

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN HANSON SCHOOL

Andover

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116405

Headteacher: Mr S. Evatt

Reporting inspector: Mr D. Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 25th February – 1st March 2002

Inspection number: 243920

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 16

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Croye Close
Andover
Hampshire

Postcode: SP10 3AB

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Grace Morgan

Date of previous inspection: 3rd February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16976	Mr D. Pittman	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements.</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9724	Ms B. Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
18967	Ms B. Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3731	Mr W Robson	Team inspector	English, drama, English as an additional language	
1779	Mr D Leonard	Team inspector	Science	
1385	Mr K. Hopkins	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
10053	Ms J. Simms	Team inspector	Art and design	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
20497	Mr V. Williams	Team inspector	Geography History	
4829	Mr I. Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
11975	Ms T. McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music	
13217	Mr M. Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	

8216	Mr G. Binks	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
10895	Mr D. Wasp	Team inspector	Religious education, humanities, equal opportunities Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

John Hanson is an average size comprehensive school with 910 students on roll (452 girls, 458 boys). The school serves a very mixed population; it receives more applications from out-of-catchment students than in-catchment students. The school has a high mobility of students partly related to the incidence of students from military families. For the first time, the school is significantly oversubscribed for 2002. Standards of attainment of students when they entry the school are in line with the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals (4.2 per cent) is well below the national average. The percentage of students with special educational needs (24 per cent) is above the national average. The majority of these students are at an early stage of support. There are relatively few students with full statements of special educational need (1.3 per cent); this is below the national average. The number of students speaking English as an additional language is very low. The severe problems of inadequate accommodation, which the school has had to cope with, are being resolved shortly when the school moves to a new building in September 2002

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

John Hanson is a good school with significant strengths. Standards of attainment are above average and most students make good progress. Students benefit from good teaching and from the positive relationships within the school. The personal development of students is promoted through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities to show responsibility. Leadership and management are effective and efficient; clear direction is given to the school and there is a commitment to improvement. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment in humanities, physical education and geography are well above the national average.
- The overall achievement of students is good.
- The quality of teaching is good; it is often very good or better.
- Leadership and management within the school are good.
- The pastoral care, support and guidance students receive are strengths.
- Personal development is significantly enhanced by a very effective personal, health and social education (PHSE) course.

What could be improved

- The achievement of higher attaining boys in examinations.
- The provision, application and assessment of information and communication technology in subjects.
- Greater consistency in developing literacy and numeracy across subjects.
- The identification of spiritual opportunities in the curriculum.
- The support and challenge given to gifted and talented students in lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection in 1997. The school now uses assessment data more effectively to identify under-achievement and establish targets for improvement. Form tutors have become increasingly and successfully involved in this process. These strategies have

helped raise standards of attainment although the under-performance of some higher ability boys remains an issue. The overall quality of teaching has improved significantly.

It is to the school's credit that it has have been able to sustain this position during a current period of staffing difficulties related to long-term illness and problems of recruitment. Standards of attainment and the students' achievements have been raised substantially in design and technology. Most staff have received relevant training in information and communication technology (ICT) but lack of computer resources is a constraint in applying these skills in lessons. The quality of reports to parents has improved and they now comply with statutory requirements, although comments and targets are frequently not specific enough to tell parents what their children need to do in order to improve. The provision for students' spiritual development has been partially addressed through individual departments but there continues to be a lack of coherence in the way spirituality is dealt with across the school. The introduction of a work-related programme into the curriculum has improved the provision for less able or disaffected students.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	B	C	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds, results were above the national average. In English attainment was close to the national average but below average in comparison with those results achieved in similar schools. Attainment in mathematics was above average nationally and in line with the performance of similar schools. In science, attainment was well above the national average and above the standard of comparable schools. On balance, the trend in the school's performance was better than the national picture. The overall standards achieved were in line with the results for schools with students from similar backgrounds.

In GCSE examinations, results were in line with the national average but below the performance of similar schools. The results of some higher ability boys were below expectation; attainment in the higher grades was below that of similar schools. GCSE results have been close to national averages in recent years. The trend in GCSE standards has been similar to the national picture. Examination performance in most subjects is close to national figures, with particularly high standards being achieved in design and technology, geography, humanities and physical education. The standards achieved in ICT were low and were not as high as they should be given the abilities of students. The school failed to meet its overall target for GCSE examination performance by three per cent.

Overall attainment in lessons at the end of the current Year 9 is in line with national expectations. It is above average in science, design and technology, religious education and physical education. Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is predominantly good, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Attainment continues to improve in most subjects through Years 10 and 11. Attainment is well above the national expectation in geography, humanities and physical education. Achievement is generally good through these later years. The achievement of students with special educational need is good. The achievement of students who are gifted and talented is satisfactory.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most students are enthusiastic about their studies and many take an active part in the wide range of opportunities provided for them. A small minority of students are demotivated and show a lack of interest in their studies.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally good. In lessons most students behave well in order to concentrate on their studies. A few students in Year 9 can be difficult and disruptive. Behaviour outside of lessons is generally good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relations in the school are very good and help learning. Students respond very well to the provision for personal development.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance rates are below the national average; though attendance has improved during the current academic year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. In almost all of the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory; much of it was better than satisfactory. In above one lesson in four, teaching was of high quality, that is, very good or excellent. A very small amount of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Examples of excellence were seen in science, design and technology, textiles, humanities, physical education and lessons in personal and social development. On balance, the teaching is very effective in meeting the needs of most students.

The quality of teaching is good in English and science; it is satisfactory in mathematics. An increasing emphasis is being placed on improving literacy and numeracy but owing to long term illness of key staff there is a lack of consistency in the way it is being taught. Across the school, the main strengths in the teaching are teachers' knowledge of their subjects, detailed and effective planning and the high expectations of achievement. Students are 'known' well; the rapport and positive relationships between staff and students are noticeable features of many lessons.

The result of the teaching is learning of good quality; students gain new knowledge and understanding effectively. Most students work hard and concentrate well on their studies. The unsatisfactory attitudes to learning of a minority of students have an adverse impact on their progress. Students can work well on their own initiative and organise themselves efficiently. Students with special needs learn well and make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school is strongly committed to provide equality of opportunity and access for all its students. Subject planning provides good breadth and balance. Literacy and numeracy policies are not fully developed. The curriculum is considerably enhanced by the good extra-curricular

	provision: the enrichment activities successfully promote students' development.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. The learning support department helps these students well. A good standard of assistance is provided for students with statements of special needs throughout the school
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. There are clear procedures for identifying the needs of such students and appropriate support is available for any who are at an early stage of learning English. The learning support department provides further help for these students when necessary.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory; and for moral and social development it is good. Provision for cultural development is very good. There is a strong sense of shared purpose throughout the school and firm disciplinary procedures are in place to help students distinguish right from wrong. Students are given opportunities to take on responsibilities and show initiative.
How well the school cares for its students	Very well. Heads of year and tutors know students thoroughly. They keep careful records. This knowledge is effectively used to support students' work, personal development and behaviour. Procedures for child protection are very good. Parents are very supportive of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior staff provide effective and efficient leadership of the school. Many heads of department and pastoral leaders are also effective managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses; there is an effective committee structure. Communication between the school and governors is open and productive.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school uses data well to monitor the school's performance. Actions to bring about improvement are planned efficiently and implemented successfully. Good systems are in place for managing the performance of teachers.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Detailed planning enables resources to be efficiently deployed; specified grants are used appropriately. There is clear identification of priorities and effective indications of action to be taken.

The governors fully meet the statutory requirements for the curriculum but requirements are not met in relation to a daily act of collective worship.

The overall staffing provision is unsatisfactory. In some subjects, such as mathematics, staff specialisms do not meet curricular requirements. The school continues to face problems of recruitment in some subjects such as science and modern foreign languages, which is in line with the national picture. The provision for learning resources is satisfactory; tight financial control is necessary because of overall budget constraints. In general, accommodation is poor. The planned move to new school buildings, in a few months time, will resolve this issue.

Financial planning is effective and relates well to the school's priorities for improvement. The school consults a range of people about financial matters and obtains resources at a competitive price. It uses them in the best possible way to meet its aims.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like the school. • The school expects their children to work hard and do their best. • They feel comfortable approaching the school if they have problems or concerns. • They consider that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of behaviour in the school are not good. • Their children do not receive the right amount of work to do at home. • They are not well informed about the progress that their children make.

The inspection team agrees with these positive views held by parents. The views expressed by parents about areas for improvement are from a minority; the majority of parents are satisfied with these issues. The team confirms that most students behave well, but a minority do not. Annual reports comply with statutory requirements but comments and targets are often too generalised. Homework tasks and the quantity of work required are appropriate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

- 1 The overall attainment of students on entry to the school is average. Most students have a sound basic grounding in the skills of literacy and numeracy.
- 2 Results in the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds were above the national average; girls' attainment is higher than boys' but it is not significantly different from the national picture. In English attainment was close to the national average but below average in comparison with results in similar schools. Attainment in mathematics was above average nationally and in line with the performance of similar schools. In science, attainment was well above the national average and above the standard of comparable schools. On balance, the trend in the school's performance was better than the national picture. The overall standards achieved were in line with the results for schools with students from similar backgrounds.
- 3 Results in GCSE examinations were in line with the national average but below the performance of similar schools. The attainment of girls was above the national average, a pattern which has been evident for the last three years. The results of some higher ability boys, in 2001, were below expectations. For all students, overall attainment in the higher grades was below that of similar schools. On balance, GCSE results have been close to national averages in recent years. The trend in GCSE standards has been similar to the national picture. Examination performance in most subjects is close to national figures, with particularly high standards being achieved in design and technology, geography, humanities and physical education. The standards achieved in ICT were low and were not as high as they should have been given the abilities of students. The school's overall target for GCSE examination performance was appropriately challenging; it failed to meet the target by three per cent.
- 4 On balance, attainment in English is in line with national expectations. Students have very good speaking and listening skills. They are keen to ask questions and participate in lessons. Most Year 9 students can understand the texts they read and can back up their views with good reference to the text. A few low attaining students experience great difficulty with reading. In Year 11 students show a good knowledge of the plot, characters and relationships in set texts. The organisation and the structure of their writing are areas for improvement for many students. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory in both key stages.
- 5 Standards of literacy are satisfactory and enable students to understand and make progress with the work that they do in all subjects. Students have good speaking and listening skills and contribute very well to discussions. They often provide extended answers to questions in class. Most have a good command of standard English by the time they reach Year 9. Overall standards of reading are satisfactory. Students understand the work that they have to read in different subjects and are able to skim and scan for information when they are asked to do their own research from books and on the Internet. The standard of students' written work varies. It is good in physical education, religious education and design and technology because teachers insist on accurate spelling and help students to plan their work. However, in science, students often misspell technical vocabulary. In art, students have difficulty synthesising their ideas and in music their written answers to questions are often

badly organised. Overall, students have difficulty in structuring their essays and longer pieces of writing.

- 6 Overall, standards in mathematics are in line with the national average. Most students have satisfactory numerical skills and are increasingly confident in using a range of mental methods in their calculations. Algebraic and data-handling skills develop well when the appropriate specialist staff are available. In Years 10 and 11 the ideas of shape and space are generally well understood.. However, students' investigatory skills are less strong. Generally the progress made by students of all levels of ability is satisfactory
- 7 Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall. Number skills have been well taught by the mathematics department, and evidence remains of good standards. Although the present staffing problems are creating difficulties with consistency and continuity, the non-specialists can usually cope with helping students with basic number skills. The use of mental mathematics 'starters' to lessons gives practice with recall of number facts, and increases speed and accuracy of calculations. Year 7 show increasingly good levels of numeracy overall, through the development of the numeracy strategy in primary schools. Some gaps in knowledge and understanding are evident in some older students, notably in estimating measures and in fast recall of multiplication and division facts. Standards of numeracy are reported as good in many subject areas, notably geography, science and design and technology, where there is insistence on accurate calculations.
- 8 Students' ICT skills are generally satisfactory in terms of communicating information through word processing and desktop publishing. However, the great majority of students have little more than a basic knowledge and understanding of how to use the computer to control another machine, to capture data, to log changes and to measure outcomes over a period of time. Opportunities for students to apply the skills learnt in discrete ICT lessons, for example the use of spreadsheets, are limited, mostly as a result of insufficient resources in the subject. Research skills using the Internet are satisfactory, most students being able to select an appropriate site and search for the required information. Almost all students have good practical skills, readily logging on to the school network, using passwords, loading the required software programs and their saved work files and using the keyboard and the mouse to successfully negotiate the required menus and functions.
- 9 On balance, standards of attainment in science are above average. Students' notebooks show that the quality of work is appropriate to their ability levels. For some students difficulties with the technical language of science hold back progress because it prevents them from describing and explaining their work. In Year 11, students conduct experiments accurately and are able to analyse their results correctly. Students' skills in using ICT are underdeveloped because of a lack of resources. Overall, progress through successive key stages is good.
- 10 Standards of attainment and the quality of work produced in the humanities course, offered in Years 10 and 11, are well above the national average. Students are confident in oral discussion and mature in their approach to learning. In Year 10, students are able to analyse issues in considerable depth and produce very impressive extended writing. These skills of analysis and very good literacy are given an even sharper focus in Year 11. Overall achievement is very good.
- 11 Standards of work seen in design and technology and physical education are above average at the end of Year 9. They improve to become well above average at the end of Year 11 in physical education. Attainment in design and technology continues to be

above average in Years 10 and 11. In Year 9, students work safely in a very wide range of materials and develop good skills using a range of tools and processes. Higher attaining students show very good presentation and graphical skills. In Year 11 some students' work also reflects high levels of creative flair and imagination, developing products which match their interests. In physical education students acquire significant practical skills, particularly in basketball and badminton. In Year 9 girls' achievement in gymnastics is very good. Boys, including those with special educational needs, make excellent progress in health-related exercise. On balance, achievement in design and technology and physical education is good.

