has also made a lot of progress in developing the curriculum. For instance, the national literacy strategy has been incorporated into the Year 7 programmes of study. Some teachers have valuable experience of implementing the strategy in primary school and pupils are making good progress in these

lessons. In addition to this, intervention groups have been set up in Year 7 to help raise the attainment of pupils who have standards just below average. These pupils also benefit from separate, 'catch-up', classes. All these initiatives have a good effect on pupils' achievement, and help to raise standards.

Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in Year 11 and results in the 2001 examinations are average.
- Pupils achieve well when they have specialist teaching.
- The curriculum offers drama to all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of specialist staffing gives some pupils unsatisfactory experiences of drama.

131. It was not possible to judge the standard of work in Year 9, nor pupils' achievement, during the inspection. The absence of staff and therefore the lack of specialist teaching means that provision is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Standards in Year 11 are average and pupils achieve well. The standards in Year 11 are achieved because the teaching of a specialist teacher is good and pupils have positive attitudes.

132. All pupils have one hour of drama a week in Years 7 to 9, and have the option to choose drama as a GCSE subject in Years 10 and 11. At the time of the inspection there were no full time drama teachers in school due to staff illness, one short-term and one longer-term. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have very different experiences of drama, depending on whether they have a specialist teacher or not. Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good.

133. As only one lesson was observed in Years 7 to 9, it was not possible to make a judgement about teaching, standards or achievement. In the one Year 7 class observed, standards were well above average. Pupils worked together very well, producing a polished performance of extracts from, 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin'. They used a variety of dramatic techniques such as choral speaking, freezing and mirror movement to music. They showed good self-control and self-confidence. Teaching and learning in this lesson were excellent, with pupils moving from scene to scene at a swift pace and all making excellent progress, including those pupils with special needs. High expectations meant that all joined in enthusiastically with the lesson, co-operating well with each other and responding to the teacher immediately. In discussion with pupils from Year 9, it was obvious that some enjoyed their drama enormously and were developing skills progressively, whilst others had little continuity and insufficient specialist input to their lessons, leading to their dislike of the subject.

134. One lesson was observed with pupils on the GCSE course, though not with their regular teacher. Judgements have been made from the standard of pupils' work in the lesson and the work in their folders plus the detailed work left for the pupils to be done in the teachers' absence.

135. Standards in Year 11 are average. Pupils can develop their work independently with minimal input from the teacher. They improvise imaginatively on the theme of urban myths. They co-operate well in their groups and give each other advice to move the drama on. Higher-attaining pupils take on roles seriously and convincingly. Lower-attaining pupils tend to lose some control, but soon get back on track. Written work shows they are able to assess

their own work and that of others and make suggestions for improvement. Girls' standards are higher than boys'. All pupils, including those with special needs, achieve well, making good progress in developing drama skills and techniques over the two years, and growing in self-confidence. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, results were average. They have improved since the previous inspection.

136. Teaching and learning are good in the GCSE course. Pupils warm up well with breathing and speaking exercises such as tongue-twisters. This prepares them well for moving into their own work. Work is well planned to develop a variety of skills and extend knowledge. Good records are kept of pupils' progress and work is thoroughly assessed. Discussion with pupils showed they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and that they enjoy their lessons. Behaviour and attitudes are good in Year 11. Pupils displayed positive attitudes despite the teachers' absence. They warmed up with enthusiasm and co-operated well in their groups, developing their improvisations. Girls settled to their work immediately; the few boys in the group took a little longer.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.
- Pupils behave well in class.
- The leadership of a recently appointed head of department is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of pupils' attainment are well below average in Year 11 and below average overall.
- The use of ICT as a tool for teaching is underdeveloped.
- Lessons are not always as challenging or interesting as they might be.

137. The mathematics department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection less than two years ago. The appointment of a new head of department and the improved staffing position has raised morale and engendered a sense of purpose. Teaching has shown marked improvement. Organisational improvements include better time-tabling, effective curriculum arrangements and schemes of work and improved departmental planning. The teachers' work is much better supported by monitoring and feedback on performance. The impact of these improvements is not yet fully reflected in the standards attained by the pupils.

138. Standards of work seen are below average overall and well below average in Year 11. Pupils' achievement in relation to low prior standards is satisfactory overall. However, in Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because the high level of poor attendance of a minority of pupils holds back the achievements of these pupils and affects standards and results. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall and the positive attitudes of those pupils present and their good behaviour support a satisfactory rate of learning in most lessons.

139. National Curriculum test results in 2001 for fourteen year olds were well below national averages but in line with those achieved by pupils from similar schools. They showed an improvement over the previous four years but rose less than the average national improvement. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Results in mathematics were similar to those in science and lower than those in English.

140. Up to the age of 14, pupils' achievement and gains in mathematical skills are satisfactory. Standards are well below those seen nationally when pupils joined the school at the age of 11. Their standards improve over the first three years to draw closer to average, but are still below average. Higher and middle-attaining pupils make appropriate gains in understanding. Lower-attaining pupils make fewer gains although their achievement is still satisfactory. Numerical skills, referred to as a weakness in the last inspection, are improved, although still lower than found in most schools. This is the effect of better teaching following the National Numeracy Strategy and the improvements in organisation and management referred to above. Lower-attaining pupils show confidence and accuracy with their multiplication tables, including seven and eight times. A girl explained that seven times nine could not be 64 because seven times ten is 70 and seven less than 70 is 63. She did not, however, note that two odd numbers multiplied cannot give an even answer.

141. GCSE results for 2001 were also well below the national average. There was little difference between the performance of boys and girls but mathematics was one of the weakest performing departments in the school. Results did, however, show a substantial rise over the previous year's levels for pupils gaining grades A* to C. This is set to continue. Current performance indicates that almost twice as many will achieve this standard as two years ago.

142. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are well below average and some one in four are on track for a higher grade of A* to C at GCSE. Numerical skills are less well developed than in the lower school because lessons do not focus on number to the same degree. Even the more able pupils are insecure with multiplication tables, for instance. All pupils deal with statistics and data handling with more confidence than they show when working with algebra. Higher-attaining pupils, for example, solve quadratic equations but make some errors in their answers in more basic multiplication. Middle-attaining pupils multiply a bracket by a scalar but make mistakes when multiplying two brackets together. The lowest-attaining pupils find difficulty balancing even very simple equations. All, however, have the capacity to obtain a pass grade at GCSE. The opportunity to gain accreditation through the Certificate of Achievement is available for those for whom it is suitable. Poor attendance is a serious contributor to underachievement for many in middle and lower attaining groups. in Years 10 and 11. An average absence rate of one in five is not unusual.

143. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout. There was relatively little extra provision by learning support assistants seen in class but where it exists it is very effective. Very few pupils with English as an additional language were seen during the inspection. The support given to one boy, who had recently arrived from China, by a sixth form student, was outstanding. Not only was she devoting a substantial amount of

time both in class and at lunchtime providing sensitive and well focused advice and guidance, but she had also enrolled on an internet course for teaching English as a foreign language to enhance her skills in this area. Gifted pupils are catered for by grouping arrangements and by the use of some additional teaching materials.

144. The teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory throughout the main school. Most teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject material, and use the information they gain from marking the pupils' work to inform what they do in lessons. Organisation is good and pupils are particularly well managed so that little lesson time is wasted and classroom behaviour is always good. There were two lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory because the teacher's knowledge of the subject was not rigorously applied. One of these was taught by a non-specialist supply teacher who in all other respects did very well. In these lessons, as in all others, the pupils behaved well and worked hard. Whilst teaching in the lessons observed was almost always satisfactory or better, there were very few lessons approaching the quality of that taught to the top group in Year nine on probability. In this, very good questioning encouraged the pupils to think for themselves and to correct each other's misunderstandings in discussion. Most other lessons lacked sparkle. Too little use was made of teaching aids such as overhead projectors, or of computers. The degree of pace and challenge was not high enough to render them really exciting.

145. Accommodation is barely satisfactory. Some of the rooms are close together but are rather small and dingy. There are insufficient rooms dedicated to mathematics to enable each teacher to teach in their own room. Teaching on a split site makes communication more difficult.

146. Departmental leadership is good. The relatively new head of department has gained the confidence and respect of a team of teachers which is now almost fully up to strength. She is well organised and hard working. She leads from the front. Teachers' work is well supported by regular classroom observation and by close monitoring of marking and record keeping. Good provision is made for a postgraduate student teacher studying for his initial teaching qualification.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- National test and GCSE results have improved in 2001.
- Teaching and learning are good. A strong team of teachers share good practice.
- Lower attaining pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, are well-provided for.

Areas for improvement

- Results in national tests at age 14 and at GCSE are well below the national average.
- The range of texts books for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is narrow.
- Computers are not used often enough in lessons.

147. Standards of work seen during the inspection are better than those in recent tests and examinations. They are average overall but below average in Year 9. Overall, pupils' achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment is good. Lower attaining pupils and particularly those with special educational needs make good progress and science is making a significant contribution to the development of their writing. However, there are insufficient challenges for pupils with talents in science. The overall good quality of the teaching and pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute to good rates of learning in lessons and good achievement.

