

INSPECTION REPORT

BETHS GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Bexley

LEA area: Bexley

Unique reference number: 101479

Headteacher: Jennifer Payne

Reporting inspector: David Bate
1545

Dates of inspection: 11 – 15 February 2002

Inspection number: 243901

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Boys

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: David Blake

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

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	John Richards	Team inspector	Design & technology	
30741	Paul Copping	Team inspector		Special educational needs
1049	Brian Evans	Team inspector		How well are pupils taught?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Beths Grammar School for Boys is a selective 11-18 school, situated in the London Borough of Bexley. It became grant maintained (GM) in 1993 and is now a Foundation school within LEA control. It was awarded Technology College status in 1995 and has since been successfully re-designated. There are 866 pupils on roll, of whom 183 are in the sixth form including six female students. Admission to the school is based on the LEA's selection procedures which cover the top 25% of pupils in the area – much higher than surrounding selective LEAs and independent grammar schools, thus giving the school population a wider range of abilities than is usual for grammar schools. There is no clearly defined catchment area and the school draws its pupils from a wider socio-economic group than indicated in statistics supplied by the DfES. The number of pupils coming from minority ethnic families where English as an additional language is higher than other schools locally and most schools nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special needs, including statements, is below the national average, and the percentage of pupils with a statement is well below average. The overall attainment of pupils on entry is above average and almost all pupils continue their studies in the sixth form. The basic characteristics of the school have changed little since the time of the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Pupils receive a very good education which has many very good and outstanding features. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Pupils are very positive about learning and behave extremely well. There are excellent relationships throughout the school. Overall standards at the age of 14, 16 and end of sixth form are well-above national averages, and well-above average in comparison with similar schools at age 16 and end of sixth form. The school adds very good value to pupils' achievement as they move through the key stages. Leadership and management are outstanding and there are very good financial and budgetary procedures in place. The provision of extra curricular activities is outstanding. The school is giving very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Outstanding leadership of the head teacher and other key staff.
- Enables pupils to attain very high academic standards.
- Very high levels of good and very good teaching.
- Excellent relationships throughout the school.
- Very good financial and budgetary procedures and processes.
- Very good links with parents.
- Outstanding provision of extra curricular activities including sport and music.
- Very good pupil attitudes, behaviour, personal development and attendance.
- Adds very good value to pupils' achievement and attainment as they progress through the school.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching of chemistry in Years 10 and 11.
- Use of extended registration time to make it more cost effective and useful.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997, since when there have been very good improvements in many key areas. The quality of leadership and management is now outstanding and ensures clear educational direction and purpose for the school. Management has established very effective monitoring and evaluation systems, including input from key governors, which rigorously reviews all aspects of the work of the school, including financial and budgetary matters. The quality of teaching has improved considerably with very high levels of good and very good teaching now in evidence. Standards have improved considerably in GCSE and GCE A-Level.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A*	A*	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	C	B	A	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* Results are in the top 5% nationally

At the age of 16 years in 2001, the overall attainment of pupils in the GCSE examinations in terms of average points scored was well-above average in comparison with all schools and when compared with those of similar schools. For pupils achieving 5 or more grades A* - C, the school was well-above average in comparison with all schools and when comparisons are made with similar schools. For those pupils achieving 5 or more grades A* - G the school was in the highest 5% for all schools as well as in relation to similar schools. In 2001 GCSE examination results in English, mathematics, biology and double award science were well-above the national average for those pupils achieving passes at grades at A* - C, a result which was also well-above average when compared with results in similar schools. The school's best results were in art, biology and statistics and results were weakest in chemistry and PE/Sports Studies. The trend of improvement over the period 1998-2001 is well-above the national trend.

At the age of 14 years in 2001, pupils' overall results in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science were well-above average in comparison with all schools and when compared to similar schools attaining level 5+. When compared with similar schools attaining level 6+ English and science compared unfavorably, whilst mathematics was above these schools. In the DfES pilot scheme for assessing the value the school is adding to pupils' achievement from entry to the end of Key Stage 3 the school achieved very high value added scores compared to all schools in the sample. The trend in English, mathematics and science show improvement overall. The trend overall based on average points scores was broadly in-line with the national trend.

Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress throughout the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the school. They take great pride in their achievements and the schools reputation. They demonstrate very high levels of interest and motivation in their academic work and in extra curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils conduct themselves in a very mature and orderly way both in classrooms and around the school generally.
Personal development and relationships	Very good personal development. Relationships throughout the school are excellent . Pupils are very mature and responsible young men who understand and respect others' feelings, values and beliefs.
Attendance	Very good and is well above the national average.

The attitudes of the pupils at the school are very good. Behaviour around the school is very good and in lessons it is often excellent. Personal development is very good. Relationships are excellent. Attendance is very high.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good throughout the school. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in English, art, design and technology, history, physical education and religious education is very good and it is good in most other subjects except for chemistry in Years 10 and 11 and for geography where it is satisfactory. The needs of most pupils are met. Work is modified for lower-attaining pupils and most teachers present pupils with work that extends their knowledge and understanding. The strengths in teaching are good subject knowledge and understanding, high expectations and the high quality and use of teacher assessment in supporting pupils to raise their standards. Pupils rapidly absorb knowledge and acquire skills. They develop their ideas through rigorous questioning and take an active part in discussion. Pupils quickly develop the ability from Year 7 onwards to sustain concentration in lessons. However, there are lessons where pupils make less progress even though the teaching is generally satisfactory. This is because the work is either too easy or too hard for a group of pupils or because the lesson structure does not give them sufficient scope to apply their previous knowledge and understanding of the topic being studied.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<p>Very good. The school offers a broad curriculum which includes all statutory aspects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent.</p> <p>The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all its pupils.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. There are very well developed systems and procedures for monitoring and supporting all pupils identified as having SEN.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. There are very effective procedures in place for supporting pupils with English as an additional language should such support be required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are very good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent as is provision for diagnosing and supporting individual pupils' needs.

Overall, the effectiveness of the school's links and partnership with its parents is very good. It is another strength of the school and has improved upon the standards of the previous inspection. Such very good links influence considerably the success of the pupils' learning.

The school fulfils very successfully its curricular aims. Provision for extra curricular activities is excellent. There is very good provision for pupils' personal development

The school provides a very caring and safe environment within which to teach its pupils. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good.

The school does not provide opportunities for a daily act of collective worship for all its pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstanding. The headteacher, fully supported by senior and middle managers, provides very clear educational direction and purpose with continuous improvement and raising standards at the heart of the school
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body take a full and active part in the strategic development of the school. The governors have a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a full and active part in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are very well-developed systems in place which enable the school to evaluate all aspects of its performance. This includes detailed analysis of examination results, monitoring of teaching quality and detailed individual pupil target setting procedures.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial and budgetary decisions are firmly embedded in the schools' improvement plan priorities and clearly targeted at enabling all pupils to achieve the highest possible standards.

The headteacher and other key staff provide outstanding leadership and management. There is a corporate shared commitment amongst teaching and non-teaching staff, pupil/students and parents to continuing improvement in provision and standards and a desire to succeed and be the best. The members of governing body, who are now full and active partners in shaping the ethos and direction of the school, are increasingly effective in their role. The key sub committees are led and managed very well and are very effective in their roles. Financial management is excellent. Subject leadership overall is very effective. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision are very good. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources to fully support pupils learning and progress are good

The school fully and rigorously applies all principles of best value in all its financial dealings.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standards achieved by pupils • Pupils make good progress throughout the school • School has high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour • School is very inclusive • Overall high quality of teaching • Teachers are helpful and lead by example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent use of homework • Information about pupils' progress • Improved communications between school and home

Sixty-five parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and 472 questionnaires were returned. The inspection findings accord fully with what pleases parents most.

On the issues parents would like to see improved, the inspection team found that there are good arrangements to communicate with parents on a regular basis. All pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form have an annual report and also receive interim reports very regularly during the year. The use of the student planner was seen to be effective and pupils spoken to thought this system of communication between the school and their parents worked very well. Newsletters and other forms of communication between school and home are sent out regularly and parents are kept well-informed of events. Arrangements for homework are generally good.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM BETHS GRAMMAR SCHOOL for BOYS

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is about the same size as most sixth forms nationally and currently has 183 students. At the time of the inspection there were six female students attending the sixth form. A significant proportion of students speak English as an additional language, all of whom do so very fluently. The school has very close links with the local girls' grammar school to extend the range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to students in both schools. The stay on rate from the main school into the sixth form is very high indeed – around 90% and a very high proportion of Year 13 students move through into higher education. Most students study at least three A-levels and complete a general studies course that includes key skills.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful. Standards are above average and improving. These have risen steadily in recent years. Students learn very well and make good progress. The emphasis in the curriculum is on courses that lead to traditional GCE A-level qualifications. However, the general studies and personal, health and social education (PHSE), community links and extra-curricular programmes provide excellent enhancement of the curriculum and opportunities to ensure very good personal development and that it fully meets the needs of all students. The overall standard of teaching in the sixth form is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. It supports students' learning very well and contributes to the better than expected progress they make. All lessons were at least satisfactory and four in every five were good or better. Nearly half were very good or excellent. The leadership and management of the sixth form are strong and effective. There is a positive ethos for learning. Students are given a great deal of responsibility which they exercise well. Morale in the sixth form is high. The financial management of the sixth form is good, although expenditure for the sixth form is slightly higher than for the rest of the school. The sixth form gives very good value for money.

Strengths

- Students have very good attitudes to learning and teaching.
- Teaching is very good and students achieve well in English, history, electronics within design and technology and art.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and create a strong environment for learning.
- The sixth form offers a wide range of opportunities for students to take responsibility; this contributes very well to their very good personal development.

What could be improved

- Increasing the proportion of students attaining at the very highest grades in GCE A level by the age of 18 years.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good – A-level results are at national average. Standards in lessons are above average. Teaching and learning are good.
Biology	Good – high percentage of higher grades A/B – along with English Literature, biology's higher grades stand out from all other subjects.
Design and technology	Good and Very Good in electronics - although A-level results are below average students are making good progress. There is some excellent teaching.
Business education	Good – Stimulating and varied teaching activities promote good learning. Strong leadership has led to considerable improvements.
Information and communication technology	Good – A-level results are above the national average. Students make good progress as a result of good teaching.
Art	Very good – very good teaching and good evidence of individuality in students' work. Students have very mature attitudes.
Geography	Good - Standards are improving. Teaching is good. Numbers on the courses are small.
History	Very good – The subject is popular and managed very well. Standards are improving. Teaching and relationships are very good.
English literature	Very good – Standards have improved since the last inspection and are well above average. Students achieve well as a result of very good and occasionally outstanding teaching.

Lessons were sampled in physical education, drama, communication skills, music, physics, chemistry, French and PHSE. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Students are making good progress in all these subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Assessment and monitoring of students' work are very good. Students are well known individually and they feel the guidance and support they are given is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership is strong and effective. Arrangements are monitored well. Management of the increasing size of the sixth form, including partnership with a neighbouring grammar school, is very good. Priorities to raise standards and achievement further are clearly defined and effective.

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">• Students receive very good support and guidance before entering the sixth form.• Teaching is very good and challenging.• Students enjoy life in the sixth form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice about future options.

Inspectors found that students' favourable views are fully justified. They also found that careers guidance and advice about their future options are good.

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

- The word 'results' refers to how well the pupils are doing in national tests, GCSE and GCE examinations.
- The word 'standards' is used to define how well the pupils are doing when their work is compared with what pupil nationally are expected to know, understand and do at the ages of 11, 14, 16 and 18 years.
- The word 'Level' refers to a particular standard of work described in the National Curriculum.
- The word 'grade' refers to the public examination grading systems for GCSE and GCE.
- The word 'achievement' refers to how well the pupils are doing at the age of 14 compared with what they were able to at the age of 11, similarly at the age of 16 compared with what they could do at the age of 14 and finally what they can do at the age of 18 compared with what they were able to do at the age of 16 years. It indicates how much progress the pupils are making.

Results and standards on entry to the school at the age of 11 years.

- Results at the age of 11 in national tests taken prior to the pupils' entry to the school are well-above the national average.
- Results at the age of 11 are lower than those one would expect to find for entry to a selective grammar school.

1. Results in the national tests at age 11 in the final term of primary school are well-above the national average for all schools. In 2001 all pupils for whom data was available attained the standards that all pupils nationally are expected to reach – Level 4 – in English and science, whilst 99% attained the expected level in mathematics. Nearly all attained the national expectations in reading but a small minority of pupils failed to reach the expected level in writing. There were significant numbers of pupils who did not attain the higher levels – levels 5 and 6 – in the tests
2. Entry to the school at age 11 is by selection, using the LEA test. These tests aim at the top 25% of 11 year old pupils in the LEA. This is a much wider spread of abilities than is normal for selective grammar schools nationally.

Results, standards and achievement at the age of 14 years

Strengths

- Results are well-above the national average.
- Achievement is good; it is very good in design and technology and history.
- Standards of work are above those expected nationally.
- Standards are high at the age of 14 in design and technology, history and geography.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement at higher levels in English.
- Handwriting for least able pupils.
- The trend in national test results at the age of 14 compared with the national trend.

3. The school has been heavily involved in the DfES pilot relating to pupils' achievement and value added from age 11 to age 14 and age 14 to age 16. The measured value added performance for the school – 105.5 against a norm of 100, placed it in the top 5% of the 204 schools involved and represents very high levels of value-added in its performance at age 14 and age 16.
4. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were very high compared with the national average for all schools in English, mathematics and science, although the proportion at higher levels in English was less than the previous year, and less than in mathematics and science. Results have fluctuated but overall show a rising trend, and have improved considerably since 1996, including a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 and above. Despite this improvement, the results in English for pupils attaining level 6 and above are well-below the average for selective schools. This is partly because of lower than usual prior attainment. Although pupils' attainment on entry is above average overall, a small proportion of pupils enter with weak writing skills.
5. Evidence from the DfES pilot scheme assessing value-added progress suggests that pupils' achievement is good overall. These outcomes clearly indicate that pupils overall are improving their attainment by the age of 14 by 1.5 levels above the national expectation. Results in English, mathematics and science indicate good value-added when judged against pupils' standards on entry to the school. Standards in current work in all three subjects show that standards are still very high, and that progress is good. Standards in design and technology are well above the national average, both in work seen and in teachers' assessments. This represents a significant rise in pupils' achievement by age 14 years and now nearly all pupils surpass average standards, with many attaining the highest levels, and some the exceptional performance category.
6. Standards of literacy are very high. Pupils are articulate and prepared to speak at length in class. They are confident and precise in using subject -specific terminology. Reading skills are very good, particularly the higher order reading skills of obtaining and synthesising information. Most pupils have very good writing skills, and in most subjects are provided with opportunities to write in a range of forms. Most pupils are able to take and make notes effectively, and their summarising skills are good. However, there are a significant proportion of the least able pupils who still have poor handwriting by age 14.
7. Pupils enter the school with numeracy standards that are well-above average. They improve and further develop these skills as they move through the school, not only in mathematics lessons, but also by using numeracy in other subjects. For example in

science they use decimals, fractions and percentages. They substitute in formulae and solve equations. They collect and analyse data which they represent with appropriate graphs and charts. In geography they construct graphs and bar charts to illustrate data and represent results. In information and communication technology (ICT) they use spreadsheets to calculate costs, analyse data and construct graphs and charts. In physical education they use graphs to plot their progress every three minutes when running for 12 minutes. This they compare with previous results in order to measure their progress. They also calculate their heart rate and recovery rate. In these and other subjects pupils' numeracy skills assist their learning and progress.

8. There are no benchmark assessments at age 11 in other subjects and no available comparisons with other selective grammar schools nationally. The statutory teacher assessments in 2001 were well-above average with nearly all achieving the nationally expected standards or better by the age of 14 years. Caution is required in the interpretation of these assessments because moderation arrangements are insufficient to confirm their validity.
9. These assessments were particularly high in design and technology, history and geography with the most able attaining very highly in design and technology.
10. Progress was never less than satisfactory in any of the 76 lessons seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 with four-fifths recording good or very good progress and advances in pupils' learning across all subject areas.
11. Standards at age 14 are above those expected nationally. In English and across other subjects, pupils speak confidently and are prepared to answer questions in some detail. Most read with good understanding, developing higher order reading skills. Most pupils' writing is competent and fluent, the best producing analytical essays and powerful narrative writing of a very high standard. Those in lower sets have more difficulty in organising their ideas, particularly in creative writing. A significant proportion of these still have poor handwriting by age 14. Good progress over time is seen as pupils respond to their teachers' increasing demands.
12. In mathematics most pupils reach very high standards in algebra and trigonometry. They solve problems involving right-angled triangles using the sine and cosine ratios. Other pupils use number confidently in a variety of contexts. They have well-developed graphical skills and find equations and points of intersection of a straight line. In science they are skilfully taught to develop a high level of scientific enquiry.
13. In art pupils of all abilities make rapid progress from age 11 years and apply their high level of intellectual understanding very well in to the research required for projects. Practical work shows very good integration of this into two and three-dimensional realisations. Pupils use ICT to very good effect.

14. In design and technology pupils' make very good progress by age 14 years and quickly develop a good working knowledge of the design process, and use it successfully to develop well-made and highly original products, for example mechanical toys, using cams. They work at a good pace and often make outstanding advances in understanding and skills in a short time.
15. In geography pupils have a good knowledge of places and can locate them accurately. They use geographical vocabulary appropriately and can use geographical skills to extract and present information, describe and explain patterns seen in human and physical geography and can show how one process can interact with another to influence those patterns seen.
16. From a low level of subject knowledge on entry pupils make very good progress in history by age 14 years. Pupils are at ease with the critical use of sources and learn to write for a variety of purposes. In this context, some very good extended writing was seen from Year 9 pupils on the development of the railways and the causes of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. As a result of these advances in subject skills, standards are above expectations, and sometimes well-above national expectations for all pupils by age 14 years.
17. The standard of work seen in ICT among current pupils is generally good. In a Year 9 lesson pupils were adding notes to a series of slides for a presentation to be made in their English lesson. Slides had been developed using a range of presentation tools.
18. By the age of 14 pupils have a good command of appropriate elements of their first foreign language (French or German) and are making good progress with their second language. In their first language they listen attentively and accurately to native speech. They are more diffident when speaking, but can put together simple sentences within the limited context of topics handled. Most can make statements and express opinions and are familiar with, though not always confident in using, three tenses of the verb. Standards are consistently above national expectations. Standards in the second language are understandably lower because of the later start in Year 9 but the rapid pace of work ensures that the ground is made up.
19. By the age of 14 years attainment in music is above the national average. Most pupils show confidence as performers. Many sing with an accurate sense of pitch. They have a good general musical knowledge and demonstrate a secure rhythmic ability. The achievement of pupils is good and they make good progress in understanding different musical styles and in identifying the way that instruments are used by composers to create an effect.
20. In physical education pupils make good progress by age 14 in games. They have developed and refined skills and can use them effectively in game situations. They had good knowledge of how to prepare for and recover from specific activities. In badminton they were making satisfactory progress with the better pupils showing good movement about the court and good shot selection.
21. Pupils make good progress in RE by age 14 and they know about Christianity and five other major religions of Britain.