- 12 Attainment in geography is in line with expectations at the end of Year 9 and improves significantly to become well above average by the end of Year 11. In Year 9 students have a sound grounding in geographical skills. They can use and interpret Ordnance Survey maps well but accurate presentation and analyses of statistical data are not so strong. In Year 11 students are able to describe and explain a range of physical and economic processes very well and show good understanding of quite complex processes. Overall, achievement is very good.
- 13 Attainment in art and music is in line with expectations at the end of Year 9 and improves to become above average by the end of Year 11. In art students develop their skills in two and three-dimensional work well. Drawing and painting skills are effectively developed. Students' research into historical and critical work for their projects is satisfactory. Students of music in Year 9 compose properly structured pieces and acquire satisfactory performing skills. Higher attaining students develop their ideas effectively and co-ordinate parts well in ensemble work. In Year 11, higher attaining students play and sing in an accomplished manner and students of average ability perform with a good sense of style. Achievement in both subjects is good.
- 14 Attainment in history, ICT and modern foreign languages is in line with expectations at the end of both key stages. By the end of Year 9 students have a good knowledge and understanding of historical events. However, their ability to identify the nature and the significance of source material is often weak. In Year 11, students are more confident in undertaking historical enquiry and in using source material. This work is done quite well in discussion but there is insufficient consolidation of this in writing. In ICT most students have good practical skills. In modern foreign languages students understand information from conversations on cassette satisfactorily. Students' oral skills are not as well developed as their understanding because there are insufficient opportunities for students to practise speaking and to improve their pronunciation. Accuracy in written work varies, and there is room for improvement, particularly with the use of accents in French. Overall achievement is satisfactory in all three subjects.
- 15 Students with special educational needs make good progress in the school. This is due initially to the efforts made by the school to identify students entering the school with low standards of literacy and numeracy and to seek to give them immediate support. At the moment all the students in Year 7 with below average levels in English receive regular small group teaching from teachers in the learning support department. Valuable opportunities are provided daily for younger students to practise reading with older students under supervision in the library. Help with numeracy is provided also during the morning registration sessions for students identified as having low levels of skill.
- 16 The achievement of students with statements of special educational need is good because they receive effective support from very competent classroom assistants. In most lessons there is good pre-planning between the teacher and support assistant, which helps to ensure good progress. In lessons observed during the inspection

students with special needs were achieving well in art, design and technology, geography, history, humanities, modern foreign languages, physical education and music. In English and mathematics and science the achievement of these students was in line with that of all students and it was particularly good in mathematics when support assistants were working with teachers. All the students with special needs who were entered for GCSE in modern foreign languages achieved a graded pass.

- 17 Very few students have English as an additional language. The school has clear procedures for identifying their needs. Good links with the bilingual support service ensure that further assessment and appropriate support is available for any students who are at an early stage of learning English. The learning support department provides further support for these students when necessary, with the result that they make good progress and are able to participate fully in all subjects. Students who are gifted and talented are not identified as a specific group by the school. Their overall achievement is satisfactory but the attainment of higher ability boys is not as high as it should be.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 18 Students' attitudes to the school are good. Almost all are interested in their studies and behave well. A minority are unwilling to learn and liable to behave badly. Relations in the school are very good and help learning. As individuals, students respond very well to the provision for their personal development. Attendance is below the national average.
- 19 Almost all students are keen and interested in their work. Year 7 students in a mathematics lesson in which they learnt about tallying approached their task very sensibly, moving purposefully around the room to collect data and discussing predictions and how to present their results. In an English lesson where Year 11 students worked on an extract from Clive James' 'Unreliable Memoirs', they were keen to take part in the lesson and responded confidently in discussion. Students are enthusiastic about what the school has to offer them. Large numbers take part in extra-curricular activities, including sport. Many students volunteer to do community service. Students concentrate well during lessons, and are able to sustain their concentration during double periods, particularly when the teaching is stimulating. Physical education lessons, at all levels of the school, provided several examples of sustained effort, commitment and concentration in response to inspiring teaching. However, there are some students – though a minority – who are unwilling to learn and who make little effort. For example, this was seen in a science lesson for Year 9 where a significant number of students paid little attention to the teaching and went through the motions of copying from the board but with their minds otherwise engaged.
- 20 On balance, standards of behaviour in the school are good. Students behave well in lessons: standards are often very good. Behaviour is also good as students move around the school, with little pushing or shoving. But a significant minority of students look for opportunities to behave badly, particularly if not handled firmly. Most, but not all, of this type of behaviour occurs among students in Years 9 and 11. Such students are distracted in lessons and are all too ready to create diversions and distract others.
- 21 During the academic year 2000/2001 the number of permanent exclusions was about average for a school of this size, but fixed term exclusions were higher than average. In the current academic year there have been fewer fixed term exclusions so far, though the number remains above average. The reasons for exclusions are appropriate: most are for violent or disrespectful behaviour. More students from the

current Year 9 have been excluded than from other year groups. Students interviewed did not consider bullying to be a problem in the school. Though cases do occur, the school dealt with instances promptly.

- 22 The quality of relations in the school is very good, both among students and between students and teachers. This helps learning. An example of this occurred in a Year 11 science lesson where students were conducting research into the extraction and use of metals. Because relations were good between the teacher and students, levels of concentration and effort were high. The students got on well among themselves, shared their research and co-operated well. Students listen to each other, for example in group and class discussion. The manner in which students respond to the provision for their personal development is also very good, particularly on an individual basis. This is illustrated effectively by the enthusiasm and hard work shown by students teaching in the peer education module of PHSE programme. The number of students who do community service is also impressive. Older students readily take up the opportunities offered to take responsibility as prefects, as senior students attached to Year 7 tutor groups, in the library, or helping younger students with reading. However, students interviewed commented that they did not have the opportunity to contribute through a school council.
- 23 The attitudes and behaviour of students on the register of special needs are very positive across the school. Students enjoy working in small groups where there is a clear focus on improving skills and where the activities change regularly during the lesson. Students work well and persevere where the teaching is good and in most cases where they receive individual support. Attitudes to work are particularly good in physical education, English, geography, humanities, history, religious education, and learning support. They are generally good in art, mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and science. A very few instances were noted of disaffected and distracting behaviour by students in art, English, mathematics and music lessons but these were exceptional in the context of the school as a whole.
- 24 The overall rate of attendance during the academic year 2000/2001 was 90.1 per cent. This is below the national average of 90.9 per cent. Authorised absence was 9.1 per cent compared with a national average of 8.1 per cent. Unauthorised absence was 0.8 per cent, broadly in line with the national average of 1.1 per cent. The overall rate has improved during the current academic year. Attendance in Years 9 and 11 is not as good as in other year groups. Holidays taken during term-time have an adverse effect on the overall rate of attendance.
- 25 Students' attitudes are similar to those reported in the previous inspection, but the rate of attendance has fallen.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 26 Students are taught well throughout the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good with many examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching. In above one lesson in every four, the teaching was of high quality. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Examples of excellence were seen in science, design and technology, textiles, humanities, physical education and PHSE lessons. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory and for English it is good. On balance the teaching meets the needs of students well although some higher attaining students are not challenged enough. Standards of teaching have improved since the previous inspection.

- 27 Teachers are enthusiastic and are committed to the students and the school. They form a self-critical group, supporting one another well. The school has a very good programme for professional development and training. Each member of the leadership team supports other teams of teachers. The school has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning.
- 28 Teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise, and show enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their students. In the best history lessons, subject expertise is used well to develop students' historical enquiry and investigatory skills. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the Crusades, a role-play was used extremely effectively to analyse the tone of Pope Urban II's speech to the Crusader knights. The source was effectively examined as a form of propaganda and compared with those used in modern times. Teaching and learning across the attainment range were of high quality. In humanities, the teachers' expertise enables them to explain specialist vocabulary and develop students' own use of this very well.
- 29 Detailed lesson planning is a good feature of most lessons. In English, teachers plan lessons carefully. They write objectives on the whiteboard so that students know what they have to achieve and, in the best lessons, they usually evaluate with students how well they have met them. Teachers often plan a variety of activities in lessons to interest students and to keep them learning at a good pace. In humanities, teachers plan lessons very thoroughly with clear aims and objectives. As a result, students become an integral part of the learning process and are keen to participate in class discussion. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, students examined the effects of the media on gender role formation. They discussed the role of advertising in this; the students conducted an animated and very productive debate, which resulted in significant learning on their part.
- 30 Teachers generally have high expectations of students' performance. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson on metal extraction the students' learning was excellent because the teacher utilised every moment effectively by giving very clear explanations and sustaining the pace of activities. The teacher's expectations were conveyed by means of question and answer to check that students understood, reinforcing this activity by means of role-play, then arranging for them to make a sample of metal for themselves. In art, teachers expect students to take responsibility for the development of their work at appropriate phases of projects. This means that by Year 10 they can make decisions, which create individuality in the ways they work. In general, staff make every effort to provide an environment which promotes success. In the best lessons, teachers move briskly from one task to another. This ensures that students sustain their concentration. There are good levels of productivity in a number of subjects and learning proceeds at a good pace.
- 31 The active involvement of students helps to sustain interest and enhances their learning. For example, in some geography lessons practical activities provide a stimulus for independent learning. This produces a good dialogue between the teacher and students that extends the students' knowledge and achieves a greater understanding of the topic taught.
- 32 The management and control of students in lessons are generally good. The good relationships between students and staff help to create a positive climate for learning in most lessons. Staff use praise in an effective manner to raise students' self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. Classes are usually well managed, but in some lessons, particularly in the short afternoon session, these lessons are not always managed sufficiently effectively to enable all students to learn well. In

humanities lessons, relationships are very good and teachers know their students well. In design and technology teachers expect and achieve very good behaviour from students. Behaviour is more often very good and sometimes excellent because the tasks set by teachers are well matched to interest and intellect, and as a result students enjoy what they do.