148. Results in national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 2001 were well below national average levels, but in line with those of similar schools. They improved considerably from 2000. Boys performed better than girls. There has been a slow trend of improvement since 1998. The results in the GCSE double science award were below the national average, but above in single science. They were better than in 2000. Boys and girls perform equally well but fewer boys took the double award compared to girls.

149. Standards of pupils' work in the current Year 9 are below the national average and better than the most recent test results. There is considerable evidence of improving standards in Years 7 to 9, reflecting the sharing of good practice by the teachers and the work in meeting the specific learning needs of the pupils. Pupils acquire a good general knowledge of science, but a significant minority has difficulty in recalling work from previous experiences. For example, pupils in Year 8 understood that glucose was small enough to be absorbed into the bloodstream, but did not fully understand that it came from the breakdown of dietary starch. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with very good modified learning materials and given very good support from both teachers and learning support assistants to reach standards broadly in line with their ability. Pupils generally achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment through Years 7 to 9.

150. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are average and are in sharp contrast to the below average results in recent years. Failure to complete coursework and poor attendance have been significant contributors to poor performance in the public examinations. Pupils in Year 11 generally have sound knowledge of the subject and enjoy practical work. They produce good coursework investigations with strengths in planning and observation, but are less confident with the evaluation of results. For example, higher-attaining pupils carrying out an experiment to simulate bird feeding could not satisfactorily explain why they had collected all brightly coloured simulated food pieces and left the less attractive ones. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 are well supported in lessons, and in Year 10 the new GNVQ course is appropriate to the needs of all pupils. The entry level certificate provides a good base for pupils with special educational needs to follow a single science course. For example, Year 10 pupils understand the need to separate raw and cooked meats to prevent cross contamination and were aware of the temperature range in which bacteria were most active.

151. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good knowledge of science and prepare and plan lessons well, using a variety of strategies to produce good opportunities for learning. For example, a very effective presentation using an overhead projector and biolux slide viewers captured the interest of Year 8 pupils and generated a lively question and answer session about the structure and functions of the breathing system. Learning objectives are clear and shared with the pupils as a matter of course. They are generally reviewed at the end of lessons. Learning is best in lessons where the pace is brisk, and challenge and expectations are high. For example, Year 10 pupils drew on their knowledge of the nervous system in an experiment to find the effect of caffeine on reaction time and were then challenged to explain why results were as they were. There was no unsatisfactory teaching, but there were isolated incidents where behaviour management was not effective in controlling some low level disruption. Analysis of pupils' work show that it is marked regularly,

but the comments are often inconsistent and lack depth.

152. The faculty is well led and managed and improvement since the previous inspection is good. The head of faculty has a very clear view of what needs to be done to raise standards further. The development plan reflects his views. Following monitoring by lesson observation, schemes of work have been upgraded and the range of teaching strategies in use has broadened. There is a much greater emphasis on investigative science. As a result, standards are improving and this is reflected in the results in the national tests. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress throughout the school and there is effective use of target setting. The use of computers has improved since the previous inspection but they are not yet used often enough, for example, to accurately demonstrate experimental procedure and display results. The range of text books in use in Years 10 and 11 is narrow. However, use of material on the internet is broadening pupils' access to written information. The new accommodation in September 2002 will considerably improve the facilities for teaching and learning which are currently unsatisfactory, but there is an urgent need for more technical support staff to deal with the practical demands of an expanding curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Relationships between the teachers and the pupils are good.
- The management of the subject is very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of computer aided art and design applications.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the highest grades in examinations is not high enough.

153. Standards of work seen during the inspection at Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with the national average and pupils' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7 and Year 10 is good. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and a wide range of creative opportunities are available supported by a good level of resources. Therefore the quality of learning in art and design is very good overall.

154. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average. The pupils experience a wide variety of creative experiences and this combined with very effective teaching, helps the majority of pupils to show an interest in their work and achieve well. In Year 9, the majority of pupils draw and paint with a reasonable degree of confidence and have some appreciation for the use of colour, line and tone. They increase their knowledge and understanding about artists and cultures. In Year 7, pupils make block prints based on the work of Georgia O'Keeffe and Claude Monet. In Year 8, pupils make masks based on African art. Pupils in Year 9 use the influence of the work of Giacometti and the images of the Holocaust to create sculptures using wire and papier-mâché. This lesson provided links to history, personal and social education and the school's literacy programme. Some pupils demonstrate reasonably good research skills when completing homework assignments. Pupils are willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements, which is a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their prior standards and those with special educational needs progress well.

155. In the year 2001, GCSE results were below the national average but pupils achieved

better results in art and design compared with most of the other subjects they took. Few pupils obtain A*-C grades. The best results are within the range of A*-G grades. In the three years, from 1999 attainment has shown a gradual improvement against national averages.

156. In Year 11 standards of work seen are average overall and better than the exam results because the relatively new team of teachers are having a major influence on raising standards. A majority of pupils handle drawing instruments and materials competently and show a sound understanding of their progress. Research skills are satisfactory but too often are the result of copying information rather than analysing it. Pupils are provided with a wide range of resources and creative opportunities. These opportunities together with some very good and excellent teaching are improving the pupils' competence, knowledge and understanding of drawing, painting and three-dimensional work. A small number of pupils produce work to above average standards. The majority of pupils achieve well in relation to their prior standards. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress as a direct result of sensitive teaching and a well designed scheme of work which caters for the needs of all levels of ability. The most able pupils are not always provided with the challenge they need in order to maximise their true potential and to effect an improvement in the number of pupils attaining the higher grades in GCSE examinations.

157. Throughout the school the majority of pupils are reasonably articulate when discussing their work and many are capable of understanding and using technical language. The promotion by teachers of key words in every lesson is having a positive effect upon the pupils' understanding of technical language within the subject. The attitude of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. The majority of pupils show a good level of interest. A minority finds sustained concentration, independent learning, problem solving, and an understanding of aesthetics difficult. These problems are more common among lower-attaining pupils in Year 9. Relationships between pupils and towards teachers are very good. Pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and are willing to assist in the distribution and collection of equipment in lessons.

158. Teaching and learning are very good overall with almost one third of lessons judged to be excellent. The best lessons are challenging and well planned and they provide all pupils with opportunities to reach standards commensurate with their abilities and aspirations. Although in some lessons not enough demands are made of the highest-attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well served through sensitive teaching and specially designed learning opportunities, which offer pupils the opportunity to succeed. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good providing a pleasant and positive approach to learning in lessons. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. Connections are also established in all lessons to the school literacy strategy, particularly in the promotion of key words. Pupils are encouraged to read as part of their research into artists and cultures.

159. All classrooms within the department contain good displays relating to the work of significant artists or cultures which provide an opportunity for pupils to learn and appreciate the wider aspects of art and design education. Assessment is effective and is used as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. Assessment includes a certain amount of pupil self-assessment and therefore, when questioned, the pupils were well aware of the teacher's expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given target grades for GCSE examinations and are capable of discussing their progress towards achieving their targets. Work is marked at periodic intervals, usually linked to the completion of a project. Marking is always supported by helpful comments by the teachers and is linked to self assessment. Therefore the pupils in all year groups are well aware of their level of achievement and what they have to do to make further progress. The positive relationships established between teachers and pupils help this communication about assessment and marking to work well. The staff have also developed individual learning targets in art and design for the pupils with special educational needs which work well.

160. The management of the department is very effective in promoting high standards in lessons and giving clear direction. The teachers, all of whom joined the school in September 2001, work as a very effective team. The work of the pupils displayed in the department and around the school is good, promoting high standards and interest in the subject and celebrating achievement. Accommodation is good. A wide range of good quality papers, paint, sketch books, printing and ceramics equipment is provided. As a consequence of the wide range of opportunities for the pupils, together with some excellent teaching, the department is improving pupils' standards in art and design.

161. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and standards, teaching and learning are rising rapidly with the recent establishment of a new team of teachers. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop computer skills, particularly their skills in using computer aided art applications. Procedures for assessing pupils' work have improved significantly. The kilns are no longer a health and safety issue.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are very good. There is a shared commitment to raising standards.
- Standards have improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their prior standards.
- Teaching is good. Learning is well supported by the good management of pupils and the high expectations of behaviour create a positive learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not make enough of their own decisions in drawing up their designs.
- The range of drawing techniques used by pupils is narrow.
- The split site and old buildings place an intolerable amount of travelling on the teachers. The shortage of technical support compounds this problem.
- Homework is not used consistently to support learning.

162. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average but pupils achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7 is good. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. A direct result of this is the positive attitudes of pupils, which also cause the quality of their learning in design and technology to be good.

163. Results have risen significantly in 2001 and the number of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C was very close to the national average. The trend is an improving one and the results in design and technology are amongst the best in the school. The most successful areas were resistant materials and graphics. Girls outperformed boys but not by as much as is found nationally. Achievement is good. Both boys and girls did better in design and technology than in most of the other subjects they studied but boys did significantly better.