22. The small number of pupils with special educational needs make very good progress by age 14 years and their needs are fully met within the school. All members of staff understand their particular requirements and practical, supportive mechanisms are shared by teachers to ensure full inclusion of these pupils and all on the special educational needs register in lessons.
23. The school has started to identify formally those who are gifted and talented. These pupils' make good progress overall and the standards of their work seen confirms this, especially in English, mathematics, history, physical education and IT. The additional voluntary time provided in 'Period 7' after school fully supports these pupils to attain well at the higher levels by age 14 years.
24. There are no perceptible differences between the subject competences of those students whose mother tongue is not English and that of their peers. All have a standard of English which enables them to access the curriculum effectively. The school includes pupils with English as an additional language very well into all its activities and monitors their attainment to ensure that they have no more subtle unmet needs. This monitoring is reported to governors, last year showing the attainment of these pupils to be significantly higher than their peers at age 14 years.

Results, standards and progress at the age of 16 years

Strengths

- Very high standards in comparison with national averages – the school is in the top 5% nationally.
- Very high levels of pupils attaining grades A* - C across almost all subjects.
- Trends improving at a faster rate than nationally.
- Very high levels of attainment in comparison with similar schools – the school is in the top 5% nationally.
- Very good levels of progress in relation to prior attainment.

Areas for development

- Increase the proportion of pupils achieving at grade A*/A across all subjects.
- Improve the results in chemistry and PE/sports studies to ensure they meet at least national averages for A* - C grades.

25. Standards in 2001 are very high in comparison with the national average and are in the top 5% nationally. This represents a significant improvement on the results reported at the last inspection in all subjects and the performance over the intervening years has been improving steadily, although always very high in comparison with the national average. The level of these results in comparison to similar schools is very high and also places the school in the top 5% nationally.
26. The trend since the last inspection in the school's average points score has been well-above the national trend. Since the last inspection all subjects have improved significantly and the school's results are much further ahead of the national average for all schools than they were in 1997. With the exception of chemistry and PE/sports studies all subjects were well-above the national average in all areas, that is: percentage A* - C grades, percentage A* - G grades and points score per pupil. All pupils in art and design, biology and statistics attained an A* - C grade. All pupils in all subjects attained an A* - G grade.
27. In 2001, 100% of pupils attained at least 5+ A* - C grades which is very high compared to the national average. The average points score of 65.8 is also high and continues an improving trend since the last inspection.

28. These results, expressed as an average points score per pupil, were above average when compared with grammar schools nationally and represent high levels of progress when comparisons are made with the pupils' previous results in national tests at the age of 14 years. The outcomes of the DfES value-added pilot project also confirm this high level of pupil progress. The very high quality of work seen during the inspection further confirms these standards and levels of progress.
29. The proportion of pupils obtaining the highest grades of A*/A varied considerably between subjects with approximately half of the pupils attaining these grades in mathematics, physics, geography and information systems. A third of pupils attained these grades in English, chemistry and history. Approximately a quarter did so in English Literature, statistics and art. The proportion obtaining grades A*/A was low in double science, design and technology, business studies, PE and RE. Although the overall percentage attaining grades A*/A of 31% represents a further significant improvement since 1998, the raising of these levels of attainment is an area the school needs to address.
30. The pupils did significantly better in mathematics, drama and German than they did in their other subjects. They did less well in PE, religious studies short course and ICT short course.
31. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above those expected nationally in all subjects and are well-above those expectations in English, mathematics, art, electronics within design and technology, history, music and RE.
32. Almost all pupils make very good progress by the age of 16 years as indicated in the national comparison against prior attainment and substantiated by the findings from the DfES value added project. Progress was never less than satisfactory in all but three of the 54 lessons seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11, with almost four-fifths recording good or very good progress and advances in pupils' learning across all subject areas. Pupils made unsatisfactory progress in chemistry due mainly to the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and lack of appropriate challenge in the work and subsequent loss of motivation.
33. Inspection evidence revealed no perceptible differences between the subject competences of those pupils whose mother tongue is not English and these of their peers. All have a standard of English which enables them to access the curriculum effectively. The school includes pupils with English as an additional language very well into all its activities and monitors their attainment to ensure that they have no more subtle unmet needs. This monitoring is reported to governors, last year showing the attainment of these pupils to be significantly higher than their peers at ages 14 and 16 years. This difference is particularly marked at GCSE where points scores of pupils from ethnic minorities, some of whom are pupils with English as an additional language, are well above the average of the cohort.

34. Standards of literacy are generally very high at age 16. Many subjects provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills further by engaging in discussions and debate, writing in-depth and researching information, which often includes very good use of ICT. Pupils are articulate speakers: they answer questions thoughtfully and are always prepared to express their own opinions and ideas, using appropriate technical terminology with confidence. They usually listen to their teachers attentively. Most have well-developed reading skills particularly evident in English and RE, where oral activities are an important factor in learning. Their comprehension is good and pupils of all abilities are able to write detailed perceptive analyses of the topics studied, although some weaker pupils struggle to develop an appropriate formal style. Many in higher sets produce creative writing of a very high standard in English. However, some weaker pupils sometimes show an unwillingness to write in depth.
35. Standards in numeracy by age 16 are very good. Pupils improve and further develop these skills as they move through the school, not only in mathematics lessons, but also by using higher order numeracy in other subjects. For example in science they substitute in formulae and solve complex equations. They collect and analyse data which they represent in high level graphical representations. In ICT they use more sophisticated spreadsheets to analyse data. In these and other subjects numeracy skills assist their learning and progress.
36. Standards in ICT are above those expected nationally at age 16. There are many good opportunities to use and develop these skills in other subjects, notably in RE, art and science; pupils use the ICT suites extensively at breaks and lunchtime to do research and access information. Many subject teachers positively refer pupils to an appropriate website as a matter of course.

Sixth form

Strengths

- A level results are well above the national average for 2001.
- A consistently rising trend in A level results since the last inspection.
- Work seen for current students is well above expectations.
- Very good A level and AS results in English literature.

Areas for improvement

- The significant variations between subjects for pupils attaining higher grades A/B.

37. A-level results in 2001 for pupils attaining grades A to E were well-above the national average. There was a significant amount of variation between subjects for students attaining the higher A/B grades.
38. Results were well-above average in English Literature and biology and above average in art and design, chemistry, computer studies and general studies for students attaining grades A and B. They were in-line with the national average in economics, geography, mathematics and physics and below average in design and technology and history and well-below average in sport/PE studies.
39. Results in AS English literature were well-above the national average, those in business studies, biology and geography were above the national average and those in mathematics and computing in 2001 were broadly in-line with the national average.
40. Since the last inspection, results have shown a consistent and upward trend with the strongest performances being in English literature and biology. Students are making

very good progress from their GCSE attainment in English literature and geography. Progress is good in biology, electronics and art.

41. The factors that contribute to these good high standards are complex but of particular significance. They are the very good standards of teaching, provided by very thorough and professional teachers who prepare very well, have very high expectations and challenge and target students' individual needs accurately. Standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills on entry to the sixth form are good. The vast majority of sixth form students have a very positive and responsible attitude to their school and their studies. Relationships with each other and with teachers are excellent. The students are very mature, very highly motivated and have very high expectations of themselves. The combination of these good levels of key skills and the high expectation and very good subject knowledge that characterises nearly all of the sixth form teaching provide the foundation for their overall good progress in the sixth form.
42. The standards of students' work seen in lessons and in their folders is very high in English literature and above average and better than might be expected from the examination results in mathematics, biology, business studies, art, geography and history and in-line with the national average in ICT. Students work seen indicates improving standards in design and technology. Overall standards in the lessons seen were above those expected nationally in 57% and were very high in 22% of lessons.
43. Students contribute to discussions in English with perceptive insights which are articulately expressed. They sustain arguments and research information to support their conclusions in history and use precise scientific language with confidence and understanding. Most students analyse text in depth in English and carry out detailed analysis of information, for example the decline of the Liberal party after World War 1. They demonstrate very good algebraic skills in mathematics and investigate algebraic functions, find asymptotes, plot graphs and use graphical calculators with confidence and accuracy. They have good knowledge and understanding of the main business concepts in business education and successfully discuss the implications of road building and describe the different stages of product development. In geography they demonstrate good knowledge of human and physical processes and the extent to which these interact. They also test hypotheses about micro climate and apply what they have learned to interpret global patterns and processes.
44. A major strength in students' attainment and progress is the logical way they organise and present their work. Written work and diagrams are particularly accurate and well-presented in electronics. They demonstrate good progress in developing their note taking and essay writing skills. Most are able to apply high order ICT skills to their coursework and they show an impressive capacity for mature reflection

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- The attitudes of the students are very good.
 - Behaviour around the school is very good and in lessons it is often excellent.
 - Personal development is very good.
 - Relationships are excellent.
 - Attendance is very high.
45. The attitudes of the students at the school are very good. These are a strength of the school and have even improved upon the already existing high standards reported on at the previous inspection.

46. The enthusiasm shown in lessons and around the school overall is highly commendable. The students are proud of their school and its good name. The majority of them display very deep interest and involvement whether academically, playing sport or at leisure. This was most evident during a PHSE lesson, by Year 7 discussing 'Violence'. The students had to discuss as many emotions as they could think of, connected to the subject. The very adult conversations covered everything from intimidation and involvement to inconvenience, to mention but a few. From witnessing both, sport on the field and an evening orchestral concert, it is obvious that competition and pride in their school go hand-in-hand for the students.
47. Behaviour at Beths School is very good; this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. This is strengths of the school. Within lessons behaviour is often excellent. However, in a very few instances, where the management of students is less effective and the curriculum provision is inappropriate, behaviour is occasionally unsatisfactory; this was witnessed in only 2 of the 179 lessons observed. In and around the school pupils conduct themselves very well. Between lessons they usually move around in an orderly fashion and at break times, talk in groups or play football. The pupils are very polite. They willingly open doors ahead of you and are very keen to guide you around the school. During the inspection no evidence whatsoever was seen of oppressive behaviour, vandalism or graffiti. From talking to groups of students, it is obvious, that they are very well aware of the retaliation caused by and repercussions ensuing from their actions upon others. They realise, that not all people, even within their own school, have either been brought up the same or have similar views and values as themselves. Incidents of exclusion at the school are very low and compare favourably with similar schools of this type.
48. Personal development and relationships overall are very good and yet another of the many strengths. The initiative and personal responsibility shown by the pupils is very good. ICT work is usually carried out with the minimum of supervision and students generally are encouraged to follow independent programmes of study. Musicians practise individually or in unsupervised groups. Pupils adapt well to, and proudly carry out, the responsibility of becoming either form prefects, team captains in sport or the library and learning resource monitors.
49. Relationships specifically at the school are excellent and a very significant strength in the school's success. The majority of the students, from many walks of life, get on very well together. They all mix and study well in groups or at the various sports and musical groups offered by the school. The pupils look up to and show great respect for the staff at the school, particularly their own form tutors or heads of department. They realise that they can turn to them at any time not only as a mentor but also as a friend.
50. Attendance at the school is very high compared with schools of this type nationally. Attendance within individual classes is also high. The majority of pupils come to school and into classes on time and most lessons commence promptly. The school has no unexplained absence trends.

51. Overall, the very good attitudes, values and personal development of pupils at Beths school contribute significantly towards the success of their learning.

Sixth form

Strengths

- The majority of sixth form students have a very positive and responsible attitude to their school and their studies.
- Their personal development and relationships are excellent.
- The development of personal and learning skills is very good.
- Students' attendance and punctuality are very good.

52. The majority of sixth form students have a very positive and responsible attitude to their school and their studies. They are still at the school because they want to be not because they are forced to be. They are proud of the high expectations and confidence that tutors have in them and strive very hard for their academic futures.
53. Their personal development and relationships are excellent. They take on the role of prefects and captains of senior sports teams with great pride. Many complete training qualifications in, for example, sport and this enables them to contribute significantly in helping pupils in local primary schools. Others similarly offer help in ICT and music. During the inspection, it was a privilege to witness three sixth form students learning, with immense patience and care, to teach severely disabled children in a nearby special school. Students have an excellent standard of bonhomie with and reciprocal respect for, both their contemporaries and members of staff.
54. The development of personal and learning skills is very good. This was very evident from the large numbers of students involved in either independent individual or group study work, within their discreet study areas or in the learning resource centre.
55. Students' attendance and punctuality for this type of school are very good.
56. From comments received on the student questionnaires and from speaking to them personally the majority have positive views on the school. They particularly thought that they were well-prepared for the sixth form, well-taught and challenged and they enjoyed the life. Those spoken to could not agree with the few negative views expressed by a small minority of students.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

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.

Strengths

- Very high levels of good, very good and excellent teaching.
- Teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge.
- Teachers plan their lessons well and have a good understanding of how pupils learn.
- High standards are based on very good teaching of basic skills, which are acquired by pupils from Year 7 onwards.
- Teachers know their pupils and their needs very well.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of chemistry in Years 10 and 11.
- Satisfactory teaching does not always respond sufficiently to the different needs of all pupils and expectations are not consistently high enough.
- Some teachers do not consistently use methods that actively involve pupils in the lesson and develop independent investigation skills.

57. Overall, teaching is very good in Years 7 to 11 and underpins the high standards achieved by pupils. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all but two lessons seen. It was good or better in eight out of every ten lessons and very good or excellent in over four out of every ten lessons. Both unsatisfactory lessons observed were in Years 10 and 11. In these two lessons, pupils made little progress because the work they were set was too easy and the teacher's classroom management was weak. Since the last inspection, the considerable emphasis by the headteacher and senior staff on improving the quality of teaching and learning enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress and achieve high standards. A key element has been a strong framework for monitoring and supporting good classroom practice. For example, all teachers begin lessons by making their objectives for the lesson clear to pupils and most, but not all, end by reviewing pupils' learning at the end of the lesson. As a result, most pupils of all attainment levels work harder, develop good study skills and make considerable gains in their understanding and skills.
58. Teaching is very good in art, English, design and technology, history, physical education and religious education. It is good in drama, mathematics, French and German. In science, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but is unsatisfactory in chemistry. In geography, teaching is satisfactory. In music, it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11.
59. There are three major strengths in teaching. The first is teachers' high expectations. These are exemplified by their very good subject knowledge, by their good quality lesson planning and by their understanding of how pupils learn. These are key factors in enabling pupils to fulfil their academic potential. Lessons are planned to include a sequence of progressively harder tasks, which enables pupils to cope with demanding work. In most lessons, teachers' firm but reassuring approach helps to build up pupils' confidence in tackling the challenging tasks set for them. The teacher's authoritative subject knowledge was communicated well and lessons frequently began by challenging pupils' prior understanding. The lesson plan included different group activities designed to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding at a level appropriate to them. In response, pupils work hard, concentrate well and are keen to learn. In very good lessons, pupils have high expectations of themselves.
60. The second strength is that high standards are based on very good teaching of basic skills, which are acquired by pupils from Year 7 onwards. Pupils gain well-above average skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and numeracy. As a result, pupils are able to research topics for themselves and learn to draw conclusions and form opinions. Provision in teachers' planning for developing ICT skills has improved significantly since the last inspection. Most teachers encourage pupils to apply their above average ICT skills either as part of a planned programme within their subject or, more often, to use the computers in the learning resource centre at break times or after school.

61. The third strength is that teachers know their pupils and their needs very well. It confirms the school's effective inclusion policy. In very good lessons, teachers' assessment of how successfully pupils are learning in lessons is of high quality. It enables them to match work appropriately to the attainment levels of individuals and of groups. Written work is marked in a helpful and constructive way. In addition, teachers use careful and effective questioning in their assessment of pupils' progress. At the beginning of lessons, they check what pupils remember and in the course of the lesson they periodically check knowledge and understanding. Questions are also used to develop knowledge and understanding, to encourage independent thinking with open questions. In most lessons, pupils are encouraged to question information presented to them and to think for themselves.
62. Homework is well-designed and supports learning very effectively. A range of tasks is set, including some that encourage pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding for themselves. Many pupils take advantage of open-ended assignments to produce work of a very high standard.
63. Very good teaching, allied to a consistent implementation of the school's teaching and learning policy, is a major contributory factor in pupils' very good attitudes to learning. In lessons with some shortcomings in pace and challenge, it is sometimes the pupils themselves who come to the rescue with their pertinent questions which drive the lesson at a pace it otherwise would not have. The main difference between very good teaching and good teaching is the degree to which the teacher inspires pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding outside the lesson timetable. Homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Marking of pupils' work is good and the school's assessment data is used well in many subjects in planning lessons and for monitoring pupils' progress.
64. However, there are weaknesses. In many otherwise satisfactory lessons, teaching does not always respond sufficiently to the different needs of all pupils and expectations are not high enough. For example in mathematics, average attainers are capable of achieving higher standards. Teachers do not consistently use methods that actively involve pupils in the lesson. In satisfactory lessons, this lack of variety in teaching approaches limits the development of independent investigation skills.
65. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers are fully aware of pupils needs and address these very well in lessons. The quality of teaching for pupils for whom English is an additional language is very good. The quality of teaching for pupils identified as being gifted and talented is good.

Sixth form

66. The overall standard of teaching in the sixth form is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. It supports students' learning very well and contributes to the better than expected progress they make. All lessons were at least satisfactory and four in every five were good or better. Nearly half were very good or excellent.
67. In every subject the standard of teaching is at least good and in English, biology, art and in design and technology it is very good. Teachers have the subject expertise and personal skills and share a strong professional commitment to student learning and establish a very good teacher-student rapport. This is clearly recognised by the great majority of students who value the support they receive and many are inspired to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills independently.