- 33 Time and limited resources are used well by most teachers. English teachers use a variety of resources to deepen students' understanding of literature. For example, a Year 10 class developed an awareness of Shakespeare's use of persuasive language through a class reading of Henry V's stirring speech before the Battle of Agincourt. They then listened to an alternative emotive rendition on videotape and analysed it in groups. The use of limited ICT resources is very much dependent upon the interest, expertise, experience and enthusiasm of subject teachers.
- 34 The school is developing a policy for literacy across the curriculum. Most subjects departments have their own literacy policy but at present the teaching of literacy skills lacks consistency. The English department is beginning to revise schemes of work to take account of the National Literacy Strategy. The learning support department has made good progress with the use and adaptation of progress units to help students with reading and writing difficulties. Science, English and modern foreign language teachers make good use of the library to help students develop research skills. However, in most subjects, students do not have enough opportunities to read aloud in order to improve their fluency and expression. Teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on the need for students to read more widely. The teaching of subject specific vocabulary and extended writing skills is very inconsistent. In design and technology, students receive a lot of guidance and often produce well-organised reports and evaluations of their practical work. In modern foreign languages, teachers help students to plan their writing carefully, through the use of spider graphs, for example. In physical education and religious education they provide very good guidance for planning GCSE coursework. However, in science, teachers rarely correct students' spellings or grammatical errors. In music, the marking of writing is similarly superficial. Many teachers are aware of ways in which they can help students plan their writing by providing them with a framework for their ideas.
- 35 Good examples of the use of numeracy were seen in Year 7 drama (costing caretakers' time to pick up litter), and in Year 9 physical education with the 'sergeant' jump (measuring difference in height jumped with arms outstretched). In geography and science a range of different graphs were interpreted and used well, and statistical data presented well. Number skills and graphical techniques are taught well by specialist mathematics teachers and competently by others. Students with special educational needs are helped with numeracy problems by intensive one-to-one sessions with senior students during two registration periods each week, supervised by a learning support assistant. This is very good provision.
- 36 Teachers in the learning support department make an important contribution to the improvement of students' basic skills in English. The department has undertaken this year the teaching of the literacy progress units within the National Literacy Strategy. Skilful and purposeful teaching is helping Year 7 students to build on their existing knowledge and to improve their spelling and word recognition as they follow systematically this process of catching up. The department also has a programme of regular withdrawal of small groups for other Year 7 students who follow a structured reading, speaking and written comprehension programme. Indications and testing show that these students and others who are withdrawn from lessons individually or in very small groups learn well and make good progress overall.

- 37 All students above the first stage of the register of special needs have up-to-date individual education plans which summarise the nature of their needs. The plans indicate general targets for improvement, most of which relate to the improvement of literacy and some numeracy skills. Wherever possible the learning support teachers and heads of year who write the individual education plans discuss the plans with the students and encourage them to set themselves challenging targets. Most teachers are aware of the education plans and, particularly, the nature of the more serious disabilities of the students they teach. Not all, however, make reference to the diagnosed learning needs of the students in their lesson planning. A few teachers seem unaware of them. Teachers do not have adequate guidance in setting termly targets specific to their subjects in order to improve the learning of students with special educational needs.
- 38 The quality of the work of the learning support assistants is good. In some cases it is very good. Across a wide range of subjects teachers and assistants plan well together to provide the maximum opportunities for learning for the students and particularly so for those with the most severe disabilities. With older students the assistants show tact in recognising the need to provide increasing opportunities for students to learn more independently. In these cases support is sometimes given from a distance with the assistant providing a more general but still helpful level of classroom support. Learning assistants have an important role also as key workers in the support of students with recognised needs.
- 39 The homework set is usually purposeful and challenging and is used appropriately to reinforce learning. Good opportunities are provided for accelerated learning in some lessons. A range of visits and visitors to the school motivates students and promotes their learning.
- 40 Ongoing assessment of students' learning and developmental needs is good. The marking of work is generally frequent and thorough. However, there are some inconsistencies within and between departments on the use of National Curriculum levels to indicate attainment. In lessons teachers give appropriate feedback, also support and praise. Assessment data and performance data are effectively analysed by teachers and staff with pastoral responsibilities to set targets for students to achieve.
- 41 Students are keen to achieve well and make good progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Students are effectively encouraged to develop as independent learners; in the best lessons this is a strong feature of the very good learning. Students' intellectual, physical and creative efforts are developing well.

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

- 42 The quality and range of learning opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. A good range is provided in Years 10 and 11. Overall, the school's curricular provision is good. Statutory requirements are met. Governors have appropriate policies relating to the curriculum, which are reviewed regularly
- 43 The breadth and balance provided within most subjects are satisfactory. Planning for coverage of the National Curriculum and examination criteria is appropriate overall but there are strengths and weaknesses within this range. The well-organised curriculum in humanities, for example, provides a good option for older students. The option

range generally for post-14 students is wide, including business studies, child development and physical education. Lower attaining students or the few students with English as an additional language can choose one fewer subject and use the time for learning support. Students' curricular opportunities in design and technology are very rich. Religious education includes all the agreed aspects recommended by the local syllabus and timetabling provides a good amount of curricular time for students to cover these. The work-related curriculum provided for a few students at school and the local college is useful and is now accredited with a qualification in 'skills for working life' for students in Year 10. This is the only vocational provision for older students. Governors and managers are wisely keeping this provision under review.

- 44 Less satisfactory aspects of the curriculum include the current provision for literacy and numeracy across the school. Staffing difficulties have created difficulties in both these areas. Neither the literacy nor the numeracy policy is fully developed or consistently implemented in departments, although good practice exists in some subjects. Aspects of writing required to promote students', particularly boys', better achievement within subjects are insufficiently well supported because of this weakness.
- 45 A whole-staff training day on numeracy across the curriculum and the National Numeracy Strategy was held in May 2000, followed by discussions with heads of department and the distribution of an audit questionnaire. Not all departments completed the audit, and the implementation of the initiative has been halted by the absence of the head of mathematics. Design and technology, science and physical education provided detailed information for the numeracy file.
- 46 Overall provision for gifted and talented students is inconsistent and does not provide fully for their needs. Some additional opportunities are available through departments, which are required to meet students' needs. Not all do this sufficiently well, however, to ensure that they achieve their full potential. Departmental criteria for the identification of gifted and talented students are often unclear and targets are insufficiently challenging.
- 47 Provision for ICT is inconsistent across the school. The school does not meet the requirement to provide for, develop and assess students' ICT skills across the curriculum. The music curriculum lacks breadth for younger students and fails to meet aspects of the National Curriculum relating to ICT.
- 48 Students with special educational needs enjoy access to the full school curriculum. The only modifications come in Year 7, when small numbers miss three lessons per week in order to work intensively on literacy skills. A few older students continue to be withdrawn to work individually or in very small groups when they need to practise reading, comprehension, spelling and writing skills. A small Year 10 option group, for example, worked effectively on the improvement of reading, speaking and writing skills within an interesting wider topic of first aid and life skills.
- 49 The learning support department provides valuable opportunities for younger students to practise reading or to improve numeracy skills by working in the library during morning tutorial time. In addition, the homework club, which is open for an hour each evening after school in the library, provides a very helpful facility for students to complete tasks with adult advice and help.
- 50 Some of the real strengths of the school's curricular provision lie outside subjects, for example through its very good PHSE and careers programmes. One reason for its

very good quality is its broad basis: personal and social education, careers, health and sex education, citizenship, work experience, study skills and some key skills are all included in the programme. Planning is thorough and careful. There is a weekly period for all year groups which is taught by tutors. As part of this programme, students in Years 8 to 10 learn to prepare and teach a module. This part of the provision is a particularly good feature as students learn much from the preparation and planning involved as well as from having to teach their peers. Older students have additional lessons. In Year 9 PHSE lessons are taught by specialist staff. In Years 10 and 11, they consist of careers (see below), and health and sex education taught by specialists. The programme makes very effective use of outside professionals. A detailed cross-curricular audit is currently being compiled. The good standards of provision noted in the previous inspection report have been maintained and improved.

- 51 Good relationships with the Careers Service mean that students' contacts with these services are flexible and much appreciated, for example by students in Year 11. Students also appreciate the good range of extra-curricular opportunities the school offers. These are particularly strong in physical education, where many staff and students participate in a very good range of sports. Likewise, the range of opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities in music is very good.
- 52 The school demonstrates a strong commitment to the provision of equality of opportunity and access for all its students. There is an effective equal opportunities policy in the school and this is disseminated well through departments. Public examination results are monitored closely in terms of gender. The school places considerable emphasis on social inclusion and there is good extra-curricular provision for all. Equality of opportunity is fostered particularly well in PHSE and some very effective lessons were seen in Year 10 involving peer group teaching on this topic. There is also very strong emphasis on the moral and social implications of inequality within the humanities curriculum.
- 53 The school's relationships with its feeder schools are satisfactory. Management and staff have worked hard to strengthen these links, but the response has been variable. Its relationships with further education institutions are also satisfactory, but students tend to proceed into a very diverse, geographically scattered range of colleges rather than the most local one, which makes it difficult for the school to develop stronger links beyond the town. The school's local community contributes satisfactorily to the range of curricular opportunities for students.
- 54 Provision for the spiritual development of students is satisfactory. The school has made considerable efforts to address the key issue raised in the previous inspection report concerning the need to improve the spiritual dimension of school life. There is a full programme of year group assemblies and these often provide students with time to reflect on wider issues; for example, in a Year 8 assembly, students were given ample opportunity to reflect and comment on the importance of family responsibilities. There are fewer opportunities for reflection or participation in registration time, which is rarely used to enhance personal growth, as was the case during the previous inspection. As a result, the school still fails to comply fully with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Within the curriculum, the spiritual development of students is fostered very well in religious education, humanities and PHSE, where opportunities for discussion of wider societal issues are provided. Opportunities for spiritual growth are also provided in English, geography and music.

- 55 The school makes good provision for the moral development of students. The school has a strong sense of shared purpose, and firm disciplinary procedures are in place to help students distinguish right from wrong. An effective system of merits is used to celebrate achievement and there is an annual evening for Year 9 students to celebrate their successes. Issues of bullying are dealt with effectively and teachers and older students provide very good role models throughout the school. There are many good initiatives to promote moral development, such as the charity work carried out by year groups and the voluntary community service initiatives in Year 10 which attract very wide participation. In addition, a theatre group has visited the school dealing with human rights and is in the process of training students to visit local primary schools to work on this issue. Moral development is sustained well in PHSE, religious education, geography, music and English. It is particularly strong in humanities with an emphasis on moral issues such as inequality.
- 56 The provision for social development is also good. There is an effective prefect system in Year 11 which encourages students to take responsibility. Younger students, however, have fewer opportunities to make their voices heard in a public forum. Students' social development is effectively enhanced through the house system with specific reference to sports activities. Some very good peer group teaching was conducted by Year 10 students on the topic of equality of opportunity. Relationships within the school are very good and this provides a safe and harmonious atmosphere for students. There are also numerous after-school activities, including sports, music and revision clubs. Sports clubs and teams are a notable feature of these activities and this very successful aspect of school life has been rewarded by the award of a Sportsmark for the school. Opportunities for social development are provided in most subjects, especially in physical education, English, history, design and technology and music.
- 57 Provision for the cultural development of students is very good. A strong programme of visits and other activities widens the horizons of students; such as residential trips to Berlin and visits to Paris and the battlefields of Northern Europe. Cultural awareness is also fostered through various clubs and performances, especially in physical education, music and art. In the mainstream curriculum, cultural awareness is developed particularly well in modern foreign languages, where there is a trip to France for Year 7 students, in geography through field trips, and throughout the humanities curriculum. There are also very good opportunities for students to celebrate the cultural diversity of Britain and that of the wider world. In this context, the school is to be congratulated on receiving a British Council International Schools Curriculum award for its work in this area. Cultural diversity is celebrated in subject areas such as religious education, design and technology, art and music.
- 58 On balance, the school makes good provision for the personal development of all its students. However, the overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is not monitored closely at a whole-school level and opportunities are missed to build on the good practice shown in many departments.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- 59 There are very good procedures for the care and welfare of students in the school and the school looks after its students very well. Heads of year and tutors stay with their groups throughout their time in the school and come to know them well. Informal knowledge is supplemented by carefully kept records of how students are doing, both personally and academically. Extracts from these records are readily available to members of staff to give them the background knowledge to guide students

effectively. Appropriate child protection procedures (which follow local practice) are in place, with guidance for members of staff. There are appropriate procedures to ensure students' safety in school and on visits outside. Some safety issues were drawn to the school's attention during the inspection. Due emphasis is given to promoting healthy living through the PHSE programme, in physical education and in food technology. This work has been recognised by the school receiving the 'Healthy Schools Award'. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and registers are analysed to determine patterns of absence. The school is concerned, however, about the number of holidays taken during term-time. After a gap of several months, the school again has the help of an education welfare officer in following up cases of problem attendance.