164. Standards of work of the current Year 9 are just in line with the national average and this is reflected in the teacher assessments. This represents a good level of achievement, given the pupils' lower than average level of attainment on entry to the school. Pupils' understanding of design improves soundly in the Years 7 to 9 due to the consistent structured approach in all areas of the subject. They acquire sound making skills but their range of drawing techniques, whilst adequate to work out their design ideas, needs extending. Lack of computers within the classrooms results in few pupils having the opportunity to use ICT to process texts, generate images and improve presentation. However, what facilities the department does have are used well. Pupils in Year 9 demonstrate a sound understanding of computer aided design and manufacture in resistant materials when using it to cut the letters into the lids of their wooden maze boxes. Pupils' work reflects some lack of confidence in decision making in their designs but most confidently use practical skills. They understand the working characteristics of a range of materials and how to use the appropriate tools safely. This results in products being well made. Key words are displayed in rooms and the teachers positively encourage the use of appropriate vocabulary but the poor levels of literacy skills of some pupils limit the evaluation of designs. They can often explain how they would modify work but find it difficult to record their ideas. Pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs and the most able, make good progress because good teaching focuses on the individual pupil's understanding of the subject.

165. By Year 11, standards of work are average. In all design and technology subjects pupils who attend regularly make good progress and their achievement is good in relation to their ability. They learn well because the high quality of teaching positively encourages pupils to do their best. Pupils' knowledge of designing and making improves steadily because they consolidate their learning satisfactorily. Pupils build on their skills of designing, their practical competence in solving more complex problems and on their growing knowledge of food preparation. Pupils' food technology folders show some good use of testing and adapting recipes and ICT has been used well to analyse data such as the results of questionnaires. Higher-attaining pupils produce work of a good standard in graphics that demonstrates a level of flair and attention to accuracy. Formal drawing skills are good and work is well presented but freehand sketching is underused in design folios. Lower-attaining pupils in resistant materials use interesting design briefs to produce wooden storage boxes using complex joints, and they finish them off to a sound standard. Pupils in textiles use a range of dyeing and decorating techniques to produce cushions inspired by Japanese fabrics.

166. The quality of teaching is a major strength of the department. It is predominantly good and in a third of lessons seen very good. Consequently the pupils improve and develop their design and making skills consistently throughout the school and learning is at least good and often very good. Teachers manage pupils very well, often in cramped conditions, and their high expectations of behaviour creates a positive attitude in pupils. Pupils are lively and at times demanding with challenging behaviour but the teachers have developed clear accepted

procedures that result in good use being made of time and resources. For example, Year 11 pupils, who have to travel by bus from one site to the other, organised themselves efficiently because they knew what they had to do and got straight down to work. In the very best lessons teachers give very clear explanations, demonstrate techniques and build in an element of humour to maintain pupils' interest which results in successful learning. In discussion, teachers diversify on points that appeal to pupils and build on aspects that motivate and interest them. Higher-attaining pupils respond well to the challenging questions whilst lower-attaining pupils are given the support and encouragement to respond confidently.

167. Teachers channel the strengths of pupils into successful outcomes. For example pupils with special educational needs in a textiles class who had produced good designs, transferred them on to the side of the felt mobile phone holder they had made. Sound strategies for numeracy are in place and although lower-attaining pupils, particularly in Year 7, struggle with accurate measuring, teachers build on techniques to improve their skills. The high quality of individual advice and support plays an important role in raising standards and gives clear direction to pupils on how to develop work to a better level. Assessment structures are good but the department does not involve pupils in assessing their own work enough. Nor are pupils encouraged sufficiently to take responsibility for their own learning. Homework is set but is presently underused to develop independent learning skills.

168. The department is very well led and managed. The head of faculty provides strong leadership with a clear vision of the departments' aims and the teachers have a strong shared commitment to raising standards. Despite the most difficult working conditions where teachers have to travel between the two sites up to twenty eight times a week, they maintain good morale and are well motivated to do the very best for the pupils they teach. This is only made possible by the very good organisational skills they exercise as a team. The improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have improved and the good quality of teaching and learning have been maintained. The areas for improvement highlighted in the last report that were in the control of the department have been addressed. Most of the others, such as poor accommodation and resources for ICT will be rectified in the move to the new school. However, there remains a shortage of technical support, particularly in the area of food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- The standard of pupils' work is improving.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and benefit from a good range of resources.
- Fieldwork makes a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement

- The shortage of specialist teachers restricts some pupils' progress.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.
- Schemes of work are incomplete.

169. Pupils enter the school with very little geographical experience and many have weak literacy and numeracy skills. Standards of work are below average at age 14 but are improving. These standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Although much of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good, problems of staffing means that some pupils receive non-specialist supply teaching some of which is unsatisfactory and pupils do not learn as much as they should. Standards of work, although below average at age 16, represent good achievement in relation to pupils' prior standards. This level of achievement is the result of good teaching. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute towards good learning in lessons.

170. At age 16, results in the GCSE examination have fluctuated recently but have remained well below the national average, particularly for boys. The pass rate at grades A*-C for both girls and boys dropped in 2001 and a higher proportion of pupils than nationally did not achieve a pass between grades A*-G. Boys currently form the large majority of pupils in the GCSE classes in this school. The standards that they achieve are lower than those achieved by girls, reflecting the national situation. However, many pupils exceed the grades predicted for them on the basis of their prior attainment. Those entered for the Certificate of Achievement do particularly well. This good achievement represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.

171. The work seen during this inspection confirms that standards are rising. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 come to lessons with positive attitudes. Some higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 are working at nationally expected levels because of the challenge and pace set by their teachers. For example, in one good lesson observed, the teacher's lively approach, specialist knowledge and good resources enabled pupils to understand and explain tectonic processes accurately. The teacher encouraged debate so that some of the most capable pupils, both girls and boys, showed real curiosity as they thought about wider, philosophical questions on the origins of the earth and the evolving nature of research. A significant improvement in teaching strategies and resources for pupils with special educational needs enables many of them to achieve well. Pupils in Year 7 are helped to build up their understanding of specialist vocabulary through the constant reinforcement of essential words and the use of examples that are familiar to them in their own local environment. The inclusion of practical exercises in many lessons enables pupils to understand, for example, contrasting climatic and population differences. Emphasis on a wide variety of written tasks in lessons and for homework, together with some detailed marking, means that pupils know what level they are reaching and how to improve their work. Even so, many pupils have great difficulty in using numbers, drawing graphs and completing maps accurately. Writing at length, together with clear

presentation of work, presents many pupils with considerable difficulties. Problems of staff absence are having an adverse effect on some pupils' progress, particularly for groups in Year 8. Achievement is not high enough in lessons where non-specialist supply teaching lacks detailed knowledge and understanding of the subject.

172. The prior attainment of pupils who choose to study geography in Years 10 and 11 has declined recently. However, the standard of work seen for most pupils is better than the recent GCSE results suggest and the majority of pupils do better than might be expected because of the good teaching. A small proportion of boys shows a reluctance to learn despite the efforts of their teachers to engage them in lessons. Erratic attendance also curtails the progress of a few pupils, particularly in Year 11. In Year 10, higher-attaining pupils are reaching expected levels. Although their general geographical knowledge is not very secure, they respond quickly as they transfer their theoretical learning to actual examples. In a very good lesson in Year 10, pupils were able to use climatic and river discharge data to explain the unusual regime of the river Nile which gave them insights into the complexities of water supply and demand along its course. The predicted grades for these pupils are considerably higher than for pupils in the current Year 11. A second group of Year 10 pupils, with much lower levels of prior attainment, are making good progress because of the consistent and challenging approach of their teacher. Pupils feel a sense of achievement as they build up their knowledge and skills. In Year 11, pupils whose learning was disrupted by staff absence are now achieving well because of the tireless efforts of the teachers to help pupils catch up on work that was missed. Very good course work, adapted so that it is suitably challenging for all levels of attainment, ensures that all those who are willing to co-operate are given every opportunity to be successful.

173. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Years 10 and 11, and over half the lessons observed were good or better. In Years 7 to 9, over half the lessons seen were good, but there were two unsatisfactory lessons associated with non-specialist supply teaching. In these lessons, poor planning and inappropriate tasks meant that pupils were not given clear instructions and consequently they did not learn enough. The strengths of the teaching lie in the experience, planning and consistency that specialist teachers bring to their lessons. Teachers know their pupils very well. The potentially disruptive behaviour of a rather volatile group in Year 10 was well managed so that all were able to learn successfully. The help of a classroom assistant for those with special educational needs contributed to the calm working atmosphere in the room. Teachers who operate on the two separate sites make considerable efforts to ensure that no time is lost between lessons and so pupils' learning is not disadvantaged. Schemes of work have been greatly improved since the last inspection by introducing topics that increase pupils' awareness of other cultures and confront them with acute moral dilemmas in many parts of the world. However, there is very little planned use of ICT in lessons so that opportunities for increasing pupils' geographical awareness and encouraging independent research are missed.

174. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. It is well led and managed despite staff absence and the need to operate on two separate sites, sometimes in rooms where it is difficult to use essential resources such as atlases and wall maps. There is a shared commitment to raising the standard of work for all pupils. An enthusiasm for fieldwork means that daytime and residential trips stimulate pupils' interest and widen their awareness of the world around them. Analysis of pupils' performance, related clearly to national standards and shared with pupils, is now being used to identify individual progress. However, although schemes of work have been updated, they are not yet produced in a standard format with details of activities appropriate for all levels of attainment.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, sensitive to pupils' needs and literacy development, ensures that they do their best.
- Leadership and management are very good and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and co-operation.
- Day-to-day procedures for tracking individual pupils' progress and analysis of overall performance inform target-setting and decisions about raising standards.
- Pupils are confident when working with source materials.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough opportunities to develop pupils' independence and social skills through fieldwork, active learning and ICT.
- Teaching and learning strategies do not do enough to evoke deeper personal and creative responses in pupils.