68. Teachers understand how to enable students to make very good progress in developing their understanding. In subjects such as history and business studies, students develop a sophisticated understanding of different theoretical models and concepts through the teachers' ability to elucidate and exemplify intellectually challenging ideas. Students respond well to their teachers' high expectations.
69. Lessons are well-planned and there is a mix of teacher directed work and other activities where students are more actively involved in their learning. Teachers have developed effective means of monitoring and supporting student progress. Marking and assessment are good and used well to determine students' strengths and weaknesses.
70. Provision for the teaching of key skills is good. In ICT, access for students is good and, for example, is exemplified by the impressive working atmosphere when sixth form students are studying independently in the learning resource centre.

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

Strengths

- The school fulfils very successfully its curricular aims.
- Provision for extra curricular activities is excellent.
- Very good provision for personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Monitor the provision and quality of ICT across all subjects in Year 10 to ensure statutory requirements are being fully met.

71. The school fulfils very successfully its aims to offer a broad, balanced and relevant education which includes academic studies and extra-curricular activities including trips, visits, sports, music, drama and community service work. There is a very successful emphasis on the academic, personal and social needs of individual pupils.
72. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is generally very good. It includes all aspects of the national curriculum and RE. In Years 7 and 8, pupils study either French or German and take up the second foreign language in Year 9. At that stage science is expanded into three separate subjects, i.e. biology, chemistry and physics.
73. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is very good. All pupils study GCSE courses in English language and literature, mathematics, double science, design and technology, French, information systems, physical education and religious education. Additionally they select two options from art, business studies, drama, geography, German, history, ICT, statistics, music, religious studies and a third science. Some pupils also take a short course in GCSE French. During these two years all pupils are expected to attend a residential course and undertake a period of work experience.

74. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 have timetabled provision for PHSE, which is very good and it includes sex, health and drugs education. It covers a wide range of cross-curricular themes and is well co-ordinated. Careers and vocational education are good with pupils having access to a good range of material and advice. There is a strong emphasis on progression into the sixth form and then to university.
75. The curriculum from Years 7 to 11 is socially inclusive, seeks to remove barriers to learning and ensure that all pupils have full and appropriate opportunities to succeed as mature young adults.
76. The school allocates sufficient time to all subjects in its broad curriculum, although use of ICT across the curriculum has not yet been mapped. In view of the school's decision to deliver ICT in Year 10 in a cross curricular way, it would be advisable to carry out this task with some urgency to ensure appropriate delivery of the statutory curricular requirements for ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
77. Taught time for the week is the recommended number of hours and the school additionally provides 'period 7' time after the end of the school day for pupils to access additional support and help in a range of studies.
78. A significant amount of time is invested throughout the school year in form tutor time at the start of the day, when pupils are not engaged in assemblies. The overall quality of these periods was unsatisfactory and inconsistently used by tutors and pupils. The school should address this time to ensure effectiveness in the overall learning process for all pupils and value for the expensive teacher investment.
79. The school has a formal policy relating to gifted and talented pupils. During the inspection there was little evidence in classroom of additional support for these pupils. However, there are many good opportunities in the extra curricular provision, including targeting during the post-school 'period 7', Saturday morning and holiday 'Masterclasses' for these pupils to get additional help and support for their particular needs.
80. An excellent programme of extra-curricular activities provides further enhancement. This programme includes a very wide range of clubs and activities which enable pupils to extend their interest and expertise in curricular areas for example; art, drama, English, ICT, mathematics, science and technology (including kart club) as well as the more traditional range of sporting and games activities, together with a very impressive range of music groups including big band, choir, orchestra and singing groups.
81. The school also organises many educational and holiday trips, some residential, others of one day duration. This extensive programme reflects a very high level of staff commitment to providing extra opportunities to develop subject knowledge and personal interest beyond the classroom. Many pupils also benefit from the instrumental tuition provided in music.
82. Further excellent opportunities are provided for pupils beyond the immediate locality. Students have been involved in World Challenge expeditions to Guyana and South Africa in the last two years. Large numbers of pupils enter the UK junior and Intermediate maths competitions.
83. The school has very good links with the local community, including primary and secondary schools, churches, businesses and community organisations. These activities form part of the Specialist Technology College community provision.

84. In addition to supporting local and national charities, money has been raised to support a school in Nigeria. Sixth form students visit and assist in old people's homes and special schools. Pupils from Year 10 and above give assistance with games, music and ICT in local primary schools.
85. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It has improved since the last inspection.
86. Provision for spiritual development is good. A carefully planned programme of assemblies provides a very good range of opportunities to reflect on matters of spiritual, moral and social values. The ethos of these occasions is very good, providing opportunities for praise, encouragement and the rewarding of good work. They also reinforce the togetherness and corporateness of the school community. English, art, RE and music make valuable contributions to pupils' spiritual development. The school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
87. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school puts a very strong emphasis on personal responsibility, and this underpins the school's approach to the very good quality of moral education. There is a very well understood framework of values. This is particularly so in religious education and PHSE where pupils debate a wide range of contemporary moral and social issues such as euthanasia and abortion for example; very good work on the issues of abortion and medical ethics proceeded from the coordinator's careful planning of a series of three lessons in Year 10 and work in Years 7 to 9 about 'cheats never prosper'.
88. Provision for pupils' social development is also very good. There are many good opportunities in lessons to work together in pairs and groups, for example in drama when developing a small playlet, in PE in small sided games development and in science to develop an investigation topic. The school's aims, ethos and values encourage qualities of self-respect, self-discipline, leadership and responsibility. The many team sports and musical activities that the school provides make a very good contribution to teamwork and balance very well the elements of competition and co-operation. Residential experiences, both in England and abroad extend further the very good opportunities for pupils' social development.
89. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There is a good range of opportunities in music, RE, art and English. There are very good opportunities for pupils to visit the theatre, museums and places of interest. The school, however, does not take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the presence of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of Britain as a multi-cultural society.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Very wide range of subjects at AS and A-level.
- Very good choice of options within courses.
- Excellent range of extra-curricular activities including most sports.
- Very good opportunities for students to participate in activities to support the local community.

90. The curricular opportunities offered in the sixth form are excellent. The school provides a very wide range of subjects at both AS and A-level. Over twenty subjects are offered in this school with a further seven available in collaboration with Townley Grammar School on its site. These arrangements work well and there are sufficient students to provide very good option choices within most courses. Students also follow a PSHE course which assists their personal development. Students are provided with a very good range of learning opportunities outside the classroom including community service. For example, students help to improve amenities at a local home caring for young people recovering from cancer and work with disabled pupils in a special school. They are enthusiastic and caring as they undertake these responsibilities. There is also wide range of sports, drama and music for students to continue.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Strengths

- The school provides a very caring and safe environment within which to teach its pupils.
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good.
- The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour.
- Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good.

91. The school provides a very caring and safe environment within which to teach its pupils. This is a strength of the school and ensures a very conducive and welcoming atmosphere, leading directly to the success of the pupils' learning. Such conditions have improved upon the existing high standards witnessed at the previous inspection.
92. The head of pastoral care is the named and trained child protection person. He ensures that all staff are well-briefed on their relevant responsibilities. The school works very closely with the local social services and police. It follows local authority written policy guidelines. All incident reports and other relevant documentation are securely locked away.
93. Health and safety are very capably handled by the school's experienced representative and a named governor. They have ensured that all fire-fighting, physical educational and portable electrical equipment are in-date checked. Fire exercises are held regularly and recorded. All escape routes from the school are well- marked and accessible. A detailed up-to-date written policy exists and indicates risk assessments have been carried out. The school has a caring and effective accident and medical routine. There are fully trained first aid personnel. Good use is made of the visiting school nurse and other outside professional help. The local policeman comes in and talks about drug and alcohol abuse and also makes a very full contribution overall towards PHSE. Meals are cooked, served and consumed in very hygienic conditions.
94. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good and account directly for the very high levels shown by the school. Computerised attendance sheets

are marked morning and afternoon and forwarded to the office. Attendance is also recorded at individual lessons. The school has a very secure lateness routine. Parents are well-aware of their relevant responsibilities. If pupils are absent the school contacts parents directly. Very good use is made of the local educational welfare officer.

95. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating that of an oppressive nature; these are major strengths of the school. The discipline policy contains very realistic rewards and sanctions. These are well-known and adhered to by staff and students alike. Disaffected pupils are counselled by the special educational needs coordinator. If necessary they are put onto an individual behaviour plan for up to one term and are continuously monitored. Pupils who have experienced this course of action speak very highly of the effects it had on supporting them through their problems. The school has a separate anti-bullying policy. All pupils are given the confidence to report incidents to a prefect or staff member and the staff are experienced at diffusing potentially dangerous situations. The school has a separate racial harassment procedure within which, incidents are recorded, analysed and reported to the local authority. Behaviour and bullying are fully covered at assemblies and in PHSE.
96. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good and are another of the school's strengths. Through the school's efficient PHSE programme all students are taught how to become responsible and caring citizens. Team-work is also important, as evidenced by the way that the pupils work together in sports teams or within the musical ensembles. Working in the community, at other schools and with old people is consistently encouraged. All pupils have personal files, self compiled, in which can be kept personal statements and, for the older boys, work experience documents and/or job interviews.

Sixth form

Strengths

- The school knows its sixth form students very well.
- Processes for diagnosing and providing for individual students' needs are excellent.
- There are very good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress.
- Careers and guidance for the sixth form are good.

97. The school knows its sixth form students very well. Processes for diagnosing and providing for individual students' needs are excellent. There are very detailed and accurate records about each student's academic and personal development. There are very good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress. These start with subject teachers' very good knowledge and relationship with each student and are very efficiently co-ordinated by the sixth form management structure and senior managers.
98. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance within the sixth form. Computerised attendance sheets are maintained very well by course and form tutors. These procedures account directly for the comparatively high attendance at Beths School against the national average. Because some courses are taken at another neighbouring school students are trusted to sign-out in a log held in the foyer. The majority do so with great honesty.
99. Overall, careers and guidance for the sixth form are good. However, a significant proportion of students did state on their questionnaire that they were not advised. For students going onto university there is a wealth of choice. The school provides

specialist evenings on higher education for students to come in with their parents. These evenings are repeated regularly through Years 11,12 and 13. Information is given on application procedures, finance and how to pursue options. For those not wishing to follow this higher education path, students are advised for example, on National Vocational Qualifications or other options within further education. Alternatively, advice is sought from local or national firms about going directly into employment. Various representatives are invited into the school from the careers service, local agencies and employers. Students are then taught how to complete a curriculum vitae, a personal statement and a job application.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

100. From information gained at the parents' meeting, talking to parents in school and questionnaires returned, the vast majority of parents believe that Beths is a very good school. These parents are pleased about the high standards achieved, good progress made throughout the school and the high expectations of work and behaviour. They also state that the quality of teaching is high overall, teachers are helpful and lead by example and the school is very inclusive. A small minority of parents did deny that there was a consistency of homework, that they received sufficient information about their child's progress or sufficient communication between school and home. However, on the whole range of evidence collected from the inspection week inspectors do not concur with the views expressed regarding what parents would like to see improved.
101. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about pupils' progress is very good. Each parent receives a copy of the school's prospectus and a copy of the annual governors' report. Both documents comply with current statutory requirements. Pupil progress reports are sent home for all year groups, five times per year. The new version currently being employed is very concise and informative and most parents like it. However, reports do not show individual attendance figures, which some parents said that they would like to see. In addition, parents receive regular informative newsletters, regular 'meet the teacher evenings' and have easy access to the head teacher and staff. Student planners are particularly appreciated by parents. These contain details of subject commendations and conduct and are seen by parents at least once a week. Home/school agreements were well received by parents.
102. Parents' contribution towards their children's learning, both at school and at home are also very good. Some parents volunteer to come in and mentor disaffected pupils in their final examinations. A few talented parent musicians perform within the school orchestra and band. There is also strong support for musical productions when many of the school's parents and ex-pupils help on the instrumental side. At home parents support homework very well, helping with projects and topics. The combined impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good.
103. Overall, the effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is very good. It is another strength of the school and has improved since the previous inspection. Such very good links influence considerably the success of the students' learning.

Sixth form

Students' views of the sixth form

104. The students' questionnaire was distributed to all Year 12 and 13 students. Of the 183 given out, 147 students replied. Discussion with groups of sixth form students' took place during the pre-inspection visit day and during the inspection week. Several other

inspectors met groups of sixth formers during the week to talk about their subject specific experiences.

105. Almost all students are very pleased with the school and are very pleased they stayed on into the sixth form or joined from other schools. They like the wide range of courses available for them and consider them to be well-suited to their talents and career aspirations. They like the friendly ethos and the fact that teachers are always ready to help and support their needs, both academically and personally when required. They appreciate the mature approach of the staff who treat them as adults and show them respect and understanding. They fully appreciate the opportunities to take and exercise responsibilities such as prefect duties, organising sporting and other activities, working in the community and primary schools. The students like the target- setting processes used in the sixth form as it lets them know exactly where they are and what they need to do to improve and reach the required levels of attainment and progress. Work is generally at the right levels and most find the work challenging and stimulating. The homework set is challenging but they have adequate time to complete the extended assignments set. They are very pleased with the wide range of sport and other extra-curricular opportunities provided including the chance to be involved in the community schemes and to obtain external qualifications. They feel they are well- advised about their future options and career paths. The school responds very well to the views expressed by the sixth form. The sixth form council has made some good changes. Those spoken with could not understand and strongly disagreed with the negative comments raised on the questionnaires.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and other key staff.
- The corporate shared commitment to continuing improvement in provision and standards and a desire to succeed and be the best.
- The overall effectiveness of the governing body who are now full and active partners in shaping the ethos and direction of the school.
- The key sub committees are led and managed very well and are very effective in their roles.
- Financial management is excellent.
- Subject leadership overall is very effective.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The leadership and management of geography are unsatisfactory.
- The school fails to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

106. Leadership and management are outstanding. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good and have been instrumental in projecting a very clear and positive ethos and educational direction for the school with raising pupils' standards and achievement, both academically and personally at the heart of all developments.
107. The considerable areas of weakness identified at the last inspection have all been very successfully addressed, with an exceptional example being the very good improvements in the modern languages department which is now a well led and effective department.
108. A major strength of the school is the corporate shared commitment by all teaching and non-teaching staff, managers at all levels, the governing body, the pupils and students

and parents to continuing improvement in provision and standards and a desire to succeed and be the best in Bexley and beyond.

109. The considerable strengths of the head teacher, new since the last inspection, a willingness to address the key issues directly and ensure positive outcomes. Secondly, a very dedicated commitment to raising the standards of provision for all pupils and through this raising their own personal achievements and attainment. Thirdly very skilful management of the extensive changes required to ensure school improvement. Finally a willingness and commitment to delegate leadership and management responsibilities to all senior and middle managers. A very high degree of success has been achieved.
110. School improvement planning is very effective in setting the longer-term direction of the school. There are clearly defined and targeted priorities at the heart of which lies overall school improvement and raising standards. The school, through its improvement plan procedures, is very effective in monitoring and evaluating its performance and taking any required action. There are good links between the school improvement plan and departmental development plans.
111. There are very good links between the headteacher, senior and middle managers and the governing body. The overall effectiveness of the governing body has improved significantly since the last inspection. They are now full and active partners in shaping the ethos and direction of the school. The headteacher and senior managers keep the governors fully informed and there are good opportunities for others to contribute positively to the effectiveness of the governing body. Due to this they have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold the professional managers to account at all stages.
112. The key sub-committees are led and managed very capably and are very effective in their roles. Their terms of reference are well-defined and their contribution to the development and improvement of the school is well co-ordinated effectively by the chair of governors. The finance sub committee being exceptional in ensuring financial probity and accountability for all decisions relating to strategic use of financial resources, including specific grants and other funds. Financial management is now excellent and a major improvement since the last inspection. The educational priorities, identified in the improvement plan, are supported very effectively through the school's financial planning procedures. The school fully adheres to best value principles in all financial matters.
113. The school has been very effective in its management and use of the additional funding accrued from its designation as a specialist Technology College. These funds are having a very beneficial effect not only in the technology department but in encouraging and enabling all departments to access and use a wide range of new technologies in teaching and learning. There is clear evidence that this is successful and fully supports pupils' and students' learning.
114. The governing body meets almost all of its statutory responsibilities in relation to providing a broad and balanced curriculum including RE with the exception of ensuring a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Despite the three assemblies each week being of a very high quality, the provision of a daily act of collective worship has not been adequately addressed since the last inspection.
115. Subject leadership overall has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now very effective in English, mathematics, ICT, design technology, history, art, music and physical education. There have been significant improvements in the leadership

and management of the modern languages department which is now good. The leadership and management of geography are unsatisfactory.

116. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision are very good. Arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, including direct observation in classrooms, are very good. Monitoring roles of school leadership group and heads of department are clearly defined within the job descriptions of all staff included. There are clearly defined line management routes and these provide a very positive and regularly planned review of departmental performance and effectiveness. There is a good strategy for performance management in which the headteacher has shown very good leadership.
117. The monitoring arrangements in most subject departments are very good. They are much more effective than at the time of the last inspection and departmental actions have contributed significantly to the very good improvements in overall provision and raising of standards since the last inspection. Provision for the monitoring of particular groups of pupils; for example those with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and the gifted and talented, is very good. The school provided additional funds from its own budget to provide support in these areas.
118. The management of those with special educational needs is very good. The title of the special educational needs co-ordinator is that of head of individual educational needs and she is involved in assessment and target setting for all pupils in the school. The effect of this management arrangement is to achieve a very closely integrated programme of assessment and remedial action for all pupils. The role of the co-ordinator in providing counselling and mentoring makes a further significant contribution to provision, for pupils with special educational needs as well as for the pupil body as a whole, particularly in addressing social and emotional matters which have impinged upon performance in school.
119. ICT is used very, effectively to support the management systems of the school. The ICT systems for monitoring pupils' individual academic and personal progress and attendance are excellent and are very capably managed by an expert member of the school leadership group.
120. The development of the school's facilities is very well led and managed by the chair of the finance subcommittee in close collaboration with the headteacher and other governors and staff. New facilities for performing arts, physical education and the learning resource centre have been built or developed. These facilities have contributed significantly to improvements since the last inspection. Overall the current accommodation is good with it being very good in ICT, history, PE and music. There are well-advanced plans to further develop and improve the accommodation.
121. The school has good resources. ICT resources are excellent in the three purpose built suites and in all classrooms throughout the school. The ratio of computers to pupils is above the national average. Resources for English and modern languages are very good. Science and geography resources are satisfactory. Resources are used efficiently and very effectively to support learning and progress and the attainment of high standards. Expenditure on learning resources is in-line with the national median.
122. The staffing provision is good overall although the budget for teaching staff is below the national average for a school of this size. The school management has made very positive and courageous decisions regarding the recruitment of good quality, well-qualified teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. This has led to successful and

active recruitment methods and the school currently has only one vacancy being covered by a temporary teacher.