- 60 The procedures for promoting good behaviour and discipline are very good. Achievement of all kinds is recognised and celebrated through house points, credits, whole-school assemblies and a celebration evening for the end of each key stage. Very good procedures to promote discipline have been developed. Members of staff have had specific training in how to manage students. The school is aware that a number of potential trouble-makers are concentrated in a particular year group and recognises the need to support teachers in handling them by holding special meetings to discuss methods of doing this. Skilful management ensures that students behave well: examples of this were observed during the inspection where potentially difficult students responded to firm handling. The good and frequently very good standards of behaviour in lessons show that the school's procedures work well.
- 61 The learning support teachers play an important part in the testing and assessment of students coming in to the school. The testing of reading, comprehension and spelling skills of Year 7 students gives the school and the local education authority a clear profile of students' attainment and an indication of which students may have special learning needs. The students who are placed on the register of special needs are monitored regularly to check that progress is being maintained. Record keeping within the learning support area is good, although at the moment the assessments are confined mainly to reading, spelling and reading comprehension scores.
- 62 Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good across almost all subjects. The exception is ICT, in which the contributions made by other subjects to the development of students' skills in this area are not assessed. Teachers help students measure their progress against national standards by relating the grades awarded in day-to-day marking to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. The school collects a significant amount of data about students' attainment from the results of tests and examinations. This information is used well both at whole-school and departmental levels to determine the value added by the school and to set targets for further raising students' attainment.
- 63 Assessment information is used well to guide curricular planning, for example by identifying groups of students in Years 10 and 11 who now benefit from a work-related course in conjunction with Cricklade College. However, gifted and talented students are not similarly identified with a view to further boosting their performance. Assessment data is also used well and sometimes very well in subjects. For example, the design and technology department uses its own tests to compare performance across the department and guide students towards those areas where they are more likely to be successful.
- 64 In most subjects, test and examination results are used well to monitor students' performance and identify those who under-perform relative to others, as in science

where the under-achievement of boys in Years 10 and 11 has been addressed, and modern foreign languages where speaking by boys is a weakness. Assessment information is used effectively in Years 10 and 11 to decide which students would benefit from additional support; for example, in art and science extra-curricular sessions are offered to help redress under-performance or boost the performance of those who are on the borderline between obtaining C and D grades. Students benefit from the use of test and examination results to set clear targets for their performance in GCSE examinations. A particular strength is bringing together academic and pastoral monitoring systems in periodic reviews of students' targets. On these occasions students meet their tutors individually to discuss progress towards their targets. Many teachers also set shorter-term learning targets for students in their day-to-day marking, but this is inconsistent across the school.

- 65 Although assessment has improved since the previous inspection, when it was a key issue, it is still not used effectively enough to target learning for the highest attaining students.
- 66 There are very good procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development. An example of this is the 'conferencing' where most teachers of a tutor group attend a formal meeting with the tutor to talk about each individual member of the group and discuss how they are working and what will help them do better, both personally and academically. The school collects a wide range of information about students to enable it to follow the progress they make, including, for example, the ways by which students say they like to learn. The school uses the data it collects to give students very good educational and personal support and guidance. This includes support for special groups of students such as the mentoring offered to some Year 11 students which incorporates a study skills conference.
- 67 Pastoral care was considered a strength of the school at the previous inspection. The monitoring of academic and personal progress is now more consistent, thus improving the quality of the support and guidance given to students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 68 The school has good and effective links with parents. Parents' views of the school and their involvement with it are satisfactory.
- 69 Parents' views of the school are broadly satisfactory. Those parents who returned the parents' questionnaire and attended the parents' meeting say that their children like the school and believe that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best. Almost all these parents say that they feel comfortable approaching the school if they have problems or concerns. Most parents consider that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. The inspection team agrees with these positive views held by parents. There are several areas where some parents have concerns and would like to see improvements. A number of the parents present at the parents' meeting and of those who returned the questionnaire do not consider that standards of behaviour in the school are good. The inspection team considers that most students behave well, but a minority do not. Some parents do not think that their children receive the right amount of work to do at home. Inspectors consider the amount that homework set is appropriate. A proportion of parents do not think that they are well informed about the progress that their children make. The inspection team found that annual reports comply with statutory requirements but consider that comments and targets are often too generalised. Some parents do not think that the

school works closely with them. Inspectors consider that the school makes considerable efforts to have effective links with parents.

- 70 The school has developed effective links with parents and works hard to maintain them. It holds a forum for parents of students in Year 7 shortly after their children have started at the school to enable them to meet tutors and other staff. This is seen as an important contact since the head of year and tutors will remain with those children during their time at the school. The school seeks parents' views after this meeting and conducts a similar survey following the Year 8 parent consultation evening. Parents are told about successful work as well as about concerns. Senior staff are available at consultation evenings should parents wish to talk to them. The home/school agreement forms part of the admission pack so all parents sign it initially. The school also asks parents to renew this commitment annually.
- 71 Good contacts are maintained with the families of students with special needs. A helpful welcoming letter is sent to families of students who will be coming into the school to give reassurance about transfer arrangements. Parents and carers are encouraged to attend annual and interim review meetings and most feel confident enough to do so.
- 72 The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall. Information about the school itself is good, especially that given in the detailed prospectus, which also serves as a handbook. Current information is collated into a newsletter and published on a set day each month. Parents are asked to acknowledge receipt of this.
- 73 The information which parents receive about their children's progress, is, on balance, satisfactory. Annual reports were a key issue at the last inspection. They now comply with statutory requirements as separate National Curriculum levels are given for each of the three humanities subjects. A single comment still covers all three subjects, however. Reports list either National Curriculum levels or predicted grades so parents are given basic information about their children's attainment in national terms. However, comments and targets are frequently too general and not specific enough to tell parents what their children need to do in order to improve.
- 74 The level of parents' involvement in the school and the contribution which they make to their children's learning are both satisfactory. Parents sign the home/school agreement. Most attend consultation evenings. Diaries are used as an effective means of dialogue and routinely signed, especially by parents of students in Years 7 to 9. Events are generally well supported. The Parent Teacher Association consists of a small nucleus of active and successful fund-raisers.
- 75 The position is similar to that described in the previous inspection. There has been some improvement in the information given on annual reports.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 76 The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The leadership group very effectively promote the aims and values of the school. The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. His experience and awareness of educational issues provide a clear educational direction for the school. The deputy headteacher and the leadership team very ably support the head. An open and participative style of management has created a good team ethos throughout the school. Management is well structured and all members of the senior team have clear roles and responsibilities. Effective systems are in place to monitor and appraise their

performance. The team is relatively small and may need expanding as the school grows in size. Sharing out some of the tasks of the group would enable management training opportunities for other members of staff. Within the leadership team, members are accountable and well informed and share a common purpose. Together with the governing body they strive for improvement. Leadership is decisive but recognises the value of consultation and negotiation. The heads of departments and working committees are the main consultative bodies and they work well.

- 77 Heads of department have a good awareness of their roles in monitoring standards, teaching and learning. The quality of leadership and management is particularly strong in science, design and technology, humanities, physical education and modern foreign languages. The monitoring of teaching focuses sharply on sharing good practice and identifying the needs for professional development. This has had a significant impact on staff awareness of their strengths and on areas for improvement. Supportive systems are in place, which enable the school to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness and how to improve further.
- 78 Heads of year form a very effective team and play a crucial role in promoting the aims and values of the school. They are fully involved in academic and pastoral issues and act as a direct link between home and school and between the school and outside agencies. They monitor the progress of groups of students and their subsequent levels of learning. They work closely with tutors to support and guide students' learning.
- 79 Developments are implemented, managed, monitored and evaluated efficiently. The school improvement plan is detailed and appropriately referenced to strategic issues. These include: continuing to raise standards by effective use of baseline data, maintaining the quality of teaching and learning and implementing the national strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The capacity of staff to succeed in these areas of development is good
- 80 The governors are very well informed about the strengths and weaknesses within the school and they are actively involved in all its facets. Governors have successfully ensured that all statutory requirements in relation to their responsibilities are met with the exception of a daily act of collect worship. Governors work closely with the headteacher and the school. They are effectively involved in the appraisal of the headteacher and the setting of performance targets. Governors appropriately monitor standards and the adequacy of curricular provision through committee structures. The documentation required for parents is in place. The chair of governors is particularly supportive and hard working. Her dedicated commitment to the school over a number of years has played a pivotal role in securing the goal of moving the school to its new buildings. Governors are in a good position to make informed decisions and participate fully in the recognised priorities of the school.
- 81 Financial management and the planning of the use of resources are efficiently connected to the school's priorities. The school is now effectively maintaining a balanced budget. The school has an appropriate phased plan for the reduction of its residual deficit. Although operating within tight budgetary constraints, an appropriate proportion of the school's budget is allocated to learning resources for departments. In financial administration, there are correct divisions of responsibility and good procedures for ordering, receiving and paying for goods and services purchased by the school. The last financial audit indicated minor areas for improvement in financial efficiency. These have been corrected. Specific funding for the support of students with special educational needs is used well and to good effect. Competitive tendering

is used for the ordering of goods or services, and the school works hard to achieve the best value in its financial decisions. The administrative staff are highly efficient and greatly assist the smooth running of the school. All support staff are very approachable and present a professional first point of contact for the school.

- 82 The provision for students with special needs is organised well and it is well led. Good teaching and good support work in classrooms by appropriately trained classroom assistants who are deployed effectively throughout the school to support learning. The work of heads of year in monitoring both learning and students' behaviour is valuable also in complementing the work of the learning support department. The governing body representative with oversight of special needs visits the school regularly and has appropriate first-hand knowledge of procedures. She has recently undertaken, with the learning support co-ordinator, the training to prepare the school for the changes in procedures for the new code of practice.
- 83 Appropriate targets for improvement are set regularly and are being met. The school's systems are not overly bureaucratic; they support the drive for raising standards. The school provides a good quality of education. A positive feature of the school is the shared commitment to improvement. The dedication of senior managers, staff and governors is a significant contributory factor to the effectiveness of the school. The school gives good value for money despite challenging circumstances.
- 84 The overall staffing provision in the school is unsatisfactory. In some areas of the school there are insufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers to teach the curriculum. The school has made strenuous efforts to recruit, support and retain staff but has been faced with circumstances beyond its control, largely as a result of several cases of long-term, serious illness. At present around ten per cent of its teaching force are supply teachers; some have extended contracts but many are appointed on a short-term basis only. Staffing is unsatisfactory in English, mathematics and science, and in modern foreign languages. Provision for staffing is satisfactory in all other departments, and is good in humanities, geography, music and physical education.
- 85 Arrangements for the induction of new teachers, and for teachers' professional development are very good, and are appreciated by those involved. In addition to structures of support operating within departments, the school has devised a 'buddy' system, which provides valuable informal points of contact for new staff. However, the recent rapid turnover of supply staff has created difficulties for the school in maintaining this arrangement. Training opportunities are closely linked to the needs of the school and to teachers' personal developmental needs. There are very good links with the local authority courses and where possible with national courses. Outcomes and impact of these courses are evaluated both by the staff involved and through the school's extensive monitoring procedures, which included consultation with students on their preferred learning styles. As a result there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection.
- 86 The school has provided very good support for its classroom assistants. All are encouraged to improve their qualifications by taking the City and Guilds certificate, and two have gone on to study for a degree. They are closely involved in departmental planning, and a number diversify into more specialist responsibilities such as mentoring or reading recovery programmes.
- 87 Learning resources are generally adequate for the implementation of the school's curriculum. Resources for some subjects have improved since the previous

inspection in 1997, for example, in art, English and mathematics. In design and technology the improvement has been very good. There are still some shortcomings in certain subjects such as the lack of ICT facilities in English and science. Although new books have been introduced for the numeracy starters in mathematics, the provision of books in Years 10 and 11 remains poor. The ratio of computers to students in ICT, at 1:11, is well below the national average, and peripheral equipment is also lacking.