175. Although standards of work seen during the inspection are below average, pupils' achievement in relation to their low standards when they began in Year 7 is good. This level of achievement is reached because teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Good systems for tracking pupils' progress help to ensure that teaching is well targeted to meet individual pupils' needs. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour also cause the quality of learning in lessons to be good, and very good in Years 10 and 11 where pupils rise to the demands of an examination course.

176. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Boys have steadily improved and are nearer to the average for boys. The number of boys and girls achieving above National Curriculum Level 6 has improved. Clear-sighted leadership and team work have resulted in resolved staffing problems, better assessment and analysis of overall performance, new ways of involving pupils in reviewing their progress and subsequent changes to the Year 9 syllabus. Consequently, standards of work seen during the inspection, while still below average, indicate a rise, particularly evident in Year 9. This represents good achievement. Teachers make the most of history source work to develop literacy so lower attaining pupils achieve well. Skilful learning assistants ensure that those with special educational needs do not fall behind although specialist support was lacking on one occasion, each in Year 7 and in Year 8.

177. In Years 7 to 9 pupils confidently place events in time. Using accurate terminology and developing the historian's critical eye regarding evidence, they explain changes to political, religious, social and economic life in Britain and Europe from mediaeval times to the twentieth century. They make judgements about the beliefs and actions of key figures that led to misery and degradation as well as prosperity. They understand the power of dignity and co-operation that characterise the culture of the native peoples of North America and soldiers fighting World War One. Plans to use 1901 census data for Preston will give more opportunities to use numeracy skills and broaden the skills of interpretation. Until this and field studies are integral to each year group, pupils, especially higher-attaining pupils, miss the excitement and challenge of collecting and judging appropriate evidence

independently, synthesising their ideas coherently and exploring alternative ways of presenting knowledge.

178. Attainment in GCSE is well below average although results rose dramatically in 2001 and over two thirds of pupils achieved their predicted grade or better, based on prior attainment. These results represent good achievement. Standards are predicted to rise in 2002 to just below national average and standards of work seen during the inspection support this. Action based on the analysis of results has led to teaching, assessment and support strategies designed to solve problems relating to incomplete coursework, attendance and examination technique. Aspects of this were fundamental to learning in a Year 11 class studying the re-militarisation of the Rhineland in 1936. Pupils were judging the evidence value of the "Goose-Step" cartoon, highlighting and annotating it as points arose in discussion through skilful teacher questioning. They prepared their answer referring to the examination mark scheme in order to gain the most points. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils are equal to most challenges because of such clearly focused teaching.

179. By Years 10 and 11, pupils apply well-consolidated history skills to tease out the complexities of struggles for peace, economic stability and human rights across Europe from the 1930s, America from the 1920s and post-World War Two South Africa to the present day. Coursework reflects how far pupils have developed literacy skills, including efficient note-making and re-framing knowledge into illustrations and explanations before arriving at conclusions. Higher-attaining pupils use connecting phrases and conventions for signalling alternative points.

180. Teaching is overall good and in tune with the school's teaching and learning policy. All teaching is satisfactory or better, nearly half being very good or excellent. This engages pupils, and learning is therefore also good overall. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good because both teachers and pupils share responsibility for meeting the relentless pace and demands of the examination course. Literacy development and the drive for a firm base of historical knowledge and interpretation skills go hand in hand and account for pupils' confidence and effective learning habits. For example a Year 8 upper group, working over two lessons on the Black Death in 1348, extrapolated information from eight sources including pictures, statistics, eye-witness and modern historians' accounts, sorted it into five text boxes, and justified each choice. Then they considered the value of diaries as evidence, studying the 1665 entries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn and collecting nine pieces of information to illustrate how the author's motives and context help them to assess its reliability. All this was interspersed with expert teacher knowledge, pupil speculation, language discussion, opportunities for almost everyone to read aloud and writing guidance to suit different levels of need. This is perceptive, intelligent teaching with high expectations, typical of this team. It illustrates how teachers use a repertoire of devices to help pupils to clarify information and use key vocabulary. Paragraph planning, perhaps with suggested "starter" phrases for lower-attaining pupils, is a regular feature too and pupils write confidently. This high level of planning is not yet applied to developing pupils' oral and social skills and opportunities are sometimes missed to evoke emotional and creative responses from pupils.

181. Although in post for just two years, the head of department has developed an open, supportive style of leadership and management that are very good. Strategies for monitoring all aspects have embodied an effective response to the previous report and improvement is therefore good. There is concern about numbers of pupils choosing history and action has started to turn this round. Subject priorities are clearly in tune with those for the school, which makes the subject and the team, key players in the overall improvement of the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and teachers manage pupils well at all ages.
- Assessment procedures are good. Assessment information is well used to support pupils and to inform teachers' planning.
- The department is well managed.
- There are effective strategies to raise standards of literacy in the subject.

Areas for Improvement

- Standards are not yet high enough.
- Pupils do not work well independently.

182. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below the national average overall and in Year 9, but below average in Year 11. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 in relation to the standards when they began in Year 7 are satisfactory. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 related to standards when pupils began in Year 10 is good. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. These levels of achievement are reached because teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour also cause the quality of their learning in ICT to be good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

183. Pupils enter the school at age 11 with levels of achievement in ICT well below the national average. They follow a course which fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum. The subject is a popular GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Those pupils who do not take a GCSE course develop their skills in a structured programme through compulsory subjects. The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum for all pupils. This was not the case at the previous inspection and so is a marked improvement.

184. In 2001, pupils took GNVQ Part One in Information Technology. No national data are available by which the results can be compared. Many pupils did not gain a grade because their absence from school prevented them completing the assessment. The school no longer teaches this course. The new GCSE course provides a better foundation for pupils choosing to take the AS course in ICT.

185. In the first three years of the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to low standards in Year 7. By Year 9 pupils construct and search a database and write short routines in 'Logo' to produce a simple game. Higher-attaining pupils develop an understanding of commands and link programs. They cannot use models to make predictions. Lower-attaining pupils enter data and make simple alterations such as changing a background colour. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language make progress equal to other pupils. In some lessons, progress of pupils with special needs is less secure because they do not receive support to help them with reading difficulties.

186. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement is good in relation to their prior standards. Pupils plan their work well. For example, a class in Year 10 designed web-sites to help Year 7 pupils understand different computer components. Higher-attaining pupils give good examples of data validation and verification. Lower-attaining pupils produce a simple spreadsheet to calculate income for a leisure centre. Pupils with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language make good progress. At all ages there is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls.

187. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11 because all teaching in Years 10 and 11 is carried out by specialist teachers and this is not always the case in Years 7 to 9. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The teaching was good in just over half of all lessons. Good teaching uses questioning very effectively to assess learning. In a Year 10 class, through good questioning the teacher identified a lack of understanding about the concept of a template. The teacher used this information to plan the next lesson and ensured that the points from the last lesson that had been least well understood were revised. Good teaching also encourages pupils to work independently, especially in Years 10 and 11. A Year 11 class researched a range of topics on the internet before making presentations of their findings to the rest of the group. However, in general, pupils do not work well on their own. They are reluctant to work empirically although some lessons are well structured to encourage this.

188. A good feature of much of the teaching is the pronounced strategies to develop pupils' literacy within the subject. Teachers check regularly on the understanding of technical vocabulary and take good steps to improve pupils' spelling. Pupils develop oral skills when making presentations to the rest of the class. However, pupils are very reluctant to follow printed instructions, even when they can read the material. They ask their teacher what they should do rather than first attempting the work on the computer. Pupils' work is regularly marked. The best comments from teachers are very helpful to pupils, suggesting ways in which their work can be improved. Other comments are less informative to the pupils.

189. Currently, the school has been unable to fill a vacancy for an ICT teacher. This timetable is being covered in a number of ways. Whilst the pupils in these groups receive satisfactory teaching, their progress is not as great as other groups because the teachers do not have the experience to be able give as much breadth and depth as occurs in the other lessons.

190. The department is well managed. The head of department effectively monitors the work of all teachers of the subject. He has a clear view of developments of the subject. He has changed the examination courses pupils follow to increase pupils' chances of gaining higher grades. Appropriate measures are taken to ensure that pupils do not make improper use of the Internet. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection. There has been a significant increase in the number of computers, assessment is now far more secure, and pupils can access the internet on both sites. The quality of teaching has also improved.

191. Although ICT is used well to support learning in a number of subjects, lack of access to computers and the limited knowledge of some teachers in how to use ICT in their subject, restricts the extent to which ICT skills are taught and used. Across the school the level of skills in ICT is low but this does not prevent some teachers from using ICT within their subject. Software packages effectively help pupils to compose music. GNVQ students in Year 10 and sixth form biology students use an interactive whiteboard to develop their understanding of plant growth and genetics. All pupils in Year 10 use a presentation package to deliver a presentation to their class as part of their GCSE work. In physical education, pupils use a spreadsheet to analyse levels of fitness. In history, pupils use a 'virtual chat-

room' to 'interrogate' Henry VIII. An integrated learning package makes a considerable contribution to the development of numeracy and literacy for pupils with special educational needs. In some subjects, including science, art and design, geography, and modern foreign languages, ICT is not used enough. The school embarked on the national programme of enhancing teachers' ICT skills in September 2001. Some teachers have not yet started training. Those who have are making greater use of computers in their work.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and pupils respond well.
- Teachers know their pupils well and plan well to meet their learning needs.
- Assessment is well used, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- The department is well led and makes a good contribution to whole school issues.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough time is given to teaching modern foreign languages.
- There is a shortage of text books.