123. There are good programmes for the professional development of staff which focus on the overall school needs and the needs of individuals. Procedures for the induction of newly qualified and other teachers and staff are good and there are good arrangements with ITT establishments for the training of teachers.
124. The school has made a significant investment in education and technical support staff since the last inspection. Their deployment is very good and they have a very positive effect on both pupils' learning and supporting high quality teaching.

Sixth form

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the sixth form are strong and effective.
- There is a positive ethos for learning.
- Students are given a great deal of responsibility.
- The financial management of the sixth form is good.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements to meet fully the legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

125. The leadership and management of the sixth form are strong and effective. Tutors work in close collaboration to ensure day-to-day running proceeds smoothly. Good partnership arrangements with a neighbouring grammar school are well-organised and allow students a greater range of choice for their AS and A-level courses. There is a positive ethos for learning. Students are given a great deal of responsibility which they exercise well. Morale in the sixth form is high and in tutor periods there is a relaxed atmosphere in which students meet and talk sensibly. The financial management of the sixth form is good although expenditure for the sixth form is slightly higher than for the rest of the school. The sixth form gives very good value for money. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship in the sixth form.
126. There is a very good range of learning resources, including a well-stocked library and resource centre to meet the needs of the expanding sixth form. There is a good range of resources available for supporting students' skills in the use and application of ICT, which are used extensively. Subject departments have a good supply of books and resources for students to use on their courses.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff of the school should:

- 1) Improve the quality of teaching of chemistry in Years 10 and 11 (paragraphs 58, 156) by:
 - Providing more pace and challenge in teaching;
 - Ensuring work is aimed at levels appropriate to pupils' abilities and competences;
 - Improving the management of the pupils and ensuring a productive and purposeful learning environment is created.
- 2) Improve use of extended registration time to make it more cost effective and useful (paragraph 78) by:
 - Reviewing the programme for the use of this time;
 - Ensure all teachers are appropriately trained in the expected use of this time;

When drawing up the action plan it is recommended that attention also be given to:

- tracking the use of ICT across the curriculum to ensure appropriate delivery of the statutory curriculum requirements in Year 10; (paragraph 200)
- increasing the proportion of pupils attaining the highest grades and levels in national tests by the age of 14 and GCSE by the age of 16; (paragraphs 4, 29, 128, 153, 168, 190, 211, 221)
- ensuring the school provides a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students (paragraph 114)

Sixth form

In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff of the school should:

1. Increasing the proportion of students attaining at the very highest grades in GCE A level by the age of 18 years. (paragraphs 37, 38, 254, 261, 288)

When drawing up the action plan it is recommended that attention also be given to:

- Meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. (para 125)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	130
	Sixth form	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	4	51	48	25	1	1	0
Percentage	3	39.2	37	19.2	0.8	0.8	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	19	17	10	0	0	0
Percentage	6	39	35	20	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	683	183
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17	1

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	60	12

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	95
National comparative data	90.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	121	0	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	120	119	119
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	120	119	119
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	98 (100)	98 (99)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	78 (85)	98 (99)	89 (80)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	121	121	121
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	121	121	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	78 (83)	93 (100)	97 (84)
	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	124	0	124

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	124	124	124
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	124	124	124
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (92.6)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	48.4 (47.4)	90.9 (90.6)	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	65.8 (60.5)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

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

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	86	3	89

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	24
Black – other	6
Indian	38
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	10
White	776
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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	12	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	262

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	29.0
Key Stage 4	21.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 – 2001
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	£
Total income	2,354,303
Total expenditure	2,321,184
Expenditure per pupil	2,820
Balance brought forward from previous year	254,969
Balance carried forward to next year	288,088

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

866

Number of questionnaires returned

472

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	54	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	48	5	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	59	6	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	60	15	3	2
The teaching is good.	34	61	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	50	11	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	47	7	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	33	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	23	57	14	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	34	54	5	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	52	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	44	8	1	9

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

A very large majority of parents indicated their children like the school and that they are making good progress. They felt behaviour in the school is good as is the quality of teaching, this is very clearly borne out by inspection findings. Expectations that pupils would work hard and achieve their best were overwhelmingly endorsed. Most parents clearly feel comfortable in approaching the school and the teachers and that the school closely involves them in their child's education and keeps them well informed about their child's attainment and progress. Four fifths of parents only feel satisfied with the extra curricular programme provided by the school. Inspection findings unequivocally find this programme to be excellent.

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents raised issues relating to the use, amount of and consistency of homework. This matter was also raised by a small number of parents at the parents meeting. Inspection findings very clearly indicate that almost all teachers use homework very well to support and enhance pupils and students learning and progress. Whilst a large majority of parents are happy with the information provided about their children and that the school works closely with them, a small minority felt this was an issue for them.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Results at age 14 and at GCSE have been consistently well above average for the last three years.
- Pupils make good progress up to the age of 14, and achieve well by the end of Year 11.
- Pupils develop very good analytical skills in their response to literature.
- Teachers have excellent command of their subject, set challenging work and have very good questioning skills.
- Strong management has led to significant improvement in the work of the department since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The practices recommended by the National Literacy Strategy for Years 7 to 9 are not yet fully embedded in the work of the department.
- The good teaching overall in Years 7 to 9 would be further improved by tighter management of time and more pace in some lessons.
- In some lessons, the range of teaching methods used is too narrow.

127. There has been considerable improvement in work in English since the last inspection. Standards have risen overall, as has the proportion of higher grades at GCSE. The quality of teaching is much improved: there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. More time is now allocated to the teaching of English. A good range of literature is taught, including more non-fiction, and pupils have a wider experience of poetry as well as opportunities for creative writing. There has been a new head of department since the last inspection; many of these improvements have been the result of effective management.
128. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were very high compared with the national average, although the proportion at higher levels was less than the previous year, and less than in mathematics and science. Results have fluctuated but overall show a rising trend, and have improved considerably since 1996, including a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 and above. Despite this improvement, the results are well-below the average for similar schools. This is partly because of lower than usual prior attainment. Although pupils' attainment on entry is well-above average overall, a small proportion of pupils enter with weak writing skills. Evidence from the DfES pilot scheme assessing value-added progress suggests that pupils' achievement is good overall.
129. Observations of work and lessons during the inspection show that by the age of 14 years, pupils' standards are above average. Speaking and listening skills are sound, pupils speak confidently and are prepared to answer questions in some detail. Most read with good understanding, developing higher order reading skills. Teachers could do more to promote the skill of reading aloud with appropriate expression, paying due attention to meaning. By the age of 14, the writing of pupils in higher sets is competent and fluent, the best producing analytical essays and powerful narrative writing of a very high standard. Those in lower sets have more difficulty in organising their ideas, particularly in creative writing. A significant proportion of these still have poor

handwriting by age 14. Good progress over time is seen, as pupils respond to their teachers' increasing demands.

130. Many essay titles given to pupils in Year 9 are GCSE standard. A further factor affecting progress is the thorough approach of most teachers which is of particular benefit to those in lower sets. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress: teachers are aware of their needs and give them appropriate attention in class.
131. In 2001, the GCSE English results were very high compared with the national average. There is a similar picture in the results for GCSE English literature. Results overall have shown a rising trend, and the proportion of higher grades has risen considerably since 1996. Pupils' performance in both subjects was better than in other subjects, significantly so in the case of GCSE English literature.
132. Standards in the work seen and lessons observed during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 are well-above average. Achievement is good overall. Pupils are articulate speakers: they answer questions thoughtfully and are always prepared to express their own opinions and ideas, using appropriate literary terminology with confidence. They usually listen to their teachers attentively, but some need more practice in listening and responding to each other. Most have well-developed reading skills: their comprehension is good and pupils of all abilities are able to write detailed perceptive analyses of the texts studied, although some weaker pupils struggle to develop an appropriate formal style. Many in higher sets produce creative writing of a very high standard; that of weaker pupils sometimes shows an unwillingness to write in depth. The good progress seen is again partly the result of thorough teaching: pupils are well prepared for their examinations and they have a very clear idea of how to improve their work as a result of their teachers' detailed marking. Many pupils improve as a result of their own perseverance in carefully re-drafting their lengthy essays. Good progress is also the result of pupils responding well to their teachers' high expectations and challenging tasks: by the age of 16 years, some in higher sets produce essays that are of A-level standard.
133. Pupils' very good attitudes to their work in English are seen in their enthusiastic participation in question and answer sessions in class. In most cases pupils behave very well, showing courtesy and respect to their teachers, and usually to each other. There is only occasional restlessness in class, mainly because the pace of the lesson has not been maintained. Relationships are good: there is often a lively interchange of ideas. The insights gained from studying literature, from analysing character and motive, and from exploring themes of a moral nature contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. This is evident in their oral comments in class discussions, and in the maturity and sensitivity of much of their writing, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
134. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with many very good features. It is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. One of the main strengths of teaching is the very good knowledge of their subject shown by most teachers. At best, this results in stimulating lessons and animated, scholarly exposition, which captures pupils' interest. Teachers' high expectations mean that pupils learn in a climate in which there is a continuous striving to improve and a strong work ethic. Teachers' very good questioning skills are another strength and help to promote a greater depth of understanding. All these features were seen in a very good Year 11 lesson in which pupils looked at the poem 'Oe One Flesh' by Elizabeth Jennings. Teacher's challenging, probing questions and clear full explanations meant that all aspects of the poem were

thoroughly explored. Many teachers provide helpful frameworks to assist pupils collect and organise their ideas when planning essays. In a very good Year 11 lesson pupils in a low set were helped by their teacher's choice of materials, mainly topical articles about teenagers from local papers, to plan their own writing on a similar theme. The materials compiled by the teacher, the framework for planning provided, and their teacher's firm but reassuring approach all helped to build up the pupils' confidence in tackling the task. In less successful lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, there is some loss of pace, partly as a result of poor time management. Lesson planning now needs to allow time to explain lesson aims, as well as a conceding session reviewing whether these aims have been met. Future developments should focus on embedding the National Literacy Strategy practices into teachers' long-term planning and into their lesson plans. There is a need to introduce a little more variety in teaching methods in Years 7 to 9 in order to raise the level of the pupils' emotional response to English as well as that of their analytical skills.

135. Very good leadership and management have had a significant impact on work in English. The head of department has a clear vision and has created a good collaborative ethos in a department, committed to continual improvement. English teaching takes place in three different buildings, which makes the management of the department and support for teachers less effective than it could be. A soundly based system for monitoring all aspects of work in English has been introduced. Teachers show a professional approach when reflecting on and evaluating their own practices.

Drama

136. Drama was lightly sampled.
137. Since the last inspection, there are fewer staff teaching drama, and there has been some improvement in standards. Achievement overall is satisfactory. A major improvement is the accommodation: drama is now taught in a spacious hall, with good specialist equipment.
138. Standards are above expectations by the age of 14 years: pupils have a good grasp of basic concepts and have learned to make use of a range of drama skills in their improvisations. They work with concentration, make perceptive observations, and are able to create and sustain character. Most see the value of what they are doing in terms of developing their own imaginative powers and their capacity for empathy.
139. Results at GCSE in 2001 were above average, but numbers taking the course were low. Standards in the current Year 11 are average overall, but there is a wide variation in attainment and level of commitment. Most pupils are well-motivated and likely to gain good grades. A small proportion are not as motivated and have taken up the option despite low prior attainment. They find it difficult to respond to the challenging intellectual demands set by the teacher. Teaching is good overall, with many very good features. The main strengths lie in teachers' subject expertise, high expectations and firm classroom management. Drama plays an important role in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school.

Literacy

140. Standards of literacy are very high. Pupils are articulate and prepared to speak at length in class. They are confident and precise in using subject-specific terminology. Reading skills are very good, particularly the higher order reading skills of obtaining and

synthesising information. Pupils have very good writing skills, and in most subjects are provided with opportunities to write in a range of forms. Most pupils are able to take and make notes effectively, and their summarising skills are good.

141. There is a school literacy policy and an expectation that departments will develop their own: this is happening in most cases. Many departments confine their attention to Years 7 to 9, when the development of literacy is an integral part of teachers' plans. Key words are displayed in most teaching rooms. Year 7 pupils arriving at the school with below average writing standards are given extra help in after-school classes. Lessons are based on the Key Stage 3 Progress Units. This is a relatively new development, and its effectiveness will need to be monitored and evaluated.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- National Curriculum and GCSE results are well-above the national average.
- Teaching is good and this contributes to good learning.
- Pupils are interested in their work and are keen to do well.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Effective leadership with all staff committed to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Raise expectations at Key Stage 4 to ensure pupils are entered for GCSE at a high enough level.

142. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. National Curriculum and GCSE results have improved slightly and attainment in lessons is higher. The quality of teaching has improved with no lessons judged to be unsatisfactory, and the large majority judged to be good or very good. There has been an improvement in teaching strategies with pupils challenged both orally and by setting appropriate activities. This had led to improved learning and good achievement.

143. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were very high when compared to the national average, but show a slight decline over the results in the previous two years. They are better than the results in English and science with the same pupils. The results indicate good value-added when judged against pupils' standards on entry to the school. GCSE results in 2001 are very high when compared to the national average and are above those in the previous two years. In both examinations, results are slightly better than at the time of the last inspection.

144. The standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' folders is well-above the national expectation at the age of 14 and 16 years. It is above the standard seen at the time of the last inspection. Pupils enter the school with numeracy skills which are well-above average. By age 14 higher attaining pupils reach very high standards in algebra and trigonometry. They solve problems involving right-angled triangles using the sine and cosine ratios. Other pupils use number confidently in a variety of contexts. They have well-developed graphical skills and find equations and points of intersection of straight line. By age 16, higher-attaining pupils reach very high standards and have a thorough understanding of all topics in the GCSE examinations. They are extending their knowledge to cover the GCSE statistics course. They find the lines of best fit in scatter graphs both for linear and non-linear relationships. Lower-attaining students

understand the dimensions of perimeter and area and use Pythagoras and other formulae to find the perimeters of complex shapes. These and other students' attainment is above or well-above the national expectation.

145. Pupils have very positive attitudes and are keen to do well. They are attentive and work diligently in lessons and this helps them to learn more effectively. They organise and set out their work logically and this assists their understanding. Good response to questioning allows them to clarify their ideas and advance their knowledge. They enjoy very good relationships with their teachers who give them help and encouragement whenever they have problems.
146. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers understand their subject well and manage their classes effectively. By good planning and preparation and the efficient use of resources, they assist pupils to consolidate and extend their knowledge. For example in a Year 8 lesson previously prepared diagrams on an overhead projector reminded pupils of co-ordinates in all four quadrants. This resulted in a prompt start to the lesson and pupils quickly focused on their work. By asking appropriate questions the teacher helped pupils to find the equations of lines parallel to the axes. Further discussion ensured all pupils understood what they had found and very good progress was made. In the majority of lessons a good balance of direct teaching and pupils working independently assists learning and lessons proceed at a lively pace. Good target-setting ensures pupils understand how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Progress is helped by frequent tests and assessments enabling pupils to correct errors and move on to new work. Occasionally the lack of new initiatives results in pupils losing concentration and progress is limited. Homework is used effectively by teachers to extend learning; Teachers know the difficulties encountered by the small number of pupils with special educational needs. They provide appropriate help and encouragement to ensure that they are fully involved in all lessons.
147. The department has effective leadership and is well-managed. Good relationships exist between staff and all are committed to raising standards. Appropriate arrangements for the monitoring of teaching are in place and provide good support for staff. The department makes good use of target-setting to assist students to improve their grades. This could be further improved by raising the expectations of some pupils at Key Stage 4 to ensure that they are entered for GCSE at their optimum level. There are sufficient good quality books and resources for all lessons.

Numeracy

148. Pupils enter the school with numeracy standards that are well-above average. They improve and further develop these skills as they move through the school, not only in mathematics lessons, but also by using numeracy in some other subjects. For example in science they use decimals, fractions and percentages. They substitute in formulae and solve equations. They collect and analyse data which they represent with appropriate graphs and charts. In geography they construct graphs and bar charts to illustrate data and represent results. In ICT they use spreadsheets to calculate costs, analyse data and construct graphs and charts. In physical education they use graphs to plot their progress every three minutes when running for 12 minutes. This they compare with previous results in order to measure their progress. They also calculate their heart rate and recovery rate. In these and other subjects pupils' numeracy skills assist their learning and progress.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is satisfactory

Strengths

- Attainment and progress throughout Key Stage 3.
- Improved take-up of the triple award GCSE.
- Results in GCSE biology and physics.
- Key strengths in some teaching .

Areas for improvement

- Unacceptable weaknesses in teaching and attainment for Key Stage 4 chemistry.
- Development planning to be clearer about how known weaknesses are to be tackled.