- 88 The learning resource centre makes a good contribution to students' learning. Although small, its facilities are effectively enhanced by displays. English and humanities use the library facilities well. As a result of the literacy strategy, science and modern foreign languages are now making an increasing use of it. Although the number of books per student is below the recommended figure, any increase in the number of books is constrained by the lack of space. Books are culled at regular intervals, and no stock is redundant. Advice is readily available to students about books for careers, revision booklets and reading lists for all year groups. Students are encouraged to read, with a particular emphasis on engaging boys through highly interesting easy-to-read books. Tutors are efficiently informed of all new additions to the library.
- 89 The school's accommodation is poor. However, this judgement must be set in the context of the fact that the school will move to completely new premises in September 2002. Currently there are some health and safety issues. No adequate fire escape exists from the special educational needs department and in an emergency, students and staff would have to leave across the roof of the school. There are several health and safety issues in the science department. A room used for foreign languages which is very close to adjacent toilets is constantly affected by unpleasant odours. Accommodation for support teaching and the administration of special needs is of a good standard. The only concern at the moment is of access to and from the department as indicated above.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

- Raise the achievement of higher attaining boys in examinations.
[Ref. paragraphs: 2, 17, 90, 92, 103, 122, 124, 143, 145, 162, 172]
- Improve the provision, application and assessment of information and communication technology in subjects.
[Ref. paragraphs: 47, 62, 130, 138, 140, 154, 159, 160, 161, 182, 184]
- Implement strategies for developing literacy and numeracy.
[Ref. paragraphs: 34, 44, 45, 116, 123]
- Conduct an audit of spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities in the curriculum.
[Ref. paragraphs: 54, 58]
- Improve the support and challenge given to gifted and talented students in lessons.
[Ref. paragraphs: 26, 46, 63, 65, 94, 112, 120, 133, 148, 175]

Other issues for consideration:

- Achieve greater consistency in standards of marking.
[Ref. paragraphs: 34, 40, 96, 140, 149]
- Continue to review strategies for the recruitment of staff.
[Ref. paragraphs: 84, 106, 109, 150, 170, 171]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	165
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	11	33	63	52	4	2	0
Percentage	7	20	38	32	2	1	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 students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	910
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	38

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	218

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	88	81	169

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	69	72
	Girls	64	63	60
	Total	118	132	132
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (77)	78 (73)	78 (69)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (36)	48 (47)	44 (34)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	71	65
	Girls	76	71	63
	Total	153	142	128
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	91 (81)	84(71)	76 (70)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (35)	52 (51)	33 (36)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	93	84	177

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	36	86	91
	Girls	55	81	84
	Total	91	167	175
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	52 (51)	94 (97)	99 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.8
	National	39.0

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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	904
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	138	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	54.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	140

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	20.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	2353667
Total expenditure	2366856
Expenditure per pupil	2727
Balance brought forward from previous year	-39684
Balance carried forward to next year	-52873

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	910
Number of questionnaires returned	215

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	58	9	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	32	55	7	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	59	18	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	55	20	6	2
The teaching is good.	22	61	7	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	47	23	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	44	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	42	4	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	23	51	19	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	34	47	7	1	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	56	8	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	55	12	1	6

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and helps students to learn well in most lessons.
- Good, trusting relationships between teachers and students contribute well to students' learning, especially during class discussions.
- Students' standards of speaking and listening are above average.
- Teachers work hard as a team to overcome staffing difficulties and maintain students' standards of attainment.

Areas for improvement

- Students' standards of writing, especially boys', are not as good as they should be.
- Teachers do not mark students' work consistently and precisely enough.
- Teachers do not set sufficiently specific targets for students, so that students are not very aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

- 90 Students' attainment in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 was close to the national average but below the average for similar schools. Students did not achieve as well as in mathematics and science. Results have fallen since 1999, when they were well above average. In GCSE English, the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades in 2001 was close to the national average but below the average for similar schools. This is similar to results in recent years. Attainment in English literature was also close to the national average, but this is a considerable fall compared with recent years, when results were usually above or well above average. Girls attain higher levels than boys in all years. In Year 9 the difference is similar to that found nationally, but the gap widens during Years 10 and 11 and girls do significantly better than boys at GCSE.
- 91 Attainment in most years is in line with expectations, but last year students did not achieve as well as they should at GCSE. They began the course after gaining well above average results in Year 9 but only attained average standards in Year 11. This is partly explained by difficulties in recruiting specialist English teachers. At present, achievement is satisfactory. In most years students enter the school in Year 7 with average attainment and make sufficient progress so that they achieve average standards in Years 9 and 11.
- 92 In all years, students have very good speaking and listening skills. Year 9 students contribute confidently and extensively to class discussions. They are keen to ask questions and listen carefully to the teacher and each other. Even lower attaining students reach good standards. For example, in one lesson they played the roles of characters from Shakespeare's 'Henry V'. Students in the audience asked well-prepared questions and the actors stayed in role well when answering. All used appropriate standard English with clarity, fluency and confidence. They showed a good understanding of the plot and the relationship between Henry and the characters who were trying to betray him. Most Year 9 students have adequate reading skills to understand the texts they have to read, including extracts from Shakespeare plays. Most can back up their views with good reference to the text, although a few low attaining students still experience great difficulty with reading. Students seldom read

aloud during lessons and very few read widely for pleasure. Higher attaining students can write in a range of styles, for different purposes and audiences. For example, they were able to simplify their language appropriately when describing the plot of Henry V for eight year olds. They wrote in an informative style to produce leaflets about symptoms and causes of the Plague, based on their reading of the play 'The Roses of Eyam' and used an autobiographical style to recount 'The Best Day of My Life'. However, even the most competent students do not always vary their sentence length enough. Many students have difficulty in organising and structuring their writing. They seldom re-draft or correct their work in order to improve its accuracy. As a result, their writing is sometimes untidy and problems with spelling and punctuation persist. This is particularly apparent in the work of boys.

- 93 In Year 11, standards of speaking and listening are above average. Most volunteer their own ideas willingly in class discussion and express them clearly and confidently in standard English. Overall standards of reading are satisfactory. When reading, students have good knowledge of the plot, characters and relationships in set texts. They make good reference to the text to back up their ideas. For example, students in a middle ability class identified greed, ambition, conspiracy and witchcraft as central themes of 'Macbeth' and provided evidence to support their views. A class of lower attaining students understood the conflicting emotions that Grace Nichols was feeling when she experienced a hurricane for the first time after leaving the Caribbean, in the poem 'Hurricane Hits England'. However, most need support from teachers to analyse writers' use of language for dramatic effect. Standards of writing are lower than those of reading or speaking and listening. Even the highest attaining students do not structure critical essays as clearly as they should. They often express clear views but do not always refer to the question sufficiently and do not summarise their views in a clear conclusion. Some still make basic mistakes with punctuation. Average and low attaining students often struggle to organise their responses to set texts. Some of their writing about H.G.Wells' 'The Red Room' and Susan Hill's 'Farthing House' described the events clearly. However, they were unable to compare the short stories because they did not know how to structure their essays.
- 94 Gifted students do not achieve as well as they might and the proportion of students who gain grades A* and A is below average. Students with special educational needs make good progress over time and many achieve a GCSE pass in English. Learning support assistants often provide them with valuable support because teachers usually consider how they can involve them when they are planning their lessons.
- 95 In class, most students have positive attitudes to their work in English and, with occasional exceptions, behave well. They have good, trusting relationships with teachers and respond well when they are asked to co-operate with each other in group discussions. Both teachers and students are prepared to share their personal experiences, for example by recalling childhood memories. In one lesson, this helped a Year 11 class to analyse the text of Clive James' 'Unreliable Memoirs'. Many low attaining students noticeably gain confidence because of the praise that they receive from teachers. However, some students, particularly boys, lack motivation and need frequent reminders to complete coursework for GCSE.
- 96 The quality of teaching is good overall and enables students to learn well in most lessons. Nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory. It is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 because more experienced, specialist teachers have been allocated to these classes, and students benefit from their very sound knowledge of the subject. Teachers manage classes well, especially during class discussions, when they ensure that students listen carefully and take their turn in contributing. Teachers plan

lessons well. They write objectives on the whiteboard so that students know what they have to achieve and, in the best lessons, they usually evaluate with students how well they have met them. Teachers often plan a variety of activities in lessons to interest students and to keep them learning at a good pace. They also use a variety of resources during these activities to deepen students' understanding of the literature they are studying. For example, a Year 10 class developed their awareness of Shakespeare's use of persuasive language through a class reading of Henry V's stirring speech before the Battle of Agincourt. They then listened to Kenneth Branagh's emotive rendition on videotape, analysed it in groups with the help of a worksheet and glossary and shared their views in a final class discussion with the teacher. Teachers use starter activities at the beginning of lessons in Years 7,8 and 9, as part of their response to the new framework for teaching English. These help students to improve their literacy skills but the pace at which the activities are taught is often too slow and this prevents students from completing other planned tasks. The marking of students' written work is inconsistent. Teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on students correcting or re-drafting their work and they rarely provide students with enough guidance about how to improve their writing. Many students are unsure about how to structure essays because they have no clear guidelines. For example, teachers rarely provide students with a framework for their writing to teach them how to plan and organise their work.

- 97 There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The English department has maintained the examination results that were reported at the last inspection. The teaching has improved, especially as regards the clarification of learning objectives for each lesson. Resources have improved and there is now more opportunity for students to read literature about other cultures and traditions. Difficulties in appointing specialist teachers have re-surfaced after a few years of stability in the department, but English teachers have worked hard to help non-specialist and newly qualified teachers to fill vacancies as effectively as possible. Some teachers are still unsure about the standards of work required for students to reach different levels of attainment. When they assess work they still do not set students sufficiently specific targets. As a result, students are not very aware of what they need to do to improve.
- 98 Departmental leadership is good. The head of department has identified appropriate areas for development. For example, the achievement of boys is rightly seen as a priority and an effective teaching file has been produced to record successful teaching methods. The management of these developments has been hampered by the recent illness of the second in department and because most established English teachers have management responsibilities in other areas of the school. As a result, schemes of work have not yet been revised to ensure that new requirements for teaching drama are met in all classes. However, teachers work well together as a team. For example, procedures for the induction and mentoring of new teachers have been very efficient and supportive. Accommodation difficulties also hamper developments. The department has no identifiable base and teaches in far-flung classrooms and temporary accommodation, with inadequate storage facilities for resources.

DRAMA

- 99 Drama is part of the performing arts department. All students study drama in Years 7 and 8 for one lesson each week, and as part of the curriculum in Year 9. It is a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11.

- 100 One Year 9 lesson was observed and students attained below average standards for their age. Higher attaining students were aware of the importance of exaggerated, stylised gestures and were able to communicate the story suggested by the Willow Pattern design through mime. However, many students, especially boys, had great difficulty in concentrating and staying in role and this made their performances unconvincing.
- 101 In 2001, few students studied drama for GCSE and results were close to the national average. The number of students has increased this year and more than 20 students are taking the course in Year 11. Present standards are average, although there was no opportunity to see students perform during the inspection. In one lesson, students read extracts from a scripted drama, prepared by the teacher. The majority read expressively and dramatically, but without real control or respect for the writer's intentions. Some stumbled over unfamiliar words.
- 102 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but students do not always learn as effectively as they might, especially when they do not concentrate or listen to instructions. Lessons are well planned and in the best lessons the teacher plans a variety of activities which interest the students and keep them working at a good pace. In one Year 7 lesson the pace of teaching was too fast, as the teacher tried to achieve too much in the single lesson. The school is rightly reviewing the organisation for teaching drama in Years 7 and 8, as one short lesson each week is insufficient for students to achieve as well as they might in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory** overall.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the absent head of department.
- Good teaching of the 'permanent' members of the department.
- Assessment policy and procedures, use of data, marking and the portfolio system.
- Improvement in end of Year 9 standards in 2001.
- Attitudes and behaviour of most students in most classes.

Areas for improvement

- Staffing – absent teachers, unfilled vacancies and non-specialists affect standards.
- Consistency of teaching, good policies and procedures to be followed by all.
- Increase the range of teaching and learning styles, particularly the development of investigation skills.
- Greater challenge for the higher attaining students in each class.

- 103 Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above the national average for the proportion of students obtaining level 5 or better, and above the national average for students at level 6 or better. Results were in line with the averages for similar schools, and the trend was improving at a faster rate than nationally. Boys and girls obtained similar results. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were below the national average for the percentage of A*-C grades, but above for passes (A*-G grades). The average points score was at the national average. Students' performance in comparison with similar schools was well below average. The trend had been improving for A*-C grades until 2000, and the decline since then has coincided with a period of difficulties in staffing. Boys' standards were significantly below those of the girls at the end of Year 11.