French, German and Spanish

192. Standards of work seen in French are below average at the end of Year 9 and well below in Year 11. In Spanish and German standards of work seen are average. Pupils' achievement is good in their first three years because they enter the school with well below average overall skills and make good progress despite limited time. Achievement in French is still unsatisfactory in the GCSE years because some of the pupils have changed over to French after having spent two or three years on other languages. At present, the teaching time available to tackle these shortcomings is less than is usually the case. When they are well taught, pupils are keen to learn a foreign language. However some pupils in Years 10 and 11 still have unsatisfactory attitudes as a consequence of their past experiences and this affects their achievement, despite good teaching. Achievement in German and Spanish is good.

193. The modern languages department has improved further since the previous inspection, although there is now no sixth form work and German and Spanish are being phased out as part of a rationalisation of provision in modern languages in response to recurring problems of staffing.

194. GCSE results in French in 2001, though still well below average, improved considerably on the previous year. The gap between girls' results and those of boys was wider than that found nationally and appears to indicate serious underachievement by boys. Results in the range A*-G remain below average. This is largely a consequence of the failure of some pupils, boys and girls, to attend for examination at key times in their two year modular course, a clear example of the way in which poor attendance adversely affects what pupils can achieve. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated well below average standards but there has been a measure of improvement since that time as a consequence of improved quality of teaching.

195. German is taught to one class of relatively higher-attaining pupils in each of the Years 9, 10 and 11. In the 2001 GCSE examinations approximately one third of the pupils obtained a grade in the range A*-C, which was a considerable improvement on the previous year,

though it is still well below average.

196. Spanish is now taught only to one relatively higher-attaining group in Year 11. In Year 2001 GCSE results were well above the national average, 12 of the 14 candidates obtaining a grade in the range A*-C; in the previous year all did so. Standards seen on inspection are average.

197. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below average and are better than the most recent teacher assessments because standards are rising in response to improved teaching. Standards of work seen in Year 11 broadly reflect the overall picture outlined in the GCSE results and are well below average. Pupils achieve well when expectations are high, teaching consistently good and pupils encouraged to expect more of themselves. Although the teaching materials and text books used are well chosen, there is nowhere near enough of them for pupils to work independently outside lessons. This is one reason why achievement is not better than it is. Also, since pupils' expectation is that learning takes place mainly or indeed only in lessons, the recent reduction in time to less than that found in most schools, directly reduces the amount of learning when outcomes are compared with national standards. Speaking and listening are a strength but pupils' writing is weaker. Pupils with special needs, who are well supported, achieve well. One individual pupil who is at an early stage of learning English, was able to take part in a French game with other pupils and emerged as the winner.

198. Learning in lessons is good overall, consistently so in German and Spanish, although necessarily the scheme of work has had to be cut back because there is now less time available. Very few pupils are now prepared for higher tier work. A strength, particularly in younger years, is pupils' speaking and the related skill of listening. Reading and writing are satisfactory, which itself is good progress for some pupils who have had difficulty in reading and writing their own language. Some make good use of computers in their learning, notably in using 'PowerPoint', and some use home computers to word process work, but access to computers is insufficient for all pupils to have opportunity to develop ICT skills in this subject. Teachers are well aware of the need to contribute to pupils' basic literacy, and do so in relation to foreign language learning; for example pupils become familiar with technical terms about language such as *conjunction* and *verb*. Classroom displays are well used to reinforce knowledge of key words including verb forms. Use of number arises from everyday activities such as telling the time or counting the cost: a good example of this was a low attaining French class in Year 10 who read a price tag of 1.20 Euros.

199. In lessons pupils normally display good attitudes to language learning. Some Year 8 pupils, for example, were intrigued to be learning French from a native speaker; in the same year group an all boys' class responded well in this special situation. A limited amount of single gender teaching in this department is in an attempt to address the gender issue in language learning but it is too early to evaluate the effects of these arrangements. In the small number of instances where attitudes are negative this is as a consequence of earlier unsatisfactory provision. In most lessons observed pupils' behaviour was good.

200. The quality of teaching and learning in modern foreign languages is good overall. All teaching of French is at least satisfactory, and most lessons seen were good, two of them very good. Teaching in German and Spanish is good. Teachers are competent with their languages and use them as far as the pupils are able to follow. Teachers know their pupils well through careful assessment of their work and are well advanced with the use of assessment to set targets and raise standards. Teachers manage their pupils well and plan lessons well to develop pupils' confidence. Planning is securely based in a very good scheme of work and supporting policies.

201. Leadership and management of the department are good. Effective delegation is a strength, enabling three colleagues to offer support both with day to day matters and with whole school issues, for example equal opportunities and the school's overall policy for teaching and learning. There is however no direct experience of France, Germany or Spain offered to pupils at this time.

202. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching and learning have improved. Standards are rising. However, there is no sixth form provision at present and German and Spanish are being phased out as part of a rationalisation of provision in response to recurring staff recruitment difficulties. The subject is not developed to its fullest potential at present. This does not serve the interests of the whole school and its host community.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Leadership is very good.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Examination results represent good levels of achievement.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Homework is not set often enough in Years 7 to 9.
- Schemes of work are not well-structured to support the teaching of notation and keyboard performance in Years 8 and 9.

203. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average and pupils achieve well because of good teaching which matches the work well to the pupils' interests and previous attainment. Added to this, a high level of individual attention and effective use of support staff mean that pupils with special needs make good progress and achieve well.

204. Taking into account the standards on entry to the school the GCSE examination results are good. In 2001 the results were very close to the national average for all schools. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A to C is much higher than the average for other subjects in the school and these standards are well maintained from year to year.

205. In Year 9 pupils control keyboards, selecting appropriate sounds and playing melodies. Higher-attaining pupils combine bass parts or chords with the melody. There is good use of fingering systems in Year 7, but by Year 9 this has not been sufficiently developed. The reading of notation is still over-dependent on letter names for the notes rather than reading the musical stave. When composing, the pupils show a good feeling for tone and the ability to use composing techniques such as pedals and trills to create moods and dramatic effects. For example a Year 9 class produced music for a film sound track using musical themes combined with some effects. When listening to music, the pupils respond well and identify how composers use different techniques to achieve different effects. Pupils use technical vocabulary well as a result of the department's emphasis on keywords. In Years 10 and 11 the pupils' compositions show understanding of chord structure and sequence. They create rhythmic patterns and melodies and have a good feeling for tone. ICT is well used to notate compositions either graphically or on the stave and this helps lower-attaining pupils and those who lack keyboard skills to produce effective compositions. The standard of instrumental performance is generally good. The pupils play well in ensembles, profiting from the good choral and instrumental work which takes place in lessons and in the

extra-curricular activities such as band and choir. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 boys and girls achieve equally well with no significant differences.

206. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Two thirds of lessons seen were good and the remainder very good; no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Lessons are well planned with a good balance of activities covering the areas of performing, composing and listening. The tasks set are well matched to the pupils' needs and allow them to work at different levels. This enables all groups of pupils to make good progress. For example, in a Year 8 class some pupils composed a melody, while others composed a melody and accompaniment. Lower-attaining pupils used a restricted number of notes, such as the black notes of the keyboard, to produce pentatonic melodies. Learning support assistants are well used to increase the level of individual attention given to pupils and this is particularly helpful to those pupils with special educational needs. The teachers have a good relationship with the pupils and manage them well. This results in productive working and good concentration with pupils working well in pairs and independently. ICT is well used in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 for composing and research. Very little homework is set in Years 7 to 11 and this could be used to support both the listening programme and the teaching of notation, which lacks development in Years 8 and 9. The teachers have good subject knowledge; they are fine musicians and use their skills most effectively to demonstrate and illustrate teaching points in the lessons. The pupils enjoy the lessons and the extra-curricular work, and behaviour is good. The above average take-up for instrumental lessons and for GCSE music is a good indication of the positive attitude the pupils have towards music. Through the classroom curriculum and the extra-curricular activities the department makes a very strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. The choir and band give regular concerts in school and in the community and are often involved in raising funds for good causes.

207. The department is very well led and managed by a committed head of department, who works hard to overcome the difficulties caused by unsatisfactory accommodation on the lower school site. There is a strong focus on improvement and good progress has been made since the last inspection. Schemes of work have been improved and now ensure better progression in pupils' learning in Year 7 to 9. Lesson planning and matching of work for pupils with special needs have improved. This has led to better quality teaching in Years 7 to 9 and an improvement in the level of attainment. The music department is a strength of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers are subject specialists and they have very high expectation of their pupils.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The attitude of pupils in lessons is very good. They work hard, and behave well.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.

Areas for Improvement

- Some schemes of work are out of date.