149. Provision remains broadly as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Standards of attainment are very high by the age of 14 years, and high by age 16. There are inconsistencies in teaching and attainment, principally strengths in biology and physics and weaknesses in chemistry. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The school has a good capacity to deal with the inconsistencies.
150. Standards and provision currently are broadly in-line with those reported in the previous inspection, in 1997. This is because improvements are balanced against weaknesses. There have been improvements in the standards attained by the age of 14, in the most recent year. However, between 1997 and 2000 results, though very high, fell away somewhat more than the changes in results for all schools. Standards attained recently by the age of 16 are better because many more pupils attain well, such as in the separate sciences GCSE option. However, the comment in the previous report that attainment at the highest grades was insufficient has been only partly overcome. The quality of both teaching and learning currently is below that reported previously.
151. Standards of attainment are very high by the end of Year 9, and high by the end of Year 11.
152. The results for 14 year olds in the National Curriculum tests in 2001, the most recent year, were very high in comparison with the national average. For example, the percentage attaining the top levels, that is Level 7 and above, was very high. A weakness in this very good achievement is that these same students attained better in mathematics and English. For example, the average point scores in the 2001 tests in science were significantly below these scores in mathematics and English. The progress achieved in science is good, over the three years since pupils join from their primary schools. Standards in current work show that standards are still very high and that progress is good.
153. The results for 16 year-olds in GCSE in 2001 were above national averages. The improvement over time is good. For example, the introduction of separate sciences in addition to the previous double award GCSE has mostly led to high attainment for those who choose all three separate sciences [physics, chemistry and biology]. More students are taking this option. Those who choose the double award GCSE also attain high results. The improvements are secure for all pupils except those taking chemistry. For example, in double award GCSE 73 pupils attained 91.8% A*-C grades, well above the national average for boys of 48.9% A*-C grades. In biology 51 pupils attained 100% A*-C grades, compared to the national average of 87.3%. The results in chemistry A* - C grades fell away significantly since the previous year, 2000. For example, too many pupils attained grades D and E in chemistry. The current attainment by the end of Year 11, as seen during the inspection, is in-line with attainment in the previous year. The inconsistencies between the stronger elements

balanced against the weaknesses in chemistry means that progress overall in the two years up to the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Current standards are in-line with standards in 2001. Overall progress for the pupils now in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

154. Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory. Both are good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
155. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 varies from satisfactory to very good, and is overall good. Learners progress well in lessons because the work set is at suitably high levels. Learners are keen so that mostly the pace of learning is good and occasionally very good. However, in some cases teachers did not capitalise sufficiently on this good feature of the learning. All teachers provided high quality homework, and secured high standards of behaviour. In a very good lesson for Year 7 the teacher planned thoroughly, providing complex materials for pupils to analyse. The teacher used and improved the pupils' strong literacy and reference skills very effectively. Pupils responded especially well because the materials, provided through the school website, gripped their interest. The most striking feature of learning was the fine level of independent working shown by these pupils so early in their school career.
156. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is inconsistent, though overall satisfactory. This inconsistency is a major factor causing weak attainment in chemistry. Teaching and learning are sometimes excellent, with examples in separate GCSE physics, and sometimes poor such as in some parts of chemistry in the double award GCSE. For example, a chemistry lesson was poor because the work set was too easy and bad behaviour was unchallenged. Overall the learners disregarded the teacher to the extent that many made little effort. Because the task was too easy, even the hard-working few made poor progress. An excellent physics lesson fascinated the top-flight pupils so that they gave of their best. They made very impressive intellectual efforts, and worked very hard. The combination of tough questioning and challenging written work was exemplary. A further strength was that pupils with various learning difficulties had ample help, such as handheld computers or effective support, so that they attained as well as - and sometimes better - than the other pupils. The majority of teaching and learning is satisfactory and better in Years 10 and 11. The strengths in this teaching are the expertise of the teachers, their ability to secure good and very good behaviour and positive attitudes, the high quality homework, and in some cases well chosen resources, used well. With these teachers, learners respond well and make strong improvements in knowledge and understanding.
157. The overall leadership of science is satisfactory. Overall the school sets ambitious targets for attainment. The three departments which make up science have set up very effective procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. However, the respective subject heads of the science department do not use the information fully. The heads of department have made sure that there are good and very good schemes of work to underpin the curriculum. For example, the new schemes for Key Stage 3 give good direction to the modernised science curriculum as well as covering the other elements such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, and provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Important steps have been taken to identify the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. The school is well aware that not enough has been done to resolve these matters.
158. Other factors have a bearing on progress. Some weaknesses linked to resource problems are being tackled. For example, very recently sufficient computers were

installed to overcome a restriction to the range of information and communication technology work being undertaken. The new biology area is very good. These good features are balanced by a lack of resources for physics, and some rather ancient accommodation for chemistry. The extent of extra-curricular provision including special classes and study sessions is very good.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision for art is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Imaginative integration of pupils' research into their visual studies.
- Pupils use a rich range of media very expressively.
- Good achievement by Year 9 and very good achievement by Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of the very highest attainers to A* level AT GCSE.

159. The department has much improved since the time of the last report. Attainment by Year 9 is higher and pupils now achieve standards appropriate to their abilities or better. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is secure and fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils use a good range of primary sources for visual interpretation, for example through direct observational drawing. Issues related to the achievement of the very highest-attaining pupils have not improved enough.
160. Recent GCSE results in the A*-C range have compared favourably with those for all boys nationally and with pupils in similar schools. Results have also risen year-on-year of late. Results at the very highest grades are much lower than those in other selective schools. As at the time of the last report, pupils' achievement in the A* category at GCSE in 2001 and in previous years were very low.
161. Attainment in lessons seen shows pupils' standards to be above the expected level for boys by the age of 14 years. They apply their high level of intellectual understanding very effectively to the research required for projects. Practical work shows very good integration of this into two-and three-dimensional realisations. Pupils use ICT to very good effect for this research, often doing significant amounts of investigation for homework to generate a high quality base of visual resource material on artists they have chosen or been asked to investigate. Although they enter the school with a very wide range of attainment in practical art skills, pupils of all abilities make rapid progress from Year 7. Skills develop well across the rich range of media the department provides for pupils' experience. They show particular strengths using dry colour media such as pastels and chalks, often to achieve very creative effects in projects such as that on movement and abstract figure drawing seen in Year 8. This project will lead on to a three-dimensional outcome and an effective question and answer session with the teacher showed boys well-informed about sculptors and their work. Sketchbooks, only just introduced at the time of the last report, are now well used well in all years to develop ideas for such projects. Those seen in Year 9, for example, where pupils are doing a graphics-based project designing wine/beer labels, showed good research using images from a chosen country and investigation of an artist from there, linked successfully into visual developments for pupils' designs. Pupils generally paint well, especially when developing textural effects. Some water-based colour applications show a less rigorous attention to mark-making, particularly where surfaces are large.

Some graphite drawing shows less effective tonal range than pupils could achieve, if they used softer pencils more regularly. In general all pupils achieve well by Year 9 and develop a secure skills base from which any could move successfully into GCSE work.

162. GCSE groups show these skills developing and refining well. Attainment by the age of 16 is well-above average for boys. From early Year 10 achievement for almost all pupils is very good. Two-dimensional work in Year 10 based on a visit to London shows very high levels of attainment in colour work, based on their observations of landmarks such as the Houses of Parliament. This work shows very good use of a limited colour palette to achieve very effective pastel drawings. Pupils' work becomes more individualistic as they move into Year 11, by which time they have matured into independent learners and can use the wide range of media on offer very effectively to achieve the effects they desire. Significant strengths remain in pupils' abilities to make the theory/practice links required. The minority of pupils whose work shows them capable of the very highest grades are not sufficiently well-identified or targeted to push their grades to the A* level. This is the next challenge in a department which has already been very successful in raising the attainment of pupils who may not have achieved C grades.
163. The very good quality of teaching and the extremely positive attitudes pupils bring to their studies are the two key factors in the success of the department. Pupils respond very well to the interesting variety of projects their teachers plan for them. They rise to teachers' high expectations, producing interesting, imaginative ideas and often unusual resources upon which to base their images. The 50-minute lessons in all years are very unhelpful for the development of scale or depth in pupils' work, but teachers ensure that the pace of lessons is brisk. Pupils settle to work quickly, sustaining good concentration and creative effort. Progress in lessons and across the years is therefore very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Brief, well-focused plenary sessions leave a good amount of working time for practical activity. Teachers' one-to-one facilitation and encouragement to explore the rich range of media available enable all pupils to find an area where they are successful and all, including those less gifted in art, are included well. Teachers successfully stimulate boys' imaginations, so work is mostly lively and visually expressive. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are very co-operative in the small spaces in which very large classes have to work, so even where the scale of their work is constrained, teachers ensure that these same beneficial characteristics can develop.
164. Departmental management is good. Systems for assessment of pupils' work are effective so pupils generally know where and how their work could improve. Additional information about achievement related to "value added" would be useful in focusing the department on the potentially highest-attainers to stretch these pupils more successfully towards A*s. The department provides very effective placements for art teachers in training at a local institute. These very good links are mutually beneficial and mutually appreciated. The department seizes opportunities to display pupils' work in local exhibitions where proffered. A visit during inspection showed several prize-winners amongst pupils from this school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are high, pupils have a clear understanding of the design process, and the quality of design sheets and finished products is well-above average.
- Teaching and learning, are predominantly very good, never less than good and there is some excellent teaching.
- Projects are extremely well-planned. They are fully inclusive and provide pupils with realistic, exciting learning experiences. Much work involves computer aided design and manufacture.
- Leadership and management of the subject area are very good, and are supported by the excellent teamwork of teachers and technicians.

Areas for improvement

- Greater pupil participation in some lessons.
- Further develop links with art to improve attainment in graphics and the aesthetic side of design.
- Improve opportunities for, and access to, ICT facilities.
- Develop projects to cover more comprehensively the compliant materials side of the subject.

165. Since the last inspection, most of the concerns in the last report have been resolved, and very good improvement made. Attainment has improved in both key stages and standards are now well-above those nationally. Teaching has substantially improved, as have pupils' attitudes. The different learning needs of pupils are carefully addressed, and ICT is well-integrated with most projects
166. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses in design and technology, and the department offers a good range of experiences, including major project work in resistant materials, electronics and graphic design to GCSE level. The school does not have facilities for food technology or textiles; however, National Curriculum requirements are met as some projects involve elements of work in compliant materials.
167. Standards by the age of 14 years are well-above the national average, both in work seen and in teachers' assessments. There has been a significant rise in pupils' achievement over the past three years, and now nearly all pupils surpass average standards, with many attaining the highest levels, and some the exceptional performance category.
168. GCSE results have also improved in recent years, and were very high in 2001, in all areas of the subject examined. Students taking the electronic products option did exceptionally well, with a hundred per cent pass rate and fifteen students gaining the A* or A grades. Students taking graphic products did not do quite as well, although the A* to C pass rate was well above the national average, no students gained the two highest grades.
169. From Year 7 pupils quickly develop a good working knowledge of the design process, and use it successfully to develop well made and highly original products. For example mechanical toys, using cams. Attainment in lessons is above average and often well-above. Pupils are very productive; they work at a good pace and often make outstanding advances in understanding and skills in a short time. Design sheets are accurately presented, often with style and flair and show a clear understanding of the design brief requirements and the properties of materials. This is evident in the work of Year 8 pupils, when designing and making a 'litter pick' tool. Well-drawn and annotated diagrams of the moving part, show a very good knowledge of the use of levers, pulleys and pivots. They also evaluate their work well in class discussion. Year 9 pupils rise to

the considerable challenge of designing and making a pocket torch. They research commercial examples thoroughly, and learn about vacuum forming, and computer aided design and manufacture. They identify strengths and weaknesses in their own designs, and use ICT skills effectively to present production schedules and component lists neatly and accurately.

170. In Years 10 and 11 pupils build successfully on their understanding and skills, especially their knowledge of the design process, and identify exciting projects of their own, for example, a respiratory alarm to reduce cot deaths. Pupils working in electronics produce extensive documentation to support their ideas, showing high standards of literacy and numeracy, and excellent use of ICT to enhance presentation. Students working on graphic products have not attained a comparable depth of understanding, especially in the area of design principles as applied to visual imagery. Although their work is adequately related to commercial applications, individual style, corporate image, careful choice of lettering style, and judicious use of colour are absent from all but the best work. There is considerable scope to further develop the aesthetical side of graphic design.
171. All pupils approach their work with enthusiasm for the subject and tasks set. They have very positive attitudes, and behaviour is nearly always exemplary. Pupils are keen to develop their own ideas, and to be inventive. Project work often demonstrates considerable initiative and committed private study to complete work. Pupils have built good working relationships with their teachers and peers. A high level of co-operation is evident in group work.
172. The quality of teaching is predominantly very good, never less than good, and there is some excellent teaching. Teachers have very good command of the subject overall, and excellent knowledge in their individual specialisms. All lessons are well-planned and delivered. In the vast majority of lessons the National Curriculum and examination requirements are presented extremely well, and ongoing evaluation advances learning. Workshop management is excellent, enabling the best use to be made of the short fifty-minute lesson time when single lessons are necessary. Demonstrations hold pupils' attention and incorporate health and safety considerations effectively. Resources are carefully prepared, and tasks and worksheets are appropriate for the school's attainment range, often with key words for those that need them, and extension work for the more able. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk, literacy and numeracy are integrated well, and question and answer sessions are used effectively to reinforce learning and provide on going assessment. However, greater use of pupil participation is needed in some lessons to help teachers gauge pupils' understanding, and to advance their personal development.
173. The quality of learning is high, pupils are able to explore and analyse the properties and potential of a wide range of materials and media. They use research effectively to make links with commercial technology and manufacturers, whilst taking increasing responsibility for their own learning. They learn through self evaluation of work in progress and are developing the ability to articulate a personal view of the subject. Pupils understand the task objectives and follow a sequential path of activity to achieve them. However, outside agencies could be used more, and work linked to design movements past and present, such as Art Deco, and The Arts and Crafts Movement.
174. The department is led very well. Leadership is by example. There is careful monitoring of students' and teachers' work. Departmental management has successfully incorporated changes in staffing, the National Curriculum and in the school's population. Assessment procedures are linked to National Curriculum levels and

shared with pupils. Workshops are well-organised and team work is a major strength. Development plans are forward looking and identify priorities for further improvements, especially in the area of design and computer facilities. This successful department has considerable capacity to improve even further.

GEOGRAPHY

The provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9.
- Boys have a good attitude to their work.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the management of the department in order to raise the profile of geography across the school and increase recruitment to the GCSE course in Year 10.
- Resources to support teaching of geography.
- The use of ICT within the subject.

175. Standards of attainment in geography are well-above national expectations and are in-line with expectations when compared to similar schools. By the age of 14 years pupils' attainment shown by teacher assessment is in-line with expectations when attainment on entry is taken into consideration. The work seen in lessons and elsewhere confirms the levels recorded. Boys have a good knowledge of places and can locate them accurately. They use geographical vocabulary appropriately and can use geographical skills to extract and present information, describe and explain patterns seen in human and physical geography and can show how one process can interact with another to influence those patterns seen. The higher-attaining boys can also evaluate locations against given and determined criteria. For example Year 9 boys were seen selecting a location for a retail park using criteria relating to site and situation. In so doing they extracted information from maps and written reports and applied their knowledge in a decision making exercise to choose and explain the best site.
176. By the age of 16, pupils' attainment in GCSE is well-above the national expectations and in line with the boys' performance in other subjects. 100% of pupils achieved grade C or above in 2001 and over 50% achieved either an A* or A grade. Although achievement at A*/A represents an improvement on recent years the performance in geography was in-line with the pupils' performance in other subjects. The number of pupils selecting to study geography to GCSE is low, 17 boys studied geography to GCSE in 2001. There are only thirteen boys in the current Year 11.
177. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and sustain concentration throughout their geography lessons. They are keen to answer questions and are polite. They work to their teachers direction and wait for more work to be set if they complete a task. This compliance occasionally results in teachers letting the pace of lessons fall while those working more slowly complete a task. It also results in teachers missing opportunities to extend the higher-achievers with differentiated tasks.
178. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, ensuring that pupils achieve the grades predicted by the performance indicators provided by the school. Teachers made use of their subject knowledge and their knowledge of the pupils, to provide lessons that extend the pupils capabilities and cover the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus. Resources to support teaching are satisfactory overall. Years

7, 8 and 9 have old textbooks, some with pages missing. The books for Years 10 and 11 are newer and in better condition. Books are shared between groups and there are not enough for pupils to take them home to support homework. In many lessons the photocopied resources are used. These are often small, packed with detail and not very clear. When used without additional visual stimuli such as photographs and an Atlas, as in a Year 8 lesson on irrigation in India and a Year 7 lesson on flooding, the pupils' interest in the subject and their learning suffers. When these materials are used in conjunction with other resources, for example in another Year 8 lesson on irrigation in India, and in a Year 9 lesson on shopping centre location, pupils' interest, and their learning improved. In these lessons teaching is good, it was seen to be good in over half of the lessons seen during the inspection, but exercise books show that over time, teaching in lessons is satisfactory.

179. Geography contributes to the social and moral education of the pupils. Pupils study other cultures throughout their courses; their access to detailed study of multicultural Britain is limited. The spiritual development of the pupils within geography is limited to fieldwork activities.
180. ICT is used as a tool to support teaching only in one unit of work in Year 7 when the pupils are studying water supply. At other times pupils make use of ICT at home or within the school to improve the presentation of work. The department has not ensured that teachers are trained in the use of ICT within geography.
181. Management of the department relies on informal daily contact as well as formal meetings. Senior managers monitor teaching and learning and the information collected is fed back to the head of department. This has led to improvements in the teaching of individual lessons, but has not led to improvements in recruitment to GCSE courses, or to development of ICT within teaching. With ICT use being limited, and resources to support teaching also being limited, the overall effect is that teaching and learning is failing to recruit boys to the Year 10 courses. The management of geography is therefore unsatisfactory.
182. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching in individual lessons. This has not impacted on recruitment to Year 10 courses. Opportunities for using enquiry techniques are still limited largely to coursework and assessment exercises. Assessment is still viewed as a separate activity, rather than as an integral part of lessons in Years 7 to 9.

HISTORY

The provision for history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very high standards in GCSE examinations.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Pupils develop historical skills of analysis and interpretation rapidly.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes in class.
- The subject is managed very well.
- There is a wide programme of visits to support the curriculum.

Areas for Improvement

- Pupils need more opportunities to work in groups.

- More consistency is needed at the end of lessons so that pupils can review their progress.
- Pupils would benefit from more opportunities to become involved in the assessment process.