- 104 In the analysis of work done standards were above national expectations at the end of Years 9 and 11, but in the lessons seen standards were less good. Although in line with national expectations overall, standards in lessons vary greatly with the quality of teaching and learning. A Year 7 mixed ability class taught by a permanent, part-time mathematics specialist achieved well through excellent planning and preparation of resources. Higher attaining students investigated equations of straight lines at their own pace using graphical calculators, while lower attaining students and those with special needs were identifying features of simple straight lines on co-ordinate grids. The teacher and learning support assistant circulated around the class well, ensuring that all students were on task and learning at their own level. In contrast, another Year 7 class taught by a temporary, non-specialist were kept together calculating averages from the textbook, work far too easy for the highest attaining students but beyond those having difficulty with division. Although the placing of students in Years 8 and 9 into classes according to their different levels of attainment (setting) allows greater match of work to students' prior attainment, the bottom sets in Year 8 are too large, often containing many students with special educational needs and behavioural problems, which prevents sufficient achievement, however good the planning and preparation of the lesson.
- 105 Number skills are generally taught well in Years 7 to 9, and the mental mathematics 'starters' recommended by the National Numeracy Strategy are improving the recall of number and multiplication facts. However, the use of written worksheets as warm-up activities is less successful when they are not related to the topic being dealt with, as in the single Year 8 top set lesson on comparing fractions, in which the plenary review of learning was rushed. Where Year 9 are taught by the 'permanent' teachers they are achieving well, through good planning and preparation, depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject and awareness of the ways in which students learn. Examples occurred in a top set lesson on straight line graphs developing the general equation, and in a third set being introduced to scatter graphs and correlation. The small numbers in a Year 9 bottom set and the sympathetic manner of the non-specialist temporary teacher and the learning support assistant allowed good achievement through individual attention to needs and focused concentration throughout the lesson.
- 106 The differences in achievement between those students taught by specialists or others was also evident in Years 10 and 11, where the absent teachers were timetabled for the majority of classes. The only good lesson seen was with a Year 10 second set calculating perimeters and areas of complex shapes, building on recent work on the circle and thorough review of triangles and quadrilaterals. Excellent planning, the recap 'starter' using flash cards with formulae and shapes, and the demonstration of techniques helped students to achieve well. Year 11 students were mostly revising work, proceeding at their own pace through textbooks. Provision of GCSE workbooks for homework and revision has helped Year 11 through this difficult year, but standards have deteriorated through the absence of specialist teachers. An after-school session is being held each week by one of the part-time specialists to give extra help to those taking the higher level GCSE papers.
- 107 Schemes of work are good; all the National Curriculum attainment targets are covered in sufficient depth. Data handling is tackled well at all levels up to cumulative frequency in Year 11. Work on shape and space is good on the whole and diagrams are clear and well presented, although estimation and calculation using measures show some gaps. Development of numeracy across the curriculum started well in 2000, but has now halted. Algebra is well understood by most students, although its

application in investigation coursework is not always relevant. The development of 'Using and applying' mathematics has improved since the previous inspection but investigatory skills are still not well developed, and are insufficiently used in teaching and learning methods.

- 108 The attitudes of students are good on the whole; most show interest and concentrate throughout the long lessons. The seating of boys and girls together is having a positive impact, and most students work very well together, collaborating and discussing the work. However, there are exceptions and there were poor attitudes and bad behaviour in a large Year 8 bottom set, in which students with severe behavioural problems were disturbing and distracting others. Behaviour in lessons is usually good, although there is much pushing and noise in the mathematics corridor between lessons. Most students show respect for their teachers and listen well, but some older students are becoming frustrated with the lack of specialist teaching.
- 109 The teaching is satisfactory overall; it is better in Years 7 to 9 where the remaining permanent teachers are concentrated. Most teachers know their classes well, and generally there are good relationships between teachers and students. Strengths in the teaching are the knowledge and understanding of the subject of the part-time specialists, the excellent structure and planning of their lessons, and their use of investigation in the learning process as well as varied methods for students of all levels of attainment. However, it is in these areas that there are weaknesses in the lessons taught by temporary staff, where there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining students and a lack of pace and productivity. The inconsistency in the learning experience of students affects attitudes and standards.
- 110 The documentation, policies and procedures established by the head of department are very good and, along with the records of staff training and monitoring of teaching and learning, are evidence of good leadership and management. Since the previous inspection standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have risen, the use of investigations has improved, monitoring has been extended and the numeracy strategy embarked upon. Resources generally have improved, but although graphical calculators are used well, the use of computers is insufficient at present.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 are well above average, and almost all students gain a grade in GCSE examinations.
- Students achieve well and are eager to learn because most teachers have high expectations and are enthusiastic about their subject.
- Students are helped to learn by group work, by using analogies, and by role-play.
- The science department is very well led; priorities for further development are clear and appropriate.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results for higher attaining students are not high enough.
- Students make insufficient progress in some lessons because teachers' planning does not ensure that all are appropriately challenged.
- Boys in Years 10 and 11 often lose interest in their work because they cannot see its relevance.

- 111 In 2001, the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and above average in comparison with similar schools. This represents very good progress for these students between the ages of 11 and 14. The results were significantly higher than in the previous year and higher than those in English and mathematics. Students did well in gaining the higher levels and none gained below level 4. Boys did a little better than girls.
- 112 GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2001 were in line with the national average for the proportion of students gaining the higher (A*-C) grades. This represents good progress for these students when compared with their National Curriculum test results two years earlier. The results were similar to those in the previous year and similar to those in English and mathematics. Students' performance in comparison with similar schools was below average. A very high proportion of students was entered for the examination and almost all gained a grade, although the proportion gaining A* and A grades was below the national average and none gained A* grades.
- 113 When students enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is in line with that expected for their age. Overall, they achieve well through Years 7 to 9, although there is marked variation between different classes. In Year 9, lower attaining students achieved well when they investigated firing an object from an elastic band and found the relationship between the force applied and the distance travelled. On the other hand, in another Year 9 lesson, achievement was only just satisfactory because students copied from the board rather than using experimental results to draw their own conclusions. In lessons and other work, students' overall attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. This is lower than suggested by recent National Curriculum test results because the progress of present Year 9 students was adversely affected by staffing difficulties when they were in Years 7 and 8; some of these difficulties have now been resolved.
- 114 In Years 10 and 11, students continue to achieve well but, as lower down the school, students in some groups achieve less well than they should. For example, in Year 11, higher attaining students achieved very well when they analysed scientific evidence to support the theory of continental drift, while in a similar group achievement was

unsatisfactory because they wasted too much valuable learning time on artwork for a poster. As a result, the attainment of those in the latter group is lower than it should be. Overall, students' attainment in lessons and other work is a little above average by the end of Year 11; this is higher than indicated by recent GCSE results because changes in teaching styles are beginning to have a positive effect.

- 115 The progress of students with special educational needs is similar to that of other students, although often better than this when their learning is supported by an additional adult in the laboratory. Overall, girls make less progress than boys in Years 7 to 9 because some teachers give greater attention to boys, for example in question and answer sessions, while in Years 10 and 11, boys make less progress than girls because, on the whole, girls are more attentive at this stage.
- 116 Students' literacy skills are mostly satisfactory, though spelling is a particular weakness for many. Poor grasp of the technical language of science holds back progress for a significant number because it prevents them from describing and explaining their work. Key words and writing frameworks are not used as effectively as they could be to support the development of students' writing. Their competence in using numbers is developed from an early stage in Year 7, for example by drawing line graphs to show the relationship between temperature and time as water is heated. However, students' skills in using ICT in science are underdeveloped because there is insufficient suitable equipment located in the department. They handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely. By Year 11, higher attaining students carry out very good investigations, for example into factors that affect rates of transpiration in plants, but there are too few opportunities for them to develop their investigative skills in Years 7 to 9.
- 117 Students generally behave well in science lessons. They respond very well to teachers' high expectations and enthusiastic teaching, but become restless when they are unable to see the relevance of their work or when it is not well enough matched to their level of attainment. Students work very well in small groups, often showing maturity in sharing the workload, for example, when researching aspects of metal extraction in the library. Students keep their exercise books well, providing them with an accurate record of their work for future revision.
- 118 Teaching and learning in science are good overall. However, this masks a very wide range. More than a quarter of lessons are very good and occasionally excellent, but more than a quarter are barely satisfactory and occasionally unsatisfactory. Key features of the very good and excellent lessons are clear learning objectives, a wide variety of activities to maintain interest, clear explanations utilising models to help students visualise difficult concepts and, most importantly, high expectation of what they can achieve. In Year 11, for example, students' learning about the extraction of metals from ores was excellent because the teacher utilised every moment of a 70-minute lesson by giving very clear explanations of the processes. The teacher then checked by means of question and answer that students understood, reinforcing their understanding of the underlying chemical reactions by means of role-play, then arranging for them to make a sample of metal for themselves. In short, the teacher's own enthusiasm for science was transferred to students. In the best lessons, teachers recognise students' different levels of attainment and organise lessons accordingly, as in Year 11 when higher attaining students worked on more complex sources of scientific evidence to support the theory of continental drift. The marking of students' day-to-day work is mostly up to date and teachers write comments showing students how to improve their work, but a small number of teachers make little helpful comment.

- 119 However, in too many lessons the pace is too slow because teachers have low expectations of what students can achieve. This results in unsatisfactory learning because students waste too much time in irrelevant activities that do not contribute to learning science. In these lessons, students quickly discover that they do not need to be attentive because questions are not directed to individuals and they can avoid the teacher's attention by copying the minimum of information from the board. In short, they can get by without needing to think. Learning was unsatisfactory in a Year 11 lesson because students were given insufficient direction about what the teacher expected them to achieve in the time available; they neither gained new understanding nor consolidated earlier learning about the rock cycle.
- 120 The science department is very well led and managed. The head of department has clear vision for further development of the subject, emphasising that science is a thinking process and not merely the acquisition of facts. In a relatively short time the department has moved significantly in this direction, although much more still remains to be done, particularly in eliminating unsatisfactory teaching. While the curriculum is satisfactory overall, higher attaining students are not always sufficiently challenged and lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11 often fail to see the relevance of what they are asked to learn. Teachers have done their best to improve the appearance of laboratories, but these remain poor because they are not stimulating places for students to learn science. The laboratory technicians provide an efficient service in support of teaching, but their work is not directly managed by the head of science; this is unsatisfactory.
- 121 There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Over a quarter of lessons were unsatisfactory then; lessons are only occasionally unsatisfactory now, although too many are still barely satisfactory. Assessment is used more effectively to identify and support under-achieving students and departmental planning is much more focused on the need to further raise attainment. However, opportunities for students to use investigative techniques remain too limited in Years 7 to 9.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision for art is **good**.

Strengths

- The good quality of the teaching.
- Good experience of two and three-dimensional work (particularly ceramics) in all years.
- Students acquire practical skills effectively.
- Girls' attainment is high.

Areas for improvement

- The department needs to continue to raise the attainment of boys.
- Students at the very highest level should be attaining more A* grades.
- Unsatisfactory behaviour on the part of some Year 9 and Year 11 students undermines their achievement.
- Students do not make the links between their practical work and historical and critical studies clearly enough.

- 122 A*-C GCSE results in 2001 matched the national average but, as in the previous year, no students achieved A* grades. Fewer than average gained A and B grades and most got Cs. Girls' results were better than boys' by double the average margin. This was a relatively weak year group. Results in previous years were higher and the recent trend has been downwards. A smaller than average proportion of students took

GCSE art last year, including many boys who were low attainers with low motivation. Mostly these boys achieved well given their underlying abilities, poor behaviour and absence rates. All students attained A-F grades.

- 123 Students enter the school with skills and knowledge which broadly match the national expectation. The curriculum offers students good opportunities to develop their skills in two and three-dimensional work and by the end of Year 9 some aspects of their attainment is better than average, particularly in ceramics. In general, though, the work of students in the present Year 9 shows a range of standards which match the national average. Practical skills develop well. For example, in a drawing and painting lesson in Year 7 students were painting self-portraits and learning effectively how to mix a range of skin tones from water-based paint. Students in Year 8 were working on well-constructed, slab-built clay vessels, embellishing these imaginatively with decorations based on animal studies they had researched. In Year 9, students also showed good levels of skill in making ceramic clay figures based on observational drawings of their peers. Students do an appropriate amount of research into historical and critical work to average levels of competence. They are much less secure, however, at making the links and connections between these research aspects and their practical work, especially in the case of boys. Although the department has good procedures to support literacy, many boys cannot write competently about these links. At present, weaknesses in annotation and reflection reduce the standards of some sketchbook work. In Year 9, girls' standards in this type of critique match the expectations for girls. Students in Years 7 and 8 show standards which are higher than those in Year 9 in all areas of their work.
- 124 The department now has an average proportion of students studying for GCSE. Although the gap between the attainment of boys and girls is now narrower, it is still greater than the national average in the current Year 11. The high standards in girls' work means that overall attainment in Year 11 is somewhat higher than the national average. All students' practical work shows a good level of individuality and personal interpretation in two and three-dimensional media. As in earlier years, the weaknesses in students' ability to make the appropriate links between theory and practice diminish the quality of some work, especially that of the boys. They do not accomplish this with sufficient imagination or flair to achieve the higher grades. Standards in Year 10 are higher in art critique as well as in students' practical work. Students of all ages generally achieve well in art. The work of students with special educational needs is often only identifiable through their writing, practical work being as good as that of their peers. Students with particular talents in art need to be identified early and stretched to achieve the A* levels of which they are capable.
- 125 All but a few students behave well in lessons, rising to their teachers' high expectations. Most working environments are calm and purposeful. The minority whose behaviour is unsatisfactory undermine their own learning, which leads to less good achievement than they could be making. These are sometimes Year 11 students whose attitudes are more juvenile than those that seen in younger classes. For example, students of Year 8, working in a class of 30 in very cramped conditions in the pottery were extremely mature and co-operative, making good use of their opportunities.
- 126 Teaching in the department is good. Skills are taught well so students learn to be confident that they can achieve the effects they want with materials. Teachers expect students to take responsibility for the development of their work at appropriate phases of projects. This means that by Year 10 they can make decisions which create individuality in the ways they work. Most of these challenges are posed through

teachers' effective one-to-one sessions with individuals in lessons. The length of lessons enables teachers to devote a good balance of time to introductions and plenary reviews, then to allow sufficient time for activity so students can develop their work in appropriate depth. Usually classes are well managed, but identifiable individuals and classes, at certain difficult times of the day, particularly in the short afternoon session, are not always managed sufficiently effectively to enable all students to learn well. Some classes require more non-teaching assistance in lessons on these occasions. The department has very successfully eliminated any poor attainment or achievement even amongst its lowest attaining students. The challenges now are to find ways of enabling boys in particular to understand better the links between theory and practice and to be able to explain their learning processes in writing. This, together with better targeting for the highest attainers, should further lift an already successful department.