208. Standards of work seen in lessons during the inspection are average at age 14 and above average at age 16. Pupils' achievement in relation to their below average standards on entry to the school is good throughout. This is due in the main to the good quality of teaching which is consistent from Year 7 to Year 11. Teachers pay particular attention to ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed at their own level. The positive attitude of pupils in lessons is a significant contributing factor to the quality of their learning. They respond with trust and ambition to the challenges set by their teachers, and are often rewarded with success.

209. GCSE results in 2001, although below the national average overall, are above average for boys. Pupils generally achieve better results in physical education when compared with most of their other subjects. Boys performed better than girls at both higher grades and overall.

210. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average at age 14, and above average at age 16. In Year 9 soccer, boys pass accurately and are beginning to make and use space effectively in a game. In gymnastics, girls perform sequences on large apparatus confidently. They demonstrate good body form and inventiveness when moving into and out of balances. In Year 11 circuit training, boys and girls evaluate the comparative effectiveness of repetition and timed circuits, and show a clear understanding of the overload principle of training. This was achieved as a result of searching yet encouraging questioning by the teacher which challenged the pupils to think for themselves, and gave them the confidence to consider a range of possible options.

211. All pupils learn well in lessons with no significant differences in progress between girls and boys. However, boys usually outperform girls overall due to higher levels of attainment in physical education on entry to the school. In a significant majority of lessons, many individual pupils perform at higher levels, demonstrating an appreciation of the subtleties of games play. In all lessons, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of skills. They have a sound understanding of health related fitness, and of the effects of exercise on the body, and they are confident to express their views when asked. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in an unobtrusive manner, and they make good progress. Observing and evaluating performance against set criteria is common in the best lessons, and this encourages recognition and ownership of achievement.

212. Many pupils achieve significant success both in teams and individually, gaining local, and regional honours. A good range of extra-curricular activities, and fixtures with other schools, provide many opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills.

213. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative, and demonstrate a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive, and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively, and opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to undertake supportive roles with their peers are a common feature of the best lessons.

214. The quality of teaching is at least good in all lessons. It was very good in one third of lessons. All teachers have secure knowledge of the subject, pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, and are enthusiastic in their delivery. They have high expectations of their pupils, maintain a brisk pace throughout lessons, and work hard to raise levels of pupil self esteem. Lessons are well planned and structured, and the use of shared learning objectives, allied with clear explanations and good demonstrations, ensures that good learning takes place. These features were seen in a Year 11 trampolining lesson. Girls with minimal prior experience, but with total confidence in their teacher, planned and performed a simple ten bounce routine with good control. The more able pupils incorporated more demanding skills into the routine by the end of the lesson.

215. Leadership and management of the department are good. The teaching staff make a well balanced and complementary team who support each other well, have a shared commitment to continuous improvement, and are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum. Schemes of work are extensive though inconsistent in style. In some instances they are outdated. Regular moderated assessments relate directly to them and inform curriculum development, and the planning of teaching. The subject development plan is well understood by all teachers in the department. There is systematic monitoring of teaching to ensure that best practice is shared and implemented. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Areas identified for improvement, and not requiring capital expenditure, have been addressed, and strengths have been maintained.

216. Accommodation is poor and the shortage of suitable indoor spaces necessitates the bussing of a great many pupils to external commercial facilities. A significant amount of teaching time is lost in lessons and this restricts learning. The staff and pupils show great patience and understanding and are to be commended for their perseverance in testing circumstances. This situation will be improved at the start of the new academic year when the school moves to a new and extensive building. This is a strong department, well placed to make further improvement, and with the capacity to succeed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching sets high expectations for pupils, most of whom have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Pupils at age 14 achieve well and attain average standards.
- Teachers make good use of assessment information to monitor progress and guide curriculum planning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE are well below average.
- Lack of opportunities for structured discussions holds back pupils' progress in some lessons.
- Pupils in the main school do not have opportunities to widen their experience by visiting places of religious interest.

217. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a short course at GCSE and most pupils are entered for the examination. In 2001 there were 142 candidates, which is more than ever before. Results were well below average and the proportion of pupils who gained grades A*-C was below what was predicted. Girls did better than boys although more boys than girls achieved grade A. However, there were some excellent individual results in terms of added value.

218. Pupils' attainment by the age of 14 matches the expectations set out in the Local Agreed Syllabus. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and pupils achieve well. This is because teachers make their lessons interesting and challenging and plan effectively for pupils to develop their reading and writing skills. Work seen during the inspection shows that most pupils, both boys and girls, have a firm grasp of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and of other world religions such as Buddhism and Sikhism. Pupils also learn from religious belief as well as learning about it. For example, pupils in a Year 7 lower set made thoughtful responses in a discussion about the purpose of prayer and the need for forgiveness after wrongdoing. The majority of pupils of all levels of attainment and those with English as an additional language remember accurately what they have learnt in previous lessons and use key religious words and phrases correctly. They usually record information carefully and neatly in their exercise books, with effective use of illustrations. Higher-attaining pupils produce original work which is well researched and they write at considerable length. Middle-attaining pupils express their understanding clearly, for example when explaining the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well when they have learning materials such as writing frames to structure their responses but they do not always complete their tasks or make up work after absence.

219. Overall standards of work of the present Year 11 are below average, but teaching methods are well matched to need and enable most pupils in Years 10 and 11 to achieve satisfactorily in relation to prior standards. Higher-attaining pupils achieve well. They explain complex concepts, such as William Paley's argument on the design and purpose of the universe, logically and confidently. Lower-attaining pupils also achieve well when their work is carefully planned in short steps, with individual help where necessary. Most pupils have a reasonable understanding of the different religious standpoints on moral issues such as the sanctity of life, but some middle-attaining pupils have difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly in discussion because they do not get enough practice. Note-taking is carried out carefully and pupils with special educational needs answer written questions successfully because they are given clear guidance. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory

overall despite good teaching because the absence of a minority of pupils prevents them from reaching the standards of which they are capable and the school's recent work on improving pupils' weak literacy skills has not yet had enough time to influence the standards of the oldest pupils.

220. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject. This is because of the good relationships within the classroom and the interesting lessons. Well structured learning materials such as writing frames and lists of useful vocabulary are effective in helping pupils with literacy problems to improve their work. Pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented respond well to the opportunities for research and most pupils make good use of the internet for their project work. However opportunities for visits to places where faith is valid are restricted to sixth form students.

221. The quality of teaching is good and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning in lessons. In the majority of lessons seen the teaching was good and on two occasions it was very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The major strengths lie in a shared commitment to the improvement of the subject, the well structured lessons and the good rapport which teachers have established with their pupils. In the most effective lessons pupils learn successfully because they know what is required of them and they enjoy the work they are doing. For example, pupils in a Year 10 lower-attaining group settled down promptly to their written task because they were quite clear about what they had to do. In a lesson on moral decision making, the teacher's excellent rapport with Year 11 pupils enabled perceptive and fruitful discussions to take place as pupils listened and exchanged ideas which encompassed a wide area of spiritual experience. Teachers use the closing moments of the lesson effectively to check on progress and consolidate the main learning points. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is because lesson activities are not sufficiently varied, pupils do not have enough opportunities for discussion and the pace of working is too slow.

222. The quality of provision has improved substantially since the previous inspection. The subject is well managed with clear educational direction and teachers form a close knit team. They use assessment effectively to monitor progress and to guide curriculum planning. For example they have introduced after school revision classes and an in-house revision booklet for Year 11 pupils. Standards have risen in Years 7 to 9 and religious education is included in the sixth form curriculum. The capacity for further improvement is good. Immediate priorities are the raising of standards at GCSE, introducing a programme of visits in Years 7 to 11, and ensuring, through the sharing of expertise, that all pupils have opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through group and class discussions.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is **good**.

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the vocational department are very good.
- Teaching is good. Teachers work very effectively as a team and have very good subject knowledge.
- Many pupils achieve standards which are above expected levels.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in business education are lower than in the other GNVQ subjects.

223. The school provides a range of vocational and work-related subjects for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Currently GNVQ courses in business education, travel and tourism and health and social care are offered at either foundation or intermediate level.

224. Standards in the GNVQ courses are in line with national expectations overall. In business education, although standards are below national averages, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are developing their skills of analysis and research but they experience some difficulties, for example, in their understanding of fixed and variable costs in business finance. Standards in both leisure and tourism and health and social care are above expectations. Pupils' achievement is good. For many pupils, progress is greater than their prior attainment would suggest. Work is well presented and pupils produce excellent evidence bases for the units of work that they study. Pupils work well both individually and in groups, developing a good sense of responsibility and maturity.

225. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and effective systems for sharing expertise are in place. This is particularly valuable at times of staff shortages when non-specialist teachers are very well supported. Lessons are well planned, expectations are high and pupils are managed very well. Pupils respond well to the individual attention that they receive from their teachers. Work is assessed rigorously and continuously so that pupils are well aware of the standards that they have reached and what they need to do in order to improve. Valuable business links that support pupils' learning have been established within the community.

226. The department is very well led and managed. There is a clear strategic view of vocational provision within the school and very good development plans to support this. The challenges presented by new courses are seized with enthusiasm. Vocational education makes a valuable contribution to the enrichment of the curriculum for pupils of all levels of attainment.

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

Over the course of the inspection, 5 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 sixth form.