183. In recent GCSE examinations, results in both the A*-C and A*-G range have been well-above national averages and have compared very favourably with results in other subjects at the school. In the most recent examination almost all the fifty pupils entered gained an A*-C pass and the numbers achieving the highest grades were well-above national norms. This has successfully addressed an issue arising from the previous inspection report. In lessons seen and work analysed during the current inspection, standards are high and often very high throughout the age range. The seeds of this notable achievement are being sown from the outset as pupils develop their understanding of the subject rapidly in Year 7, often from a low level of subject knowledge on entry. Pupils are also soon at ease with the critical use of sources and learn to write for a variety of purposes. In this context, some very good extended writing was seen from Year 9 pupils on the development of the railways and the causes of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. As a result of these advances in subject skills, standards are above, and sometimes well-above national expectations for all pupils by the age of 14. In Years 10 and 11, these high levels are maintained and built on, with the result that, by the age of 16, most pupils have developed a detailed knowledge and understanding of the subject and can analyse historical issues in depth. For example, some very impressive work was seen from Year 10 pupils on the Munich Putsch, using sophisticated analyses of sources and, in Year 11, some very detailed extended essays were seen on the causes of the Second World War. As a result, most pupils achieve very high standards by the end of Year 11 and are very well prepared for success in the GCSE examination.
184. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are always very positive. They show a strong commitment to learning and clearly enjoy history lessons. They respond very well to challenges and a very purposeful classroom atmosphere is maintained at all times. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 10 lesson on the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany. In this lesson, pupils showed considerable maturity and depth of analysis as they examined how Nazi ideology was transformed into practice during the 1930s.
185. The very positive picture painted above is due, in large measure, to the quality of teaching which is very good overall. Teachers have an excellent grasp of subject knowledge and this is used very effectively to give pupils confidence. As a result, they become active learners and budding historians. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 8 lesson during which pupils examined sources in depth to determine the character of King James 1. Selected pupils then presented their findings to the whole class and did so with skill and confidence.
186. Teachers take care to include all pupils in the learning process and very acute question and answer techniques are used to probe pupils' understanding. Classroom management is very strong and high expectations from all teachers lend an air of rigour to the learning process. Lessons are planned very well with clear aims and objectives but there are occasions when not enough time is given at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on their progress. All pupils are encouraged to take part in classroom discussions and they do so with enthusiasm and maturity. They would, however, benefit from more opportunities to engage in group work activities. Higher-attaining pupils develop their historical skills to considerable depth through extension work and

individual research. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are supported well in the classroom and make good progress.

187. The department has a very strong, dedicated team and is managed very well. The previous inspection report noted that the departmental development plan at the time lacked detailed analysis. This is no longer the case and the current plan is clear and precise. The monitoring of pupils' performance is very thorough and marking techniques now give pupils a clear idea on how to improve their work. Pupils would benefit from more opportunities to become involved themselves in the assessment process. There is a plentiful supply of resources at all levels and a highly commendable programme of visits enhance the taught curriculum; for example, there is a visit to a Roman villa in Year 7 in conjunction with the geography department. The new accommodation is used to very well display pupils' work. The use of ICT is now playing an increasing role in the work of the department, and, in Year 9, work is done on the Commonwealth Graves Commission website prior to a visit to the First World War battlefields.
188. Overall, the history department has maintained the high standards noted in the previous report. The very high uptake of the subject in Years 10 and 11 and the very impressive results at GCSE are testament to the hard work and competence of the teaching team. The key challenge now is to ensure that these very high standards are maintained by those studying history in the sixth form.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT is taught as a discrete subject throughout Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 pupils can opt to do ICT as a GCSE full course. In Year 11 all remaining pupils follow ICT GCSE short course. ICT for pupils in Year 10 is taught cross the curriculum.

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

Strengths

- Examination results at KS3 and KS4 GCSE full course are good.
- Pupils have a good grasp of concepts and skills and apply them well to practical tasks.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well-structured to enable pupils to develop the required skills and concepts.
- The subject is well led and schemes of work and suitable teaching resources have been developed.
- Use of ICT in RE.

Areas for improvement

- Access to the higher levels of attainment for short course ICT.
- Monitoring of pupil progress during practical lessons to ensure lesson targets are met.
- Mapping of ICT across the curriculum, particularly in Year 10.

189. All pupils gained level 5 or above in the national tests for KS3 in 2001 9% of them gained level 8. This is an improvement on the previous year. This is above expectations for all schools nationally.

190. By the age of 16 years examination results for GCSE full course ICT are good. Grades are above the national average with 90% of pupils gaining A*-C grades. However, although all pupils entered for GCSE short course ICT passed the examination, only 58% attained a grade B or C. No pupil attained A* or A. This is below expectation for a selective school.

191. The standard of work seen among current pupils is generally good. In a Year 9 lesson pupils were adding notes to a series of slides for a presentation to be made in their English lesson. Slides had been developed using a range of presentation tools. In a Year 10 lesson pupils were being taught how to set up a relational database. Pupils were able to prepare suitable record structures and create links between files. This was based on sound teaching and revision of previous knowledge of database structures.

192. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use appropriate methods to ensure that pupils are able to understand the concepts that underlie the subject. Lessons are planned effectively and pupils have good opportunities to develop their ICT skills. Where new skills are being taught explanations are generally clear with good use being made of teaching resources such as RM Tutor software.

193. Pupils learn well on the whole. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. Most pupils make good use of the opportunity to develop their ICT skills in lessons. Where this does not occur more stringent action needs to be taken by teachers to ensure pupils remain on task and meet required outcomes. Pupils show good understanding of a range of software skills and are able to apply them to their work. Pupils respond well to teachers' questions and are able to demonstrate good subject recall.

194. Management and leadership of the subject are good. The scheme of work effectively set out the subject requirements. This is enhanced by shared lesson planning and on-line teaching resources for both key stages. Regular testing of pupils ensures that analysis of pupil performance can take place to develop progress.

ICT across the curriculum

195. The school has increased its resources for administration and the teaching of ICT. 145 computers are sited across the school. 133 are networked, with 85 in three network rooms and the rest allocated to various subject areas.
196. The learning resource centre is well-used by pupils to access computer resources at lunchtimes, before and after school to work on tasks independently. Good use is also made of the resources by teachers from a number of subject areas.
197. Good use is made of Internet facilities in lessons for research work and for private study by students in their own time. Suitable protection systems are in place to prevent improper use. Videoconferencing has been installed to enhance teaching and learning.
198. Teachers are effectively supported by the systems manager to make best use of the technology. For example, Using of and processing the results of work with a digital camera in art; preparing a CD-Rom of teaching material in RE.
199. Use of ICT across the curriculum is varied. Where it is being used by teachers there is good evidence of appropriate use. For example in RE it is used to support teaching through use of an interactive whiteboard and by pupils to carry out research and presentation work. ICT is also being used extensively in science, design and technology, art, geography and history for research and presentation work. The ICT department works in conjunction with some departments to carry out ICT tasks such as a presentation of issues with English in Year 9 and use of spreadsheets to reinforce learning about graphs in mathematics in Year 7.
200. The use of ICT across the curriculum has not yet been mapped. In view of the school's decision to deliver ICT in Year 10 it would be advisable to carry out this task with some urgency to ensure appropriate delivery of the statutory curriculum requirements.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision for modern languages is **good and improving**.

Strengths

- The competence and dedication of staff.
- The good attitude of the majority of pupils.
- Well-chosen and well-used course materials.

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum arrangements for the teaching of first and second languages.
- The place of short GCSE courses.

201. By the age of 14 years, pupils have a good command of appropriate elements of their first foreign language (French or German) and are making good progress with their second language. In their first language they listen attentively and accurately to native speech. They are more diffident when speaking, but can put together simple sentences within the limited context of topics handled. Most can make statements and express opinions and are familiar with, though not always confident in using, three tenses of the verb. Standards are consistently above national norms. Standards in the second language are understandably lower because of the later start in Year 9, but the rapid pace of work ensures that the ground is made up.
202. Results for 16-year olds in GCSE have hitherto been satisfactory but improving within the context of this selective school and well above national standards. Percentages gaining the A*-C pass grades have risen substantially since the last inspection. Current Years 10 and 11 are set to continue the improvement with greater numbers attaining the highest grades. Work done in these years is generally accurate and well-presented. Course-work is a strength and pupils apply themselves diligently.
203. The standards of sixth form work seen was broadly in-line with national standards at A-level. Only French is taught at Beths in the sixth form, pupils wishing to take German doing so at a neighbouring school.
204. Pupils of all abilities learn well in Years 7 to 9. They enter the school full of enthusiasm for their new subject and respond well to the learning challenge. This willingness largely carries through to Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 the enthusiasm is more muted but pupils work with great application. This diligence is less marked in short courses. Sixth formers learn and work well.
205. Pupils attitudes and behaviour, as well as standards of attainment, have improved since the last inspection.
206. The major improvement in the provision for modern foreign languages is in the quality of teaching. The department has undergone major staffing changes since the previous inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed (one-quarter was unsatisfactory at the last inspection). Nine lessons out of ten were deemed to be good or very good, compared with only one-third last time. There is now a stable and dedicated team of competent teachers, who are well-led, well-accommodated and resourced with first-class teaching and learning materials.
207. Teachers are universally well-prepared and make appropriate use of the target language, although there is room for greater consistency in this respect. When these basic elements of good language teaching are combined with the necessary pace, challenge and variety, good learning takes place. In one very good lesson seen, an experienced teacher gained the attention of the class from the start by combining taking the register with a warm-up and revision. New grammatical constructs were introduced using the target language. Pupils were engaged in their studies and volunteered answers freely, the teacher taking care to include the more diffident. A guessing game maintained attention, pupils' pronunciation being carefully corrected.

In this way pupils revised and consolidated known vocabulary, learned new items and grasped the new construction. Flashcards were cleverly designed to emphasise the gender of nouns. The teacher's good histrionic talents, combined with the pace and demands of the lesson, ensured that good learning took place.

208. The modern foreign languages department contributes positively to pupils' cultural awareness and development through access to overseas visits and materials relating to the lives and culture of other pupils in France and Germany.
209. Curriculum arrangements for the teaching of French and German as first or second language and the future of short courses need to be resolved in order to provide a platform for further improvement.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers are skilled instrumentalists. This has a positive impact on students' learning.
- The teaching of music technology is very good.
- There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop the provision for ICT in Key Stage 3.
- Ensure that there is a more consistent approach to the marking of pupils' written work in Years 7 to 9.

210. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The attainment of pupils has improved in Key Stage 4. Teaching is often good or very good. Provision for ICT is in place in Years 10 and 11 and is being developed in Years 7 to 9. The weaknesses highlighted in curriculum provision have been addressed and the accommodation has been greatly improved.
211. The 2001 GCSE examination results for 16 year olds gaining A*-C grades were very high when compared with the national average. The 2000 examination was taken by 5 pupils. All pupils gained B or C grades. However, in both years, no pupils gained A* or A grades. The 2001 teacher assessment results for pupils age 14 were very high when compared with the national average. In 2000 they were well-above the national average. Only one lesson was seen in Year 12 and in this the standard of students' work was in line with course-related expectations.
212. By the age of 14 years attainment is above the national average. In the last inspection attainment was found to be similar. Year 7 pupils show confidence as performers. In a lesson, Year 7 pupils listened to extracts from 'Carnival of the Animals; by Saint-Saens. They created their own short group piece to represent an animal. Many pupils showed confidence when performing these to each other. Year 7 pupils enjoy singing and many sing with an accurate sense of pitch. Pupils in Year 8 identify the different instrumental sounds found in Indian music. They use a given pattern of notes to improvise their own raga. They are confident in locating notes on the keyboard and in adding a drone to improve the overall effect. They show some ability in reading and understanding treble clef notation. Pupils in Year 9 have a good general musical knowledge and demonstrate a secure rhythmic ability. They understand how music can be used in films to enhance the action. They create their own music to illustrate a short scene and use notation well to record their ideas. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 show a

satisfactory knowledge of musical terms. However, occasionally, they make insufficient reference to these when discussing their ideas. The achievement of pupils is good. Pupils make good progress in understanding different musical styles and in identifying the way that instruments are used by composers to create an effect. In the last inspection pupils with special educational needs and the more musically able were found to be making insufficient progress. These pupils now make good progress in lessons.

213. By the age of 16 years attainment is well-above the national average. There has been an improvement in pupils' attainment since the last inspection. Pupils in Year 10 show knowledge of different chord structures and the way that these are used in a composition. They experiment with different ideas which they can use later in their own work. By Year 11 pupils are confident composers. They use music technology well to devise and refine their ideas. They listen to their own pieces and identify ways that the overall effect might be improved. The achievement of pupils is very good. Pupils make very good progress as performers, both individually and as members of an ensemble. The more musically able pupils make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils from all years who take part in extra-curricular activities achieve high standards of performance. They make excellent progress in performing together.
214. Pupils have good attitudes towards the subject in Years 7 to 9. They co-operate in group tasks and behave well. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' attitudes are very good. They work independently on composing tasks and show a committed approach to work. In extra-curricular activities pupils' attitudes are excellent.
215. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils to develop skills in composing. However, very occasionally, a few pupils in Years 7 and 8 find difficulty in staying on-task during group activities. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good, with some very good teaching. In the last inspection teaching was found to be sound or good in both key stages. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and make effective use of their own musical abilities to aid students' understanding. The teaching of music technology is very good. Teachers make skilled use of questioning and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson, pupils listened to part of Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. The teacher extended pupils' knowledge through detailed questioning about the music. This required pupils to use their aural ability to determine the structure of the piece, the way the stringed instruments were used and the musical effects achieved. The last inspection found some weaknesses in the National Curriculum provision for 11 to 14 year olds. All these weaknesses have now been addressed. Although there is satisfactory provision for developing pupils' literacy skills in lessons, there is some inconsistency in the marking of pupils' written work in Years 7 to 9. The last inspection report stated that there was no provision for ICT. Provision for ICT is good in Years 10 and 11, but is in the early stages of development in Years 7 to 9. Homework is used satisfactorily to reinforce pupils' learning. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities. These include a big band, a string group, an orchestra and a choir. Pupils have taken part in a range of musical activities, both in and out of school. A one day workshop was held in school, led by the band of the Royal Artillery. Pupils have performed at the DfES/Home Office National Conference. Strong links have been established with the Bexley Centre for Music and Dance. Students perform regularly at various school concerts. Letters have been received expressing appreciation of pupils' performances.

216. There is good leadership and management for the subject. The head of department is ably supported by two colleagues. The last inspection found that there were no procedures for monitoring development and teaching within the department. These weaknesses have now been addressed. Assessment procedures are in place and are being developed further, in order to more closely monitor the attainment of students in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are available in a range of instruments from peripatetic staff. These teachers make a valuable contribution to the work of the department. Many pupils are successful in external music examinations. The accommodation is very good and provides additional facilities for rehearsal groups and instrumental lessons. The resources are good, although there is a shortage of tuned and untuned percussion instruments.
217. The subject makes a good contribution to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall quality of provision for physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Strong and effective leadership.
- A loyal team of staff.
- An impressive range of extra curricular activities.
- Very good standards in team games.
- The inclusive nature of the programme.

Areas for improvement

- More systematic revision procedures for GCSE examinations.
- Development of good technique in answering examination questions.
- Review the appropriateness of the current GCSE syllabus.

218. In Years 7, 8, and 9 the curriculum covers cross-country, rugby, football, cricket, tennis, hockey, basketball, gymnastics, badminton, athletics and health related fitness. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject. They arrive very promptly for lessons and dress immaculately for indoor and outdoor activities. In the lessons seen, standards in soccer were very good.
219. Pupils had developed and refined skills and could use them effectively in game situations. They had good knowledge of how to prepare for and recover from specific activities. In badminton they were making satisfactory progress with the better boys showing good movement about the court and good shot selection. All Year 8 pupils attend a school camp where they experience a variety of outdoor activities.
220. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils follow the full course GCSE games syllabus. Whilst endeavouring to offer a full range of activities the department has identified a need to focus pupil learning on activities, selected from those followed in earlier years. They vary according to pupils' ability. Learning in lessons is good. In one lesson Year 10 pupils rapidly assimilated the principles involved in resuscitation. Attainment is at least, satisfactory, often good. A lower-ability group could apply soccer dribbling skills with precision and control. A high-ability class selected advanced basketball skills and adapted them to game situations.

221. In recent years GCSE results have been below the norm for other subjects in the school, although 2001 results were an improvement compared with the previous year. There is a need to adopt a more systematic approach to revision and examination technique.
222. AS and A-level courses are offered in the sixth form with some girls from a neighbouring school participating. Results have been variable. A reflective department does seek to improve the course which it offers.
223. The quality of teaching, at all levels, is consistently good or very good. Planning and preparation are excellent with appropriate emphasis on safety precautions. Lessons are delivered with clarity and well-defined objectives. Teachers' enthusiasm promotes a similar response from the boys. Expectations are realistically high with encouragement for pupils of all levels of ability. The programme is fully inclusive. Pupils with minor injuries or disabilities are required to bring their kit and given appropriate activities to undertake. Tasks in lessons are differentiated to allow all pupils to gain maximum benefit. There is a comprehensive scheme of work which is implemented fully.
224. Homework is set regularly after theory lessons in Years 10 and 11 and occasionally in Years 7, 8 and 9. Sixth form students are expected to complete one hour of homework for each hour of lesson time. The department adheres to the whole school literacy guidelines. Pupils are encouraged to read widely about the subject. Written work is of a good standard, much of it word processed. Listening skills are well-developed. Pupils speak articulately and use appropriate technical terms. They can calculate heart and recovery rates and use formulae in conjunction with fitness tests. They can present their results in tabular and graphical form.
225. A major strength of the department is the breadth of extra-curricular provision. A variety of sports are available with commendable results and also a commitment to inclusion of less able performers. Sixth formers play a prominent part in promoting activities for younger pupils. Many pupils avail themselves of the opportunities to become involved in outdoor pursuits at home and abroad. Some pupils in Years 12 and 13 take qualifications in games coaching and give assistance with local primary school and handicapped children.
226. The school has particularly good outdoor facilities and a spacious sports hall. Other local facilities, including a swimming pool, are used at times. There is an adequate budget which is efficiently managed. Resources are adequate and well-matched to the curriculum.
227. Leadership of the department is very strong, supported by a loyal team. Responsibilities are delegated with everyone taking a share. There is an ethos of purposeful participation which is shared by staff and pupils. There is ample scope for all pupils to enjoy physical activity and to make appropriate progress.
228. The attitude and behaviour of the pupils are very good, even excellent. They are of high calibre and respond positively to a well-organised environment and to enthusiastic and sympathetic teaching.
229. Since the last inspection very clear expectations about behaviour and learning tasks have been developed. All lessons now have an appropriate warm up phase. Expectations are realistically high. There is more to be done to improve performance in public examinations.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- The development of a highly successful short course RE GCSE, taken by all pupils who do not choose RE as a full option.
- Very high standards for all pupils who study the short course in GCSE RE.
- The use of ICT in a wide variety of teaching and learning contexts, notably marketing the RE coordinator's interactive CD for short course RE, used largely for revision purposes.

Areas for improvement

- Increase opportunities for discussion and reflection on moral and spiritual issues in Years 7-9.