- 127 The previous report was extremely positive and improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Standards in examinations have fallen since then for explainable reasons, but in all other respects the good features reported then have been maintained. The department is well managed, with a strong focus on the monitoring of standards and the quality of provision. Recent developments in the use of ICT are bringing new dimensions into students' creative work and to its recording in visual format. Departmental documents are extensive and include good use of data.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision is **very good**.

Strengths

- The GCSE results in textiles, food technology, graphics and electronics, including the well above average A*/A grades for both boys and girls.
- Teaching which is good or better and occasionally outstanding, leading to a high quality of learning and above average attainment by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Well-crafted products, especially in textiles, that show a high level of creative flair and imagination and reflect the very good practical skills taught and practised.
- Very good leadership and management which ensure that students have access to a broad range of design and technology activities.
- Very good relationships between students and staff which enable all students to learn effectively and achieve well above expectations in most areas.

Areas for improvement

- Improve GCSE results in resistant materials
- Develop closer links with primary schools to promote continuity and progression in learning.
- Further develop work in computer-aided design and manufacture.

- 128 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the proportion of students achieving at level 5 or above is higher than the national average. This is supported by inspection evidence. The proportion of A*-C grades varies between the contributory specialisms but GCSE results overall were above the national average in 2001. They were significantly above average in textiles and well above in food technology, graphics and electronics. They show an improving trend in overall attainment over the past three years. Girls attain better than boys in the subject, and achieve well above the level achieved by girls nationally. Boys attain in line with boys nationally. Both boys and girls achieve well above the national average number of A* and A grades. Students attain well in the subject when compared with how well they achieve in their other subjects.
- 129 At the end of Year 9 standards of work are above the national average. This represents good achievement overall given these students' average levels of attainment when they enter the school. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are well above the average, showing very good achievement over time. Students work safely in a very wide range of materials and develop good skills using a range of tools and processes. In, for example, the moisture tester project in Year 7, the tie project in textiles in Year 9 and in the 'pie factory' project in Year 8, food technology students are given sufficient opportunities to design and make products. As a result most students are able to understand a design brief, can carry out effective research and produce design outcomes which they enjoy making and are valued and in the process show very good solutions to the original design brief. Graphical skills are good: higher attaining students have very good presentation and graphical skills when presenting their work. Students are developing a good understanding of the design process, which is greatly aided by design models and a wide range of high quality exemplar materials. Students' making skills are good and they effectively evaluate their outcomes, identifying how they can improve work by setting targets for improvement for the next design task. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, have satisfactory skills of presentation, make good progress and attain to their potential.
- 130 By end of Year 11 standards are above average overall, which represents good achievement. In Year 10 standards overall are well above average and reflect very good achievement over time. By Year 11 in food technology, electronics, graphics and textiles the majority of students are achieving well and produce design folios that show good research and development of design ideas with very good graphical communication skills. The work of girls and higher attaining boys is more meticulously developed with a greater emphasis on research and a clearer development of their ideas. Their work also reflects high levels of flair and imagination in developing products which match their interests outside school, for example, an electronic metronome for music. In textiles, products are often excellent and exhibit very high levels of creativity. Folios of work in food technology indicate that most students have a very good understanding of the chemical and nutritional values of a wide range of food products and they relate their work well to industrial practice. In resistant materials the presentation and graphical skills of the higher and average attaining students are satisfactory and occasionally good. However, there are weaknesses in lower attaining students' understanding of the design processes and they

occasionally present work showing little concept of spatial awareness and the expected conventions of design drawing. The use of the computer by students to present work is underdeveloped in this area whilst it is very well developed in all other areas. Also in resistant materials students' knowledge, understanding and practice in the use of the computer to design and manufacture a simple product are underdeveloped.

- 131 The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. In all lessons it is never less than satisfactory, being often very good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers provide a very good structure to lessons with clear objectives to guide and support students in their work. Teachers plan their lessons well and have high expectations of their students. Students know how well they are doing and what needs to be improved. Higher attaining students are very well challenged through the open-ended design tasks and teachers' high expectations. Strategies are adopted to ensure that lower attaining students and those with special educational needs are supported on a one-to-one basis, resulting in good achievement for these students. Teachers use a good range of techniques to develop students' literacy skills and particularly the technical vocabulary associated with the material specialism. Lists of new technical words are provided in all areas, which are particularly useful to lower attaining students, who find them very helpful in their writing. This is having a very positive effect on the development of the students' literacy skills. Students are also expected to write in a variety of styles such as making notes, giving instructions on how to make their products, and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their products. In most areas ICT is used very effectively to raise the overall quality of presentation. Guidelines support students as they prepare specifications; step-by-step instructions are given on how to make products and on how to evaluate their work effectively. In most lessons the teaching successfully generates very positive attitudes to learning. Students are expected to work supportively and to collaborate well with one another when sharing tools and equipment. Teachers expect and achieve very good behaviour from students. Behaviour is more often very good and sometimes excellent because the tasks set by teachers are well matched to students' interests and capacity and as a result students enjoy what they do. Teachers deploy teaching support well and students are greatly assisted by the hard work and efforts of the learning support staff and, occasionally, the technician. However, the time allowed for technical assistance is low in food and textiles.
- 132 Leadership and management in the subject are very good. All the issues identified in the last inspection report have been successfully resolved within the limits of resources. The department now works as a very effective unit across all areas with a shared commitment to achieving high standards and its members are very successful in this pursuit. The monitoring of teaching and learning is very thorough and leads to improved teaching styles and techniques which have resulted in the much improved standards achieved since the previous report. Although resources and accommodation are adequate, conditions in food technology are cramped and shortcomings adversely affect standards in computer-aided design and manufacture.

GEOGRAPHY

The overall provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards of work have improved significantly and are well above average as seen in recent GCSE examination results.
- Teaching and fieldwork are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Subject leadership is good and day-to-day management effective, with specialist teachers working together as a competent team.
- Teachers are very committed, supportive and caring and this aids students' progress noticeably.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good and there is excellent rapport in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour, which contribute significantly to the standard of learning.

Areas for improvement

- Fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 to support the taught curriculum.
- Shortfall in resources including visual teaching equipment and a fieldwork budget.
- Greater consistency in marking in Years 7 to 9.
- More use of local maps and examples, atlases and the development of thinking skills in Years 7 to 9.

133 Standards of work are broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 9. Students' achievement in relation to their standards at entry in Year 7, which were close to the national average, is satisfactory at the end of Year 9. Variations exist in the standards of work produced in Years 7 to 9, some classes achieving far more than others. By the end of Year 9 students have a sound grounding in geographical skills. Most can use and interpret Ordnance Survey maps well but accurate presentation and analyses of statistical data graphically are unsatisfactory in some classes. Knowledge of location is satisfactory overall except for low attainers for whom it is less secure. Students of all levels of attainment have an inadequate understanding of spatial patterns. Higher attainers do not have sufficient challenge overall, in particular in developing higher levels of skills in their work. Average attainers are able to describe and provide broad explanations for the main aspects of topics taught. Low attainers are able to describe some aspects of topics taught but their explanation is weak. Students with special educational needs, when provided with specialist support, do well.

134 Standards of work at the end of Year 11 for most students are well above the national average. Achievement of most students over Years 10 and 11 is very good when related to their standards of work at the end of Year 9. This is the result of very good teaching, challenging work, high expectations, more open-ended assignments, a greater emphasis on enquiry skills and students who have a very positive attitude to learning. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining students produce very detailed and thorough work. They are able to describe and explain a range of physical and economic processes very well and show good understanding of quite complex input, process and output linkages. Average attainers are able to describe the processes well and have a good understanding of their significance. Lower attainers have a sound basic knowledge of some processes but their understanding is less secure. The best individual GCSE project work based on fieldwork is of very good quality. A very good revision and examination skills programme and an excellent revision

brochure have been very successful in ensuring that coursework is used to maximum advantage in preparation for GCSE examinations.

- 135 Recent GCSE A*-C grade results have improved, being well above the national average in 2001. The trend of improvement is significantly greater than the national trend. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades is high compared with the national position. Both boys and girls perform well; the difference is close to the difference nationally. When compared with results in other GCSE subjects within the school, geography results have been above or well above the average, as in 2001. Recent GCSE A*-G results have also been above the national average.
- 136 Students' attitudes to learning are very positive. Most students' work well and at good pace, are attentive in class and are keen to do well. Many show a real enthusiasm, enjoyment and pride in their work and have high aspirations, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Students' behaviour is invariably very good and often excellent. Very good constructive and effective relationships exist with teachers and a real rapport is evident in Years 10 and 11 which contributes positively to the very good progress made by these students. They respond very well to teachers' questions and their oral and written contributions are detailed and of high quality.
- 137 The teaching overall is of good quality and there is some very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 classes, where teachers trained in the subject undertake all the teaching. Teachers are well motivated and caring and provide very good professional guidance and support. They manage students excellently through encouragement, praise and clear direction and this forms a very good foundation for learning. Expectations are realistically high and the pace of work is brisk. Lessons are invariably very well planned; teachers have a secure knowledge base. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9 more emphasis needs to be placed on developing greater understanding. The best learning occurs in lessons that have a variety of practical activities that require the students to involve themselves in their learning. When there is good dialogue between the teacher and students that extends the students' knowledge there is a greater understanding of the topic taught. Similarly, when visual aids such as video extracts, maps, diagrams, graphs, specialist materials and ICT applications are used, learning is noticeably better. This was evident in a Year 10 class in which students working in groups analysed the development of coastal landforms and established extremely well the processes involved. It was also seen in a Year 11 lesson in which students researched material for their GCSE decision-making examination project on alternative energy sources. In this lesson students showed good ICT skills and sound understanding of the issues involved.
- 138 Fieldwork greatly enriches the curriculum and results in most effective learning. It is inadequate, however, in Years 7 to 9, where fieldwork in the local area needs expanding and there is need for all students to study the geography of an area outside the local area. The use of ICT has been developed since the last inspection and much is planned. However, difficulties of access to computers have restricted this programme so that not all students have received the full skills course of ICT applications linked to curricular themes.
- 139 Learning at times suffers when teachers do not take sufficient time to thoroughly place the lesson in the context of previous study so that students of all levels of attainment make appropriate linkages. More use needs to be made, in Years 7 to 9, of local Ordnance Survey maps and illustrations of local examples that are within students' experience rather than theoretical models. The subject needs to develop materials of higher skill levels for more able students in Years 7 to 9. There is

insufficient consolidation of the main points of the lesson for low attainers. Standards of literacy are sound and standards of numeracy are good overall.

- 140 Leadership of the humanities department is very good and documentation of very high quality. The teacher in charge of the subject has been in post only five months and has already made imaginative and important changes in the curriculum. Day-to-day management is effective. There is now need to formally evaluate the impact of teaching and training on learning. Assessment is of generally good quality but work marked by the students in Years 7 to 9 is far too inconsistent and at times unsatisfactory. There is often limited comment and insufficient guidance to students on how they can further improve their work. The department's assessment arrangements, including monitoring and tracking of students' progress over time, are good, especially in Years 10 and 11. Staff work very well as a team. The present accommodation is unsatisfactory as too much teaching takes place in non- specialist rooms with inadequate facilities. There are also restrictions as some teaching rooms are limited for independent resource-based learning with large classes. Wall displays are of good quality, include students' work and provide an effective learning environment. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. However, there are important shortfalls such as the need of a fieldwork budget, an overhead projector, a video monitor and a large permanent display world map in each of the specialist subject rooms as standard equipment. There are not enough computers to ensure that the ICT requirements for all students are fully met.
- 141 There has been very good progress since the last inspection in taking positive action to improvement in standards of work in external examinations and in curriculum planning. The head of subject and other specialist staff have very good capacity to sustain the current high standards and implement the points raised in this report.