The tables below show 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
Biology	8	88	88	13	34	3.3	5.3
Media studies	5	100	N/A	0	N/A	1.0	N/A
Psychology	4	25	N/A	0	N/A	0.5	N/A

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	17	87	17	43	1.7	5.8
Design and technology	5	80	91	0	30	2.0	5.4
Business studies V	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.0	10.5
Computing	4	75	86	0	23	2.0	4.6
Travel and tourism V	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.0	10.1
Health and social care V	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8.0	10.8
Art and design	3	67	96	0	46	2.0	6.6
Music	2	100	93	0	35	4.0	5.7
Media studies	5	100	N/A	20	N/A	6.4	N/A
Performing arts V	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	9.1
Geography	6	67	92	0	38	2.5	5.7
History	4	75	88	0	35	2.5	5.5
English literature	9	89	95	11	37	4.2	5.9

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and tourism V	N	8	11.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Health and social care V	N	2	12.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus in the inspection was on mathematics and biology.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers provide a good level of individual support to the students who appreciate their work.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are secure.

Areas for improvement

- The recruitment and induction arrangements into the sixth form do not provide good support and guidance for students who have achieved less than a grade B on the higher paper for GCSE.
- There are not enough opportunities for discussion and reflection in lessons to enhance students' learning.

227. The school offers courses leading to mathematics at Advanced subsidiary level and Advanced level. The students taking mathematics study a combination of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Currently there is a total of five students studying A-level. One achieved an A-level focused on pure mathematics in one year last year. She is now studying for an AS-level specialising in mechanics this year. Two students are intending to cover enough to take an A-level this year after only three terms of study. The other two students are following a more traditional approach aimed at achieving an AS-level next summer. There is a re-sit GCSE course for those studying A-level in other subjects who did not achieve a grade C in Year 11. The department makes a contribution to the teaching of key skills of using number.

228. Lessons in pure and applied mathematics were seen for Years 12 and 13. The construction of the timetable and timing of course presentation meant that GCSE and key skills lessons were not observed. Work was scrutinised and pupils interviewed.

229. The number of students entered for Advanced level year-on-year has been small. Comparisons with national averages, therefore, are not appropriate in most years since the last inspection. Results vary from year to year but have usually been below national averages and they reflect the students' prior attainment. No students were enrolled to take AS-level last year. A-level results were poor. Four of the five students entered failed with an unclassified

grade. One student who is from China achieved a grade C in one year and has stayed on to study more mechanics. The poor results last year are attributable to teaching which failed to cover sufficient ground in the first year to enable the students to progress to an Advanced level pass standard last year.

230. Too many students are enrolling on the A-level course and dropping out after only a short time. The department intends to review induction procedures for those students moving from Year 11 into the sixth form in order to put right the inappropriate recruitment of some students onto courses which results in disappointing performance. Better use needs to be made of time at the end of the summer term for students in Year 11 and Year 12 to encourage students to use some of the summer holiday for private study and completing set homework.

231. The standard of work seen was broadly in line with national levels. In Year 13, work produced is equivalent to a grade C at A-level or above. The work reflects a good grasp of Newton's second law and its application, and displays a good understanding of vectors but problems involving friction are not yet fully understood. The one year A-level candidates have a good grasp of basic calculus with the stronger of them showing clearer understanding of graphical relationships involving logarithmic functions. The two students studying for AS-level are coming to terms with integration as the inverse of differentiation algebraically but have yet to achieve a clear understanding of how these ideas operate practically.

232. Students studying for AS-level achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior standards. GCSE students make satisfactory progress building upon and improving what they have learned previously. Four of the six entered for GCSE last term converted lower grades gained in the summer to a C grade.

233. Teaching overall is satisfactory but uninspiring. Lessons are adequately prepared and presented, providing an appropriate level of pace and challenge for pupils of all abilities. Strategies, such as the students working individually or in groups on different problems and then explaining their solution to the rest of the group, are not employed. The small group size and disparity of attainment restrict the range and depth of discussion. The marking of work in the sixth form is satisfactory. All work is corrected or checked through in class with some marked by the teacher and annotated with detailed supportive comments.

234. Students feel very well supported by their teachers. The small size of the groups enables students to benefit from teachers' individual guidance and support. Students feel free to approach teachers when they are in difficulties. They are confident to speak out in class or ask questions when they do not understand. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that they give clear explanations to help students understand difficult concepts. Students rightly feel that the good relationships they have with the teaching staff helps them with their work and progress.

235. Departmental management is satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department and her team have had much to focus on in the main school so that their attention has been largely in that direction. Now that the position is improving in the main schools the intention is quite rightly to look more closely at improving the sixth form provision.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject.

- Students with English as an additional language achieve well at AS-level.
- Students do well in practical investigations as part of their A-level coursework.
- The brand new textbooks and microscopes make a strong contribution to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Retention of students is unsatisfactory during Year 12.
- There is a need to improve the proportion of higher grades at AS-level and A- level.
- Insufficient use is made of computers to support the students' learning.

236. The results at A-level in 2000 were in line with national averages in the percentage of students passing, but the proportion of students achieving a higher grade of A or B was well below the national average. Only seven out of ten students were retained from Year 12. The results in the AS-level examination in 2001 were below the national average in passes and higher grades. The one student with English as an additional language achieved a grade B.

237. The standard of work seen during the inspection is average. Year 13 pupils use their knowledge of antibiotics and their impact on bacteria well when discussing the moral issues of intensive farming. Students understand that pesticides accumulate in food chains and end up in humans. They understand how features are inherited. They solve genetic questions using an interactive whiteboard, a good use of ICT. The majority of the group are students of average ability and are making good progress in lessons and they achieve well in relation to prior standards.

238. Year 12 students show knowledge and skills of analysis in the chemistry of carbohydrates in biochemistry. Effective teaching has taken their skills beyond GCSE. They understand that joining together of many units of simple sugars can form complex carbohydrates such as starch and cellulose. The group shows a wide range of previous attainment and, although a minority has not acquired the depth and understanding required in an AS-level course, most students achieve well in relation to their prior standards. The two pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in terms of their speaking and writing.

239. Teaching and learning are good. Students make good progress and learning is best when the lesson is well planned and the challenges of the teacher focus the students on their learning. Objectives are shared and lessons start promptly with brisk question and answer sessions. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers gives them the confidence to answer all questions. Practical coursework is very well marked with A-level grades and comments which steer the students to improvement. Homework is often marked in class where common errors are identified and rectified. The two teachers of AS-level and A-level are very experienced and share their good practice to promote learning. There is little use of computers to further enhance the learning of the students.

240. Students are enthusiastic about biology and enjoy practical work. They take responsibility for their experiments. They respect one another's opinions and relationships are very good. They persevere with tasks and use their time effectively in lessons. They have access to very new textbooks, which they use to supplement their notes. The presentation of work is variable, but the spelling of technical words is good. Graphs and particularly diagrams are of good quality.

241. The management of the subject is satisfactory and establishes clear direction in the development of the subject. Target setting includes good use of specific goals for individual students based on their performance in previous examinations and on teachers' regular review of students' progress. Teachers monitor their own performance by classroom observation. The laboratories are adequately sized, but need refurbishment and increased

resources.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on AS-level ICT. The key skills course in ICT was also sampled. One lesson in key skills was observed, which was satisfactory. No students sat a public examination in key skills in 2001. Students were enhancing their skills in ICT although progress could have been greater. Students enjoyed the lessons and used the skills they had developed in other parts of their studies.

Information and communication technology.

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students enjoy their studies.
- Students value the help given by teachers.

Areas for Improvement

- At the start of the course, students do not have sufficiently high levels of skills and knowledge in the subject.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to work independently.
- Students are not fully aware of the demands and requirements of the course before enrolment.

242. The standards of work seen during the inspection were well below the national average. Too many students do not have the necessary level of skill and prior knowledge required to start the AS-level course and no alternative course is offered at present. Consequently, their achievement within the AS-level course is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning in lessons are satisfactory because the teaching takes good account of students' weak prior attainment. Although students are learning, most are not able to make enough progress from low prior standards to reach the standards required of an AS-level course.

243. No students took a course leading to a public examination in ICT in 2001. Over 25 students began the new AS-level course in ICT in September 2001. More than one third of these students have left the course. Some students did not study ICT after the age of 14. The remainder took GNVQ Information Technology. Some of these did not gain a grade equivalent to grade C or higher at GCSE.

244. Only a minority of students are producing work of a sufficiently high standard to gain a grade in the examination. Students can produce a document template but many experienced difficulties when setting up a user interface. Many students could not identify a file path without assistance from their teacher. Students do not have the confidence to explore the features of a software package other than for basic operations such as changing a background colour. Learning in lessons is satisfactory overall. However, because of the low levels of prior knowledge and understanding, most students cannot learn at a fast enough rate to enable them to reach the standard required to gain a grade in the examination. Students who had gained a merit at GNVQ Information Technology make satisfactory progress. Their progress is slowed by the demands of the remaining majority. The progress of some students is unsatisfactory because of poor levels of attendance.

245. The teaching of the AS-level course is satisfactory. Teachers recognise the low levels of prior attainment. They make good attempts to help students overcome their difficulties. However, because of the large proportion experiencing difficulties, this takes a considerable

amount of time. Teachers undertake a large amount of instruction because students are not able to carry out independent work. These factors can result in students waiting a long time for help from their teacher.