230. Improvement since the last Inspection has been very good, with the development of the very successful short course in RE and the use of ICT and other good aids to learning such as drama, art and literacy throughout the main school. Teaching is very good overall. Pupils' learning good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
231. When pupils enter school their prior knowledge and understanding of Christianity and four other major religions varies widely. The RE department assumes no prior knowledge of any specific topic is needed, and by the age of 14, pupils have progressed so much that most are at the equivalent of Level 6 or above and they know about Christianity and five other major religions of Britain.
232. By the age of 16, pupils attain high standards in compulsory RE which is examined as a short course at GCSE. Some who study for full course religious studies attain an average points score only marginally higher for the full GCSE than the short course achieves. The choice of this course was not a free one, as all who wished to study ICT had to take RE as well. In 2001 almost 60% of pupils entered for short course RE gained A* or A grades.
233. Standards in RE are good throughout the main school and very good in Years 10 and 11. Particular strengths are research and writing skills, supported by ICT, meeting the needs of part of Attainment Target 1 in the Agreed Syllabus, enquiry and evaluation. Knowledge and understanding about religions are good throughout the main school. Work on concept development and empathy are less frequently covered, because of the shortage of curriculum time. Opportunities for discussion and reflection on moral and spiritual issues are more limited in Years 7-9 as the factual coverage of the major religions is seen as a priority. However this may change, as Islam is currently studied by all in Year 11 alongside Christianity, in the short course which looks at current issues such as medical ethics, the environment and religious attitudes to these. The Year 10 full religious studies GCSE group will have more time for developing reflective and reasoned opinions.
234. Very good work on the issues of abortion and medical ethics proceeds from the coordinator's careful planning of a series of three lessons in Year 10. In the first lesson the facts and the two main arguments are presented; in the second all pupils examine Internet topics, identified by the teacher and write notes on a worksheet about their thoughts and feelings, recognising that all these websites have their own points of view to promote. In the third lesson they debate the different standpoints, having empathised with the woman's predicament in a way which develops pupils' personal response to the decisions on such issues, that they as adults will be sharing.

235. Sixth form students recall their interest and enjoyment of short course RE and their pride in high attainment in the subject. They believe that they can argue more confidently from their knowledge and understanding of a variety of world religions, and can begin to consider other views, the humanist and agnostic, the secular and philosophical. They acknowledge the contribution sixth form RE makes to general studies and the ASDAN award. They see the links between religious opinion and science, moral and ethical issues and culture.
236. Teaching and learning are good, with all teaching good, and over half of lessons seen very good. The coordinator's knowledge of the subject and the variety of teaching styles he confidently uses makes a major contribution to the success of teaching and the learning which follows from it. This allows the department to overcome the difficulty of the variety of prior knowledge and experience of RE in the primary phase by building the key content through interactive whiteboard presentations, the pupil's use of their personal bible, and creative skills developed in artistic, and dramatic presentations. The bright and colourful stained glass 'perspex' windows made by Year 8 after they had researched the Nativity story in two synoptic gospels, showed on one set the version from Matthew, and on the other Luke's birth narrative. The series of playlets written, practised and presented by groups of five boys in a Year 8 class allowed each to contribute, including writing lines that scan and rhyme, so that the result was in the style of mediaeval mystery plays. In the lesson where these were presented the teacher ensured that the Christian story from Palm Sunday to Ascension was acted out, and the rest of the class was fully involved in each stage of the Passion, taking place on the school field. This had pace and spirit, and at the end the class evaluated each scene, and the teacher gave his assessment of each group, singling out the best actors and writers.
237. Pupils work with enthusiasm and show interest and the vast majority maintain good sets of notes and do homework as required. Some pupils with poor writing skills find this pace daunting, but where they have been able to gain from seeing and hearing the whiteboard or Internet presentations, these can make up in impact for the lack of detail in their own notes. Pupils with individual education plans are supported by staff and other pupils where their individual needs require extra time or adapted resources.
238. The effect of good teaching and learning in Year 7-9 supports the GCSE short course studied in Years 10 and 11. All pupils have good prior knowledge of Christianity, and can readily understand similarities and differences between Christian groups. They study the comparison with Islam, and are able to distinguish the attitudes and views of different sects within Islam as well by Year 11. In Year 11 the weekly lesson in the second part of the year becomes an opportunity to revisit topics, revise facts and practise responses to examination questions. Pupils mark their own tests, and are treated as independent learners. They are taught that if they cheat in marking they are in reality cheating only themselves, and will gain more by recognising their mistakes and improving their performance. Opportunities to reflect are presented by this process.
239. Throughout the main school there is an emphasis on the skills of literacy and numeracy, with spellings, and reading shared, and statistics used in each year group. In Year 7 pupils do a bar chart of the world population belonging to each of the six religions studied.
240. Attitudes and behaviour are very good and there are very good relationships between staff and pupils with a good deal of humour shared. RE contributes to spiritual and

moral development. The coordinator also contributes as a coordinator of assemblies throughout the school.

241. Leadership and management make a very good contribution to learning in RE. The two part-time members of the department bring cross-curriculum skills from history and English. Opportunities to watch each other teaching are not available to staff currently, and the coordinator lacks the opportunity to monitor teaching in the subject as a result.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in latest year for which national comparisons are available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Economics	3	0	22	100	73	2.3	1.9
General Studies	1	0	19	100	77	2.0	1.9
Mathematics	6	0	15	83	62	1.2	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A - B		% gaining grades A - E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	18	50	46	100	96	7.0	6.6
Biology	13	69	34	92	88	6.8	5.3
Chemistry	9	44	43	100	90	6.0	5.9
Computer Studies	30	17	23	87	86	5.3	4.6
Economics	43	37	36	93	89	5.8	5.5
English Literature	12	75	37	100	95	8.3	5.9
French	4	25	38	100	89	4.5	5.6
Full Design and Technology	15	7	30	93	91	4.3	5.4
General Studies	88	22	30	94	85	5.3	4.9
Geography	11	36	38	100	92	5.3	5.7
German	2	0	40	100	91	5.0	5.8
History	16	25	35	81	88	4.3	5.5
Mathematics	29	41	43	90	87	5.5	5.8
Other Social Studies	11	36	34	100	87	5.5	5.3
Physics	24	29	40	92	88	5.2	5.7
Sociology	3	33	35	67	86	4.7	5.3
Sports/PE Studies	9	0	25	67	92	2.9	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

The quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- A-level results are improving.
- Teaching is good and this results in effective learning.
- Students work diligently and persevere well with difficult problems.

Areas for improvement

- Difficulty for some teachers to manage effectively the wide range of attainments in large classes.
- Further improvement in A-level results to above the national average.

242. The inspection covered mathematics at AS and mathematics and further mathematics at A-level. These courses are divided into four areas: pure mathematics, mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics. Each area is divided into modules, some of which are compulsory and others optional. Overall the curriculum is wide and varied and gives most students the opportunity to follow the courses of their choice.
243. The number of students choosing AS and A-level mathematics is high and above that in most other subjects. Entry standards are variable with some students not having taken the higher level GCSE. This makes it difficult for these students to understand some lessons. Almost all students complete their course. A-level results in 2001 are in line with the national average and are an improvement on each of the preceding two years. They are slightly better than at the time of the last inspection. AS results have declined in 2001, but this is in common with most other schools.
244. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders is above average and better than might be expected from the examination results. Higher-attaining students have very good algebraic skills which they use confidently when introduced to a new topic. For example in a Year 12 lesson on logarithms, they immediately understood their connection with indices and quickly advance to solving complex equations. Other students found difficulty and needed support. In the further mathematics group standards are high. Students investigate algebraic functions, find asymptotes, plot graphs and use graphical calculators to check their results. In other groups the majority of student are reaching average or above standards in mechanics, calculus and trigonometry. A particular strength is the logical way students organise and present their work. This helps them with revision in preparation for examinations. Most work diligently and persevere well with difficult problems.
245. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Lessons are well-planned at an appropriate level. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject and how to teach it effectively. This helps them to motivate students who are determined to understand what they are doing. In some large classes teachers occasionally find difficulty in ensuring lower-attaining pupils are understanding the work. This results in some pupils wasting time until support is available. By discussing appropriate examples teachers help students to understand the principles and methods used to solve problems. For example in a statistics lesson on the Poisson Distribution, pupils

were encouraged to consider the results of an experiment. By formulating null and alternative hypotheses and considering appropriate histograms they learnt to conduct a significance test at the five per cent level. Very good progress was made. In most lessons good on-going assessment helps students to remedy errors and tackle new work with confidence. Homework is used effectively to develop and extend classwork and promote new learning.

246. The sixth form mathematics is well-managed. Good monitoring by the head of department has enhanced staff effectiveness. Teachers work well together and there is a positive ethos for learning within the department. The department makes good use of target-setting to assist students to improve their grades. There are good quality books and resources to support learning.

Sciences

247. Three A- Level subjects - biology, chemistry and physics - have been offered by the school for many years. Students study the AS course in Year 12 and then most students continue into the second year of A-Level. The school offers biology, chemistry and physics at AS and A-Level. This year the school added an extra AS subject, human biology.
248. The standards in the old-style A-Level in chemistry and physics varied around the national averages. The numbers entered for this examination were high for physics, and mostly satisfactory for chemistry. For the new-style AS standards for chemistry in 2001 were good with a high percentage of A-B grades. Standards for physics AS were unsatisfactory, with few A-B grades and 1 in 4 students with grades below E.
249. The inspection focus was on biology in the sixth form, including human biology.

Biology

Provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Results for 2001 are much better than those in the previous year.
- Retention and recruitment are both strong.
- The best teaching is very effective.
- A-level students have a strong capacity for independent learning.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in teaching, especially over the extent of interest and challenge.
- Better planning of the learning of key skills.

250. The most recent results, for 2001 for A-Level biology were very good, with average points well-above the national average. The per cent with A-B grades was especially good, and no grade below E was attained by students from this school. This result is a very marked improvement on the weak results from the previous year. The AS results for 2001 are good. This was the first cohort for the new-style provision. Also the retention from the AS into the second year of A-Level in Year 13 is very good. The numbers from Year 11 choosing AS biology for Year 12 were good in that first year. The numbers choosing biological science this year are very much higher. More chose AS biology, plus a large group have chosen to study the new offer: human biology AS.

The first cohort for AS human biology will take their examination after the period of the inspection.

251. Current A-level work maintains these good standards. The standards attained so far by the AS human biology students are in-line with expectations, based on previous attainment. For example, their essays vary from very good to satisfactory. Essays from some students are fully detailed, with precise use of scientific vocabulary, and with very good understanding; others show adequate understanding but with some gaps in the detail of the coverage. These same variations recur in lessons. For example, students had been asked to answer questions based on topics from the previous lesson. Everyone knew that non-pulmonary veins carry waste. The weaker students were unclear about what happens to the various components of waste; the most-able understood the whole process fully. The standards in the current biology AS also vary from satisfactory to very good, in the extent that students understand matters fully. The standards in the A-level biology group in Year 13 are good and better. These students organise their notes extremely well. The best students produce top grade work. For example, on the "Body's control of blood sugar" such students had very good understanding of an impressive range of relevant factors, as well as being able to present a clear overall picture. The standards vary from satisfactory to very good, but all students are making good progress.
252. Teaching and learning are both good. Some lessons are taught very expertly and the teaching is very effective in directing further study and giving feedback about how to improve. Students make good gains in knowledge and understanding in lessons, and almost all make strong efforts to consolidate and extend their learning in their own time. Other lessons are not as dynamic, though sound overall. In this situation the gains made by students are satisfactory. Teachers are suitably careful to check the extent of understanding and to provide reasonable support. Progress in key skills is good. Provision is informal rather than planned. Even so communication and number skills are good and better. For example, written work is closely argued and well-structured, and students discuss matters intelligently and clearly.
253. Biology is led well. The new-style AS and A-level provision has been successfully introduced. The small inconsistencies in teaching are being managed. Coursework standards are managed very effectively. Students undertake suitable field work. Assessments are regular and accurate. Staff have sufficient value-added data, which they use well. Students views are positive. They feel they were given good guidance when they chose biology, and they value the very good support available to them as their course moves on.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology product design, and electronic products, are studied at AS and A-level. The courses cover elements of engineering and manufacture.

Design and Technology

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

Strengths

- High standards are achieved in electronics.
- Challenging targets are set; the quality of individual guidance and monitoring is good.
- Students' attitudes are extremely positive overall, and student commitment in electronics is excellent.
- A wide range of resources are used, promoting very good learning, and individual products of high quality.

Areas for improvement

- Provide more opportunities for students to participate in class and group presentations.
- Structure courses and lessons for product design, to better meet needs of students, and raise standards.
- Further develop links with local designers and other commercial agencies.
- Link work to craft movements and technology of the past and present.

254. Standards in design and technology examinations at A-Level have declined in recent years, and results in 2001 were below the national average both in terms of A and B passes, and average points scored. However, the achievement of individual students, especially in electronics is often high, and represents considerable progress and value-added during the two year course from GCSE, and when compared with attainment in other subjects. The subject is becoming more popular, and current work indicates improving overall standards in the new AS and A-Level courses.

255. Current work in Years 12 and 13, involves the study and realisation of prototype solutions to designing and making activities, linked to electronics and manufacturing. Ideas for useful products identified by students studying electronics include an Asthma pump dispenser, designed to automatically record use and to reduce patient stress, and a device to control the cooking of various types of rice. Folder work and modelling, indicate students have acquired a sound working knowledge of electronic circuitry, and undertaken extensive research into similar commercial applications. Written work and diagrams are particularly accurate and well-presented, with the use of ICT throughout.

256. The Year 12 product design students' initial ideas and models for skateboard ramps, kart stands, mountain bike peddles, and body armour show satisfactory application to examination specifications, but are less scientific and structured in approach, and not so well-supported with theoretical studies. Research into existing commercial designs is also weaker. With the exception of one or two students who are artistically talented, students' freehand drawings and diagrams of component assembly are below average. Design development drawings generally are not well-presented, and are insufficiently complete. Written work is not as extensive as that produced for electronics, and some design proposals and evaluations lack depth of understanding of the subject. However, learning through discovery and experimentation in practical work is generally good. Students are developing a worthwhile knowledge of the properties of materials and

processes of making and assembling components, using a wide range of materials to meet specific needs.

257. Although product design students are developing the confidence to modify and improve their own work and study the design of similar products, considering efficiency, function and fitness for purpose: their communication, visual, and spatial skills are less well-developed. Their understanding of aesthetics and bringing critical factors to bear on the evaluation of outcomes is insufficiently secure. Further links with design movements and designers past and present, for example The Bauhaus, or Dyson, could be instrumental in promoting greater understanding. ICT, including computer aided design, is used, but has not significantly improved productivity or overall presentation.
258. Students' attitudes are extremely positive and show confidence in their ability to succeed. They are keen to learn, take their work seriously and form good working relationships with their teachers, especially in electronics, where independent learning is highly developed, and students are very articulate and highly productive. There is, however, some lack of commitment to strive for the highest grades in the product design courses. This is reflected in the lack of pace in some lessons and the less than average productivity of some students.
259. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory and often excellent in electronics. Teachers communicate their knowledge of the subject well and have high expectations of students. Well-planned, challenging tasks are set that are appropriate, and inclusive, but more structure is needed in the product design courses, with self focus on design principles, and greater emphasis on documentation and critical evaluation. The quality of individual guidance, assessment of work, and the monitoring of progress is good. In view of students' very positive attitudes and interest in technology generally, greater participation in class situations, discussions, and student presentations could be advantageous.
260. Subject management and developments since the last inspection are good overall, but there is capacity to improve further. Teachers are very enthusiastic to develop the new AS and A-level courses, and to raise standards in-line with the very high standards now being achieved in the main school. Development plans to improve course delivery involve more use of outside agencies and to improve the profile of the subject at sixth form level, are firmly based on resolute team work and the shared commitment to succeed.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Standards at A-level have significantly improved since the last inspection.
- Good teaching encourages good learning, especially in giving students the skills and confidence to work effectively by themselves.
- Students are well motivated and work well with each other and the teacher.
- The very good leadership and organisation promote high standards and the subject's popularity.
- Students are very well supported by the close monitoring of their progress.

Areas for improvement

- Stronger emphasis on the development of skills of analysis and evaluation in average and lower-attaining students.
- Closer links with local businesses to enhance the curriculum and provide more stimulus and resources for the students.

261. Standards overall are above average. In 2001, at GCE A-level, students attained in-line with the national average in A-B and above at A-E grades. Average points scored per student were above the national average. Students did better in business studies than in their other subjects. There has been a marked improvement in standards since the last inspection. In 2000, results were well-above the national average and it was the best performing subject in the school. The results for 2001 were not as high mainly due to unforeseen problems outside the control of the department.
262. AS results for 2001 were also above the national average. All students entered passed except one from a large entry of 39, including a number who had not taken business studies at GCSE. This represents good achievement.
263. Standards in work seen of students on both the AS and A-level courses are above the national average. They are achieving in line with expectations based on their GCSE and AS performance. AS students who have not studied the subject before are exceeding expectations and achieving well. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the main business concepts and use technical terms well. For instance, Year 13 students successfully discuss the externalities of road building, while Year 12 students effectively describe the different stages of a products life cycle. This is encouraged by the teacher's constant reinforcement of correct terminology. Skills of note-making, recording and enquiry in-depth are developed well, often using the Internet in the learning resources centre for information. This has been promoted by the teachers' strong emphasis on enquiry work and their encouragement of students to work constructively on their own, both of which had been previously criticised. Students have good skills of listening, reading and speaking, mostly with clear expression and confidence. This is encouraged by the good questioning technique and the increased use of pair and group work.
264. More able students have mature skills of analysing and evaluating key issues. They discuss complex ideas with considerable insight and write well-structured, analytical essays with relevant supporting evidence. This has been promoted by the high expectations set by the teachers and their very thorough marking, which gives detailed guidance on how to improve.
265. Students of lower ability have also benefited from this help, although their skills of analysis and evaluation of issues and factors are less developed. They also have some initial difficulty in Year 12 structuring essays with clear introductions and writing analytically rather than descriptively. Teachers are addressing these deficiencies through rigorous marking and feedback on assessed work. For instance, two lessons began with students assessing the work of two of their peers, using the teacher's mark scheme to judge levels and receive guidance on how to improve. Overall, literacy skills of writing, speaking and reading are of a good standard. Skills in the use of ICT are also quite well-developed, especially in using the Internet, spreadsheets, word processing and occasionally, presentations using PowerPoint software. This is an improvement since the last inspection as more opportunities are provided to visit the learning resources centre. However, the lack of computers in the department constrains quick access to the Internet for research.