HISTORY

The overall provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in some lessons are good or very good in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good and make a significant contribution to the standard of learning.
- The relationships between staff and students are good and produce an effective and harmonious classroom ethos.
- Teachers are caring, committed and supportive of students within their charge.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work including boys' performance in the GCSE examinations are not high enough.
- Teaching needs to include more visual and written consolidation of learning.
- Greater consistency in teaching and learning standards throughout Years 7 to 9.
- More challenge is needed for higher attaining students, and tasks provided for lower attainers should be more appropriate to their needs.
- The appointment of a teacher in charge of the curriculum development and the monitoring of standards in the subject is necessary.

- 142 Standards of work are close to the national average at the end of Year 9 and students' achievements in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Some students in some classes, particularly in Years 7 and 8, make good progress. There is a noticeable difference in standards across classes. By the end of Year 9 students have a sound grounding in

historical skills. Most students have a good knowledge and understanding of events and of the main people of the periods studied. They appreciate well their significance in the overall context of study. Knowledge of chronology is satisfactory except for low attainers. However, students' ability to identify the nature and the significance of source material is often weak. Higher attainers in some classes in Years 7 and 8 are beginning to analyse the reasons for and the results of events and changes that occur over time and give different interpretations of these. However, in Years 7 to 9 lower attainers have too much incomplete work in their books. The tasks set are not manageable in the time available so their needs are not met.

- 143 Standards of work are broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 11. Girls' work is noticeably better than that of boys as boys are often very reluctant writers and their written work is very limited. Achievement over Years 10 and 11 is sound overall.
- 144 By the end of Year 11 students have further developed their skills in using historical evidence and analysing the reasons for, and the results of, topics studied, such as the effect of the USA joining allied forces during World War II. Students are more confident in undertaking historical enquiry and in using source material. They do this quite well in discussion but there is far too little consolidation of this in writing. Higher attainers are not challenged enough to develop critical evaluation of the cause and consequence of events within a wider context of study. Average attainers have insufficient practice in transferring skills to new contexts to meet examination demands. A greater emphasis is needed on examination and revision skills and materials and the application of students' learning to GCSE examination requirements.
- 145 Recent GCSE results at grades A*-C have been close to the national average, as in 2001. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades is very low against the national position. In most years girls perform well above the national average and very much better than boys, whose performance is low compared with that of boys nationally. GCSE results in 2001 were below the average achieved in other subjects within the school. Recent GCSE results grades A*-G have been at or above the national average.
- 146 Students' attitudes to learning are good. Most work conscientiously on the tasks set and concentrate well in lessons. Students' behaviour is usually good and with some teachers it is very good. Good constructive relationships exist between students and teachers. Students are supportive of each other when working in groups and are tolerant and respect each other's views. Students respond well or very well to teachers' questions, and oral contributions to lessons are often detailed and of high quality. However, whole-class response in some lessons is weak so that learning overall is far less secure than it should be.
- 147 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; they do, however, vary considerably: for example, some of the teaching observed was good or very good, but some of the teaching in Year 8 was unsatisfactory. All teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students in their charge. Learning is most effective when lessons are carefully planned and are underpinned by detailed knowledge and understanding of the subject taught. The best teaching is imaginative, purposeful, lively and stimulating, the pace is good and the teacher has high expectations. In these lessons the question and answer technique is skilfully used to extend students' knowledge and understanding of issues and events. In particular these lessons develop well historical enquiry and investigatory skills as in a Year 7 lesson when the context of the

Crusades was discussed with students. The teacher and students, using role-play extremely effectively, analysed the tone of the speech of Pope Urban II to the knights in the call to Crusade. The source was expertly examined as a form of propaganda and compared with those used in modern times. This was teaching and learning of high quality across the attainment range. When the teaching was unsatisfactory it was because the lesson aims were not adequately focused on during the lesson, learning was unstructured and some students were not clear enough of what was required of them. The pace of the lesson was slow and little consolidation of learning took place on the board to ensure that the class was able to write with understanding. This resulted in little work in many students' books and under-achievement was evident.

- 148 Learning is limited for higher attaining students by a lack of challenge in class throughout Years 7 to 11 and for lower attainers because tasks and materials are not sufficiently manageable. There is insufficient enquiry project work in Years 7 to 9, particularly relating to the local area. The subject has recognised this and some is planned. Not enough stimulus materials such as film, video, artefacts and other visual aids are used as source material to aid learning. In Years 10 and 11 there is need for higher expectations and examination skills development to add to existing resources. GCSE coursework is generally of good quality.
- 149 The leadership of the humanities department is very good. Documentation is comprehensive, regularly updated, clearly presented and of very high quality. There is no one in charge of curricular development of the subject and this is a major drawback in revising the schemes of work and developing other aspects of the subject. More rigorous monitoring of standards in the subject is needed. Standards of marking vary too much between teachers and often insufficient comment is made to indicate how students may further improve their work. In-service training undertaken has been of good quality but needs extending in Years 7 to 9, where many teachers, often non-specialists, teach the subject. Accommodation is very poor but teachers do their best to provide some pleasant wall displays despite limited space. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. However, specialist classrooms are not well equipped for audio and visual teaching. There are not enough computers to ensure that the ICT requirements for all students are fully met.
- 150 There has been good progress since the last inspection with overall standards of work as evidence in the improvement in GCSE results and the quality of teaching and learning. The temporary vacancy of a teacher in charge of the subject somewhat deters the progressing of curriculum development issues and the capacity to fully meet points raised in this report.

HUMANITIES

Provision for humanities is **very good**.

Strengths

- GCSE results are well above national averages.
- The teaching is very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning.
- The subject is managed very well.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all students.

Areas for improvement

- A wider range of learning materials is needed to cater for lower attaining students.
- Students need more access to the use of computers.
- Students would benefit from more opportunities to become involved themselves in the assessment process.

151 During Years 10 and 11, all students study a GCSE humanities course. Results in recent years have been above, and sometimes well above, national averages in both the A*-C and A*-G grade ranges, with a significantly high proportion of students gaining the highest grades. Girls outperformed boys in the most recent examination but both were well above national averages. This is a notable achievement and is replicated by the standards seen in lessons and students' books during the current inspection. In Year 10, students are able to analyse issues, such as prejudice and persecution, in considerable depth and students produced some very impressive extended writing on environmental groups such as Greenpeace. These skills of analysis and very good literacy development are given a sharper focus in Year 11, so that, by the time they reach the age of 16, most students are achieving very high standards, as is borne out by the GCSE results in recent years.

152 These standards are achieved mainly through the quality of teaching, which is very good overall. Teachers have very high expectations of all students and plan lessons very thoroughly with clear aims and objectives. As a result, students become an integral part of the learning process and are keen to participate in class discussion. This was seen to excellent effect in a Year 10 lesson, during which students examined the effects of the media on the formation of gender roles. In this lesson, students examined the role of advertising in this context and all took part in an animated and very productive debate that was very ably orchestrated by the teacher. There is an air of rigour and pace to lessons and this encourages all students to do their best. This has addressed very successfully an issue arising from the previous report about lack of pace and motivation in lessons. Teachers use their knowledge of the requirements of the course very well to challenge and motivate students and, as a result, most students make very good progress both in terms of their oral development and in terms of their ability to write in depth. This was demonstrated very well in Year 11 lessons, during which students were preparing for a forthcoming examination on conflict in the Middle East. Students examined the issues in depth through discussion and then focused on preparing answers to source-based questions with very clear advice from the teacher on how to achieve the highest grades.

153 Students clearly enjoy the different aspects of the course and show very positive attitudes. They are confident in oral discussion and mature in their approach to learning. Above all, they show respect for their teachers and for each other. The

shortcomings noted in the previous inspection report on poor levels of motivation and behaviour no longer apply. In order to build on this very positive picture, a wider range of resources is needed to support the learning needs of lower attaining students.

- 154 The subject is managed very well and there is a very enthusiastic and dedicated teaching team to support students' learning. Monitoring procedures are used very effectively to track students' progress. Self-assessment has been used successfully on occasions but students would benefit from further opportunities in this respect. Library provision is good and the department provides some very imaginative home-produced resources to rectify the dearth of suitable published materials. The department is well poised to take a lead on the introduction of citizenship initiatives and makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all students, particularly in the areas of moral and cultural understanding. At present, students do not have adequate access to the use of computers, but the department has clear plans to address this issue.
- 155 Overall, the subject has made very good progress since the previous inspection and is a considerable strength in the school. The very high quality of teaching and the very positive attitudes shown by the students are clear indicators of the department's success, despite the poor accommodation. A key challenge now is to build upon these considerable successes in the new teaching and learning environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Teaching in well over a half of the lessons observed is good or better
- Although the computer to student ratio is not as good as the national average, the hardware and software provided are very modern and powerful, facilitating fast access to the Internet.
- Good relationships between students and teachers lead to good attitudes to learning and good behaviour in most lessons.
- Very good technical support ensures that the equipment functions effectively in all areas and provides an invaluable contribution to students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- External examination results at the end of Year 11.
- Provision of ICT resources is well below the average provision and limits ready access to the resources by other subjects.
- Establish more coherent and effective management of ICT across the curriculum to ensure that all subjects can fully contribute to the development of students' ICT skills.
- Make better provision for students of different levels of attainment.

- 156 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the proportion of students achieving at level 5 and above is broadly similar to the national average. This is supported by inspection evidence. GCSE results were well below the national average last year, but the number of students entered was small by comparison with national entries and makes national comparisons less meaningful. Students do not achieve as well in the subject as they do in their other subjects. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve appropriate levels for their capabilities.

- 157 On the evidence of work seen, attainment by the end of Year 9 is average in most aspects of ICT, with strengths in communicating and handling information. This represents satisfactory achievement overall given these students' average attainment in the subject on entry. In Year 7 students show good skills in using presentation software to present their research into healthy eating. In Year 8 students show good skills in setting up a web page to advertise a hotel and successfully include hyperlinks to other associated sites. In a Year 9 ICT key skills course, higher attaining students show good levels of confidence and competence. Average and lower attaining students need greater reassurance and support from the teacher to carry out tasks. For example, they were more hesitant in drawing up a questionnaire to determine what the public would wish to see dispensed from a vending machine. Most of the higher attaining students reflect carefully about how to frame their questions and can readily incorporate response boxes in their text. They copy their response boxes from one sentence to another more readily than lower attaining students, who need greater help with this process. Almost all students have good practical skills, competently and confidently logging on to the network system, effectively loading and executing the required software and using the keyboard and the mouse to successfully negotiate the required menus and functions. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily and show satisfactory skills in producing work of an appropriate standard for their capability. There is no significant variation in the work of boys and girls in the subject.
- 158 Standards of the great majority of students in the 'key skills level 2' course at the end of Year 11 are average and reflect satisfactory achievement since they started the course. Students in Year 10 show greater skills, knowledge and understanding than those in Year 11. Few boys or girls are achieving at the highest levels. There is little evidence to show that the most gifted and talented students are identified and that appropriate extension tasks are provided to extend their skills and understanding. Within the expectations of the course most students are developing their skills in the use of a good range of computer programs, and are competent at word processing and in using basic spreadsheets. Almost all students have good practical skills, readily logging on to the network, and they show good confidence and competence in loading the required software and files. However, whilst a minority of subjects provide some opportunities for students to use computers to help their learning, this is not yet as comprehensive as it could be and limits progress and attainment overall by the end of Year 11.
- 159 Teaching and learning are good and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers' planning is thorough. The tasks set are topical and interesting, are well matched to students' interests and are well related to the subject requirements. This means that students are interested in their work and almost always focus on completing work within the targeted time-limits. Worksheets that are produced to guide students in their work support the higher and most of the average attaining students well, but are not always sufficiently modified to meet the needs of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs. Although teachers try to provide students with high levels of individual support this is often difficult to achieve successfully where larger than average group sizes are taught. Teachers use the large screen projection effectively to show students what they need to do. Good oral assessment techniques provide students with a clear direction for their work and in identifying areas for improvement. Students