246. Teachers have an appropriate level of knowledge to teach the course. They are skilled at using relevant examples such as when an investigation into an air crash revealed a fault in the design of an input system. The tasks set by teachers enable students to make progress in relation to their low prior standards, but most students do not have the necessary skills and prior experience to enable them to make the rapid progress they need to make to reach the required standards. Students do not answer questions in sufficient depth to reach the standards required by the examination.

247. Students have a positive attitude towards the subject. They enjoy working with computers and recognise that ICT skills will be of benefit. They state that they find the work difficult but praise the quality of assistance given by their teachers. However, several students spoke of the course being much more difficult than they expected. One student, who had gained a higher grade pass at GNVQ, found the differences in approach between GNVQ and AS-level particularly difficult.

248. Students are attentive in class. Some will readily contribute their ideas to discussions. Students are developing the skill of making notes independently but their skills are not yet sufficiently advanced to make notes of a useful quality. Students do not have sufficient skill to independently develop projects from the required framework for the examination.

249. The school's management of the subject is unsatisfactory. Students are not given enough guidance on whether they have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to enable them to cope with the demands of the course offered. As the course offered does not meet the needs of the majority of students, progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography. History and psychology were sampled as subjects, and one lesson was seen of each. In building their knowledge base of history, students share responsibility for researching work, and make presentations to contribute to each other's learning. Students' achievements are firmly based upon very good personal relationships, commitment of all parties to the course, and on the quality of reference texts available at all times. In psychology, students carried out an experiment to test the validity of previously derived hypotheses about the lateralisation of brain function. Students were able to gain a very clear understanding of the transfer of brain traffic, and on the validation of

evidence from fair trials. They were able to comment with subtle appreciation on the ethics of intrusive research into brain functioning.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good. Students are given a great deal of individual help and support.
- Students who attend regularly enjoy their lessons and develop good relationships with their teachers.
- Fieldwork provides valuable geographical experience.
- Students' progress is well monitored.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work are below the national average.
- The course is unsuitable for some students who have not studied the subject at GCSE or for some with very low levels of prior attainment.
- Erratic attendance in lessons reduces students' progress.

250. Examination results have fluctuated in recent years. Group sizes have been very small so that comparisons with national expectations are unreliable. Generally, standards are below national expectations. In 2001, from a group of 7 A-level students, 5 obtained a pass but there were no higher grades of A or B. In 2000, there were only 2 entries at A-level, one of whom received a pass grade. There were no entries last year for the AS course and so there are no students continuing their studies in the current Year 13.

251. Students who choose to study geography in the sixth form are welcomed and encouraged to do so, even if they have not taken the subject at GCSE level. In 2001, about half of the A-level students achieved satisfactorily in the light of their prior attainment, reaching and sometimes exceeding their predicted grades. Departmental analysis of the reasons for the under-achievement of the rest of the group cites the adverse effect of erratic attendance and a lack of background knowledge. A significant proportion of those in Year 12 who began the AS-level course in September has now left the group. Most of the students who remain and who studied geography at GCSE level did not achieve grades between A*-C and so their prior attainment in this subject is low. Achievement is generally satisfactory.

252. The standard of work seen in the current Year 12 is below national expectations. Students find the transition to independent study difficult, relying heavily on their teachers for guidance which is readily given. Those who did not follow a GCSE course have an added disadvantage in that they lack up to date geographical knowledge. Analysis of the written work available shows that some students, particularly girls, take pride in the presentation of their notes and keep careful records of the resources they have been given. Although they achieve quite well in the shorter, more factual questions taken from previous examination questions, their ability to sort information into essay style answers is not well developed. Grammatical construction and spelling are generally poor. However, with careful explanation and the use of well-produced resources from their teachers, students' ability to cope with essential geographical skills is satisfactory. In one very good lesson observed, they co-operated well with each other to process statistical data that built up their knowledge of contrasting urban environments. However, the lack of regular attendance in lessons significantly reduces some students' attainment and progress, despite the good teaching. In addition, a few students, predominantly boys, come to lessons without their files or any record of what they have been doing in previous lessons. They are not taking responsibility for their own achievements and in doing so, disrupt the continuity of their own learning.

253. Teaching and learning are good overall. Of the two lessons observed in Year 12, one was satisfactory and the other was very good. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, students are allowed to sit passively and listen, instead of being actively involved in their own learning. Lessons are very well prepared in sequences that provide an integrated approach to extensive topics such as coastal and river flooding. Students are given a variety of up-to-date textbooks and directed research time in which to develop their own independent learning skills. Very little use is yet made of ICT to extend this process, however. Work is marked in detail, with clear messages to students so that they understand how well they are doing, and what they need to do in order to improve the standard of their work. Teachers know their students very well, develop good relationships with them and do much to help them individually.

254. Work in the subject is led and managed well. Two experienced teachers co-operate to share the teaching, providing a varied approach which students enjoy. Opportunities for extending students' awareness of wider geographical issues and local environments are provided through fieldwork and occasional attendance at outside lectures. The syllabus specifications are well understood and followed, but these have yet to be turned into more detailed, formal schemes of work. There is a shared desire to retain the subject for sixth form study. However, it is vital that the initial guidance and advice offered to prospective students emphasises their own responsibilities and necessary levels of commitment to succeed.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English.

English

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic and they stimulate and motivate students well.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good, leading to open discussion.
- Students think for themselves and develop their own responses.
- Work is thoroughly assessed giving good help to students.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average.
- Students do not have sufficient width of knowledge of literature and the theatre.
- Numbers choosing the subject are low. There are no boys in Year 12 or Year 13.
- Programmes of study are not developed in detail.
- ICT is not used enough, neither is numeracy considered sufficiently.

255. Standards in the work seen in Years 12 and 13 are below average. Students enter the sixth form with below average attainment at GCSE, and achieve satisfactorily during the course. Progress is good within lessons, but students lack the width of knowledge that comes from wide reading beyond the set texts and extensive experience of the theatre. Only one girl in Year 13 had read other books by the set author, Ian McEwan, and few attend the theatre regularly. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and they do so, not relying on the teacher to tell them what to think. Students in Year 13, working on different stories by Angela Carter and Fay Weldon saw how they portrayed women in different ways and gathered relevant detail from the text to support their ideas. Though students in both years

know plot and character well, they struggle to understand how authors use form and structure to convey their ideas. Written work is technically sound, but, in all but that of the higher-attaining students, lacks depth of analysis. Higher-attaining students use basic technical terminology such as genre, realism and fairy tale accurately, but some students express their ideas using colloquialisms, even in written work. Students transferred knowledge gained in their media studies course to throw light on the different portrayals of women. Student visitors from abroad are well integrated into the groups and are achieving satisfactorily.

256. Teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 are good. Sometimes they are very good. Teachers use a variety of methods such as students preparing talks to deliver to the rest of the class, for example on the role of Enobarbus in, 'Antony and Cleopatra', in order to encourage independent thought. Their good subject knowledge and enthusiasm stimulate students and make them interested in their texts. Because relationships between teachers and students are very good, discussion is lively and students are not fearful of expressing their own ideas. For example, when analysing the character of Parry in 'Enduring Love', the teacher joined in the initial brainstorming in the same way as the students, encouraging them to respond freely, thus developing their knowledge well.

257. Learning is supported by good quality handouts, for example, on the genre of fairytales, and students find out more information from sites on the Internet for themselves, using the library well. Assessment is very good, so students know their own strengths and weaknesses. Skilful questioning constantly assesses understanding and moves knowledge on. Written work is thoroughly marked with clear advice on what is good and how the work can be improved. Students are given appropriate targets to aim for in their English, though targets given by the school are far too low. Good work was observed where students analysed examples of assessed work to identify characteristics of various grades so that they became more aware of what was required of them. Teachers constantly work on developing students' communication skills, extending vocabulary and reinforcing essay writing techniques. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills are not yet being exploited, and ICT is underused for presenting written work. Students do use the internet for research. Very few boys elect to take English literature in the sixth form and there are no boys in the present Year 12 or 13. This means that a male perspective is missing during discussion. Numbers of students are low in both years, but most students remain on the course once they have enrolled.

258. Results in the A-level examinations in 2001 were well below average. Considering their attainment on entry to the sixth form these students did not add sufficient value to their attainment in GCSE. A low percentage of students gained the highest grades. In 2000 and 1999, results were below average. The good teaching and learning now occurring in the classroom mean that standards of work seen are now below average rather than well below average as reflected in the results.

259. Students work well, especially in lessons. They are mature and loyal and very appreciative of the help given to them by their teachers. However, some have erratic patterns of attendance, for example, taking holidays during term time, and many have jobs after school which takes up a lot of their time.

260. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The new specifications for AS-level and A-level have been successfully introduced, and all teachers are clear as to the different requirements of the course. Insufficient work is done on the analysis of results and standards, for example, to pinpoint reasons for underachievement last year, and in order to raise standards in the future. Programmes of study cover the basics of what is to be taught, but lack detail of what is to be done and when, in order to ensure that all requirements

of the course are fulfilled and to ensure students get sufficient essay writing and examination practice in a systematic way.

261. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards remain below average, and teaching is still good. Students benefit from more group work and individual presentations in lessons. The department has wisely introduced more course work as students gain from the greater level of support afforded in these modules.