266. Teaching overall is good. It is often very good and never unsatisfactory. This is an improvement on the last inspection as the department has successfully addressed nearly all the criticisms. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons which now offer stimulating and varied activities which actively involve the students. The pace of the lessons is brisk and so the students remain very focused. For instance, Year 13 students moved quickly from a peer assessment of a recent task, to examining social and environmental costs of air-freighting the teacher's lunch and building a Bexley by-pass, with which they could easily identify. Where teaching is most effective, time is used well in setting deadlines and summing up the outcomes of the lesson at the end, especially if students provide the feedback. Tasks often make challenging demands on their skills of analysis to stretch their thinking. Pairs of Year 12 students, for example, keenly discussed strategies for extending the life of a product. There were clear gains in their understanding of a product's life cycle, while their skills of speaking and applying their knowledge were reinforced. Consequently students learn well. However, the skills of analysis and evaluation are not as developed in middle and lower-attaining students.
267. This good learning is also promoted by the very good relationship with the students, based on the teachers' readiness to give time to monitoring and guiding the students' progress. Consequently, students are strongly motivated and most work well by themselves. Their attitude to work is very good. They use time effectively and are productive in their work. They are ready to offer answers, to ask pertinent questions and to join in group and class discussion. However, some lower-attaining students in Year 12 can be reticent unless drawn in by the teacher. There is a strong desire to do well and consequently they set themselves high standards in the presentation and quality of their work. The subject is one of the most popular in the sixth form and a number of students wish to study it at university.
268. The enthusiastic and very effective leadership and management of the subject also promote the good teaching and learning. Schemes of work are clear and challenging in their tasks. The setting of specific targets for students after the frequent assessments provides well-focused direction for improvement, to which the students readily respond. A consistency of standards is ensured by effective monitoring through mutual classroom observations and regular review meetings. There is a strongly shared commitment to improvement by the experienced and well-qualified staff. The wider range of resources than previously reported provides the students with much stimulus and support for detailed, private study. However, this would be further enhanced by developing closer links with the local business community and organising more visits to businesses and industry.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Computing and information technology are offered at A2 and AS level. A number of lessons were observed in each subject in Years 12 and 13. Teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in all lessons. Attitudes among students to learning were very good.

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

Strengths

- An increase in the number of students doing A-level computing courses.
- Examination results are showing improvement over the last 2-3 years.
- Teaching is good, based on strong subject knowledge and computing skills.
- Students have a good understanding of the knowledge and skills required for this subject.

269. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in examination results at A-level. The number of students following an A-level course and entered for the examination increased to a third of the year group in 2001. GCSE A-level Computing examination results were good. 93% of students passed, 18% of them gained grades A or B. This is above the national average.
270. Thirty nine percent of students in Year 12 who were entered for AS level examination did Computing. Although 93% of students passed, of whom 27% gained grade A or B, these results were not as good as expected.
271. The standard of work among current students is in-line with A-level and AS level expectations. In Years 12 and 13 students demonstrate good subject knowledge and are able to recall and discuss clearly aspects of the subject, using appropriate terminology. They are able to apply high-order ICT skills to their coursework.
272. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. This is the result of effective planning and good subject knowledge among teachers. In one Year 13 lesson where students were developing IT systems, real-life situations were being used in conjunction with external agencies as a basis of their coursework. Theory lessons are based on lecture style teaching with on-line notes for students to refer to any time. Although this could be seen as monotonous, students respond well to this method of teaching and value the opportunity it provides to develop independent learning practices. The pace of practical lessons is satisfactory but greater emphasis could be placed on teacher expectations and student outcomes each lesson.
273. Written work is most often done on computer and takes the form of sample examination questions. Coursework is also completed on computer, draft work being submitted for marking against well-identified deadlines. Students benefit from advice given to improve the standard of their work before final submission.
274. Students learn well. They respond readily to their teachers and welcome the individual support they are given when developing coursework. Students help and support each other and show confidence in their understanding of current technology as it applies to the subject. Regular testing ensures that students know how they are progressing throughout the course.
275. Students take good advantage of the opportunity to work independently in the learning resource centre. They approach this facility in a very mature way, making use of the on-line facilities to support their learning as well as developing their practical skills.

276. The subject is well-led and managed. The ICT policy, scheme of work, lesson plans and on-line notes set the framework for good teaching. There is a commitment to build on what has already been achieved and to continue improving standards. A system for analysis of student's attainment is in place and is beginning to address the need to raise levels of achievement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art but lessons in music were also sampled. Two students entered for the AS-level music examination in 2001. Both students gained C grades. The student who took the AS-level music technology examination also gained a C grade. Three students entered for the 2000 A-level music examination and gained C and E grades. The quality of teaching of music in the sixth form is good.

Art

Provision for art in the sixth form is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching providing useful differences in approach between the two staff.
- Students' very good attitudes.
- Good use of gallery visits enhances the sixth form curriculum.
- Detailed assessment gives students effective individual feedback, related to examination Objectives.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement of the potentially highest attainers to ensure that practical outcomes match The level of rigour found in students' preparation work.

277. A-level results in 2001 placed students' attainment above average and represented very good improvement over results in 2000. Previous results had been average. The department had sizeable numbers in the sixth form.
278. Numbers are smaller in both current year groups. Attainment seen in the present Year 13 A-level group appear above average although there is a range. Work is interestingly individualistic, showing students' continuing ability from the lower school to link their research with practical studies in an intellectual way. Their preparation work for projects is developing imaginatively and "sketchbooks" are being presented creatively. Few students' work shows the very highest level of attainment, but standards overall are above average. Current AS-level work in Year 12 shows a similar range, potentially higher. Standards represent good achievement for most students. Most did not achieve the highest grade at GCSE and achievement is good in the sixth form. Many students' work seen developing during the week of inspection showed them making good short-term progress on often very large-scale pieces. The availability of a sixth form studio is very helpful in this regard as students can access their work during free periods. Most take advantage of this effectively.
279. Students speak articulately about the personal development they perceive in themselves through art. They appreciate the differences in approach to the subject which teachers show in their advice and help. Students also value the flexibility the school has shown in organising timetables so that they can study the subject even when clashes with other subjects occur. This creates groups of joint Year 12/13 students, where Year 12 in particular benefit from Year 13's prior experience of AS level. Some are combining photography with art but photography as an endorsement is no longer available because of resource constraints.

280. The characteristics of very good teaching which students experienced in the main school flow through into the sixth form. Teachers' very good knowledge, practical skills and understanding of the subject enable them to extend and enrich students' experience and perceptions of art. They provide very good encouragement for students to develop their creative individuality in the same wide range of media available in the main school. Teachers challenge all students to a high level of intellectual debate regardless of their talents or abilities, so all are stretched. The very good synthesis of research and practical work displayed in students' previous art experience continues and develops well. Some students' basic mark-making skill does not match their intellectual capacity and teachers are frequently engaged in developing, for example, painting and drawing skills with students. Most students need this because it is this less rigorous attention to basic skills which reduces the quality of some work. Effective links with other areas of the school enable students to use a richer range of media, for example textiles and resistant materials such as metal and wood in their work. Visits to galleries and exhibitions also enliven students' art work and are incorporated imaginatively into their visual explorations. These aspects provide well for students' cultural development. Teachers provide a very good quality of assessment at an individual level which students appreciate and learn from. Individual monitoring, both as oral and written comment, is very tight and well-focused on how to improve.
281. As in the main school, department management is good. Numbers have been high for sixth form courses but have fallen of late. The reasons for this need to be monitored. The department's useful contacts with a local teacher training provider are very useful in adding different expertise to the range already available to sixth formers amongst existing staff. For example the student currently in the department is providing a very useful dimension to textiles.

HUMANITIES

The focus for the inspection was geography and history. No other subjects in this area were sampled.

Geography

The provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Students are enthusiastic about the subject.
- Students receive good support from their teachers outside lessons.
- Standards have improved recently.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to raise standards.
- Recruitment to AS and A-level courses.
- The use of ICT within the subject.

282. Standards of attainment at A-level in 2001 are in-line with national expectations for all schools, but below expectations for a grammar school. While this was an improvement on students' attainment in 2000, it was still well-below performance of students in 1999. Numbers of students are low and variable from year to year. Trends in recent years vary with the intake and numbers, but using school figures, students' performance in geography has been slightly below their performance in other subjects in three of the last four years. AS results in 2001 were above national averages with two thirds of students achieving higher grades. This indicates improvement is continuing. Students' work observed in lessons and elsewhere indicates that the Year 12 students have made good progress from GCSE and that standards at A/S are improving and are at least being maintained at A-level. Students' coursework shows good knowledge of human and physical processes and the extent to which processes interact. Findings are properly explained and suitable conclusions are drawn. The fieldwork has been completed and evidence is used to good effect. Year 13 students were seen testing hypotheses about microclimates using the school grounds to provide first-hand data. The students can use data in case studies and apply what they learn locally to interpret global patterns and processes. Teachers ensure students have the opportunity to apply newly developed skills to a practical situation, Year 13 students were seen extracting data relating to population for statistical analysis using Spearman's rank techniques.
283. Students are enthusiastic about the subject and the support they receive from their teachers. They appreciate the opportunities to use ICT facilities outside lessons to help with research. Their learning is also helped by the assistance of geography teachers outside lessons. Target-setting based on prior attainment and attainment in other subjects is established.
284. Teaching is at least satisfactory, good in many lessons and good overall. In some lessons teaching was targeted at too low a level and in others teachers did not insist on pupils answering or working out answers. Instead they provided answers themselves, too readily. In these lessons teaching was only satisfactory. In good lessons, students are given appropriate help to develop their communication and number skills within the subject. Students are able to extract information from a variety of sources and present notes in various formats to suit the purpose. Students are confident in using ICT (although their access to ICT comes during private study, not within geography lessons) and in researching topics from geographical text and magazine resources held in the department. Enquiry methods are used appropriately in coursework and fieldwork and in developing case studies to support the topics studied. Teachers have and communicate good subject knowledge and knowledge of their students' prior attainment. Teachers have good knowledge of the examinations and use this well in assessing students' work. Questions set as homework relate well to the expectations of examination and are marked appropriately, giving suitable feedback to students to reward what is good and give guidance on how to improve.

285. Management of the department relies on informal daily contact as well as formal meetings. Senior members of staff monitor teaching and information collected is fed back to the head of department. This has not led to improvements in recruitment to sixth form courses, or to development of ICT within teaching. The department is well-resourced in some areas; Year 13 students have a textbook each and take them home to help their study. Year 12 students do not. The department provides text and magazine resources to support student research. Resources to support enquiry geography and field-study are provided during lessons. There are no ICT resources within the department and students have access to ICT facilities outside of lessons.
286. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have been maintained at or about national expectations for all schools. Recruitment has been variable, peaking with 24 students in 1998, but there are now just 6 in Year 13 and 9 in Year 12. Use of ICT remains underdeveloped. Target-setting based on prior attainment and performance in other subjects is established.

History

Provision for history in the sixth form is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Students in both years are able to analyse historical issues in depth.
- The quality of teaching is very good and there are high expectations of all students.
- There are excellent relationships in the classroom with a very high level of debate and discussion.
- The subject is managed very well.
- There are very good home-produced materials to support students in their courses.
- The subject is becoming an increasingly popular choice for sixth form students.

Areas for Improvement:

- Results at A-level need to be improved.
- A wider range of resources is needed in the learning resource centre to support independent learning.
- The possibilities of ICT and the Internet need further exploration.
- Students would benefit from more opportunities to take part in conferences and listen to visiting speakers.

287. There are 26 students studying the subject to AS level in Year 12 and 9 students studying A-level in Year 13.
288. In recent years, results in GCE A-level have been below national averages both for the proportion of students achieving a pass and for the proportion achieving the highest grades. There is, however, a rising trend over time and, in the recent AS level examination, more than half the students entered achieved the highest grades. Standards observed during the inspection are considerably higher than those shown by recent examination results. In the Year 12 course, students analyse sources critically and use a wide range of evidence to produce structured arguments. Skills of interpretation and evaluation are also developed well. Evidence from their written work suggests that they are able to replicate their good oral progress in writing. In this context, some very detailed and well-organised paragraphs were seen in answer to a short assessment task on the causes of the 1905 revolution in Russia. These historical skills are honed further in Year 13 where students are making very good progress in developing their note-taking and essay-writing techniques. They use these

very well to make sustainable arguments and higher-attaining students in particular use specific detail to support their conclusions; for example, in some in-depth analyses of the decline of the Liberal party in Britain after the First World War.

289. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers are confident in their subject expertise and use this very well to promote successful learning. Lessons are planned very well with clear aims and objectives that are shared with the students. Expectations are very high and, as a result, students make rapid progress, both in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the various topics and in terms of developing subject skills. For example, in a very good Year 13 lesson, students were encouraged, by carefully targeted teaching, to examine in depth whether or not Nazi economic policy after 1936 was geared to war. A variety of approaches are used to stimulate students' interest in the subject. These include short written tasks, student presentations, video clips and class discussions. There is, above all, a sense of purpose to lessons and this gives students confidence to express their opinions and develop their ideas in depth. Relationships are excellent and, as a result, students thoroughly enjoy their lessons and have very committed attitudes towards their work. All take part in classroom discussions and the maturity and depth of their oral responses are particularly impressive. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 13 lesson on the problems facing British foreign policy in the 1920s. Individual presentations and group discussion on this topic produced some very detailed and mature responses from all students and the debate ranged very widely to encompass Soviet Russia, American isolationism and the decline of the British Empire.
290. The subject is managed very well by an experienced head of department with very strong support from another member of the teaching team. The progress of all students is monitored rigorously and schemes of work have been developed successfully to reflect recent changes in the subject. There is a very good range of home-produced materials to support students on their courses and they are encouraged to read widely and in-depth. This has addressed an issue arising from the previous report. However, more resources are needed in the learning resource centre to support students in developing their independent research skills. The possibilities of ICT and the Internet are beginning to make an impact on the work of the department and students would benefit from more opportunities to attend historical conferences and listen to visiting speakers.
291. Overall, improvements have been made since the previous report in terms of more helpful marking of students' work and in terms of encouraging students to read more widely. The subject is becoming an increasingly popular choice for sixth form students and public examination results are improving. The key issue now for the department is to ensure that this improvement is maintained so that all students achieve their full potential.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The main focus in this inspection was on English literature at AS and A2 level. The department offers further choices in the form of communication studies and film studies at AS and A2 levels. Communication studies was lightly sampled and found to be very good

Overall, provision in English literature is **very good**.

Strengths

- Results in 2001 were very high at GCE A level and well-above average in the new AS level examinations.
- Students achieve very well, acquiring high level skills of critical analysis.
- Teaching is very good, occasionally excellent.
- Students develop very good study skills and learn from each other as well as from their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- No significant areas for improvement were identified.

292. Since the last inspection, there has been a notable improvement in results and in the quality of teaching.

293. Results in A-level English literature were very high in 2001, and show a considerable improvement on the results from the previous year. There have been some fluctuations in results since 1998, but they have been well-above average overall. Students' performance in English literature at this level has been significantly better than in other subjects. The results in the new AS level examinations in 2001 were well-above average, with 80% of the entries gaining A or B grades. Most students have carried on with the study of literature to A2 level.

294. Standards seen in Year 13 during the inspection are well-above those usually found nationally. Most students have made very good progress from GCSE as a result of skilled teaching and a great deal of individual help. Students contribute to class discussions with articulately expressed perceptive insights. They have gained in confidence intellectually, show very good understanding of abstract literary concepts and are able to apply these in differing contexts, making links across a range of texts. Their essays have improved in the degree to which they are able to analyse texts in depth: the best are clear, logical and well-expressed, showing an impressive capacity for mature reflection. The most successful students have developed excellent study skills, keep well-organised files and show effective revision techniques.

295. Students in Year 12 are finding the transition to AS level from GCSE very demanding, but they are rising to the challenge and their work shows very good progress overall in the relatively short time since the start of the course. They are able to build on the sound analytical approaches developed in Years 10 and 11, and are developing a confident personal response to literature as well as an awareness of different critical perspectives. The essays of high-attaining students show developing skill in the analysis of writers' use of language and its impact on meaning, while responses in class show good understanding of the historical and political background to the texts studied.

296. Students' very good attitudes are a significant factor in contributing to their good learning in lessons and their progress over time. They contribute at length to class discussions, reporting that they enjoy these sessions, and recognising how much they

learn from them. Students come to lessons well-prepared and most follow up points raised in lessons with research or wider reading. They have developed a collaborative ethos and show a supportive attitude to each other. Essays are copied and shared so that they can learn from each other. Students report that they find this practice helpful. They recognise the contribution studying English has made to their personal development, acknowledging the degree to which they have gained in confidence. The skills of critical analysis and self-expression that they have acquired are valued, and their potential application to future studies in a range of disciplines is recognised.

297. Students learn well as a result of very good and in some cases outstanding teaching. They respond well to their teachers' enthusiasm and energy. The best lessons are inspirational: sound scholarship combined with expressive delivery commands students' attention, and teachers' challenging expectations and skilled questioning stimulate students into thinking more widely, often drawing on insights gained from other A-level studies. High expectations are also seen in the way essays are copiously annotated and marked with great rigour. Teachers provide a great deal of individual tuition, which students appreciate as one of the main factors helping them to make progress.
298. Students are supplied with good quality background materials in order to broaden their critical perspectives, and are provided with ample opportunities to develop research skills. They make appropriate use of libraries, and also the Internet. They exchange information about useful websites and have developed a sound critical response to the material acquired, recognising that it is variable in quality. Of particular benefit to those of last year's AS level students who were going to continue their studies at A2 level was a week away on a Shakespeare study course. Those who attended spoke with great enthusiasm about the value of this experience. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Teachers are well-trained for A-level work, and are appropriately qualified and very experienced. As in the main school, leadership and management are very good.

A level Drama & Theatre Studies

299. This course was lightly sampled. One lesson was seen. Numbers are small in Year 13, but healthier in Year 12. Students from Year 12 and Year 13 are taught together in one group, which involves careful planning on the teacher's part to ensure all benefit. Teaching is very good. Students benefit from the teacher's subject expertise; they work seriously and achieve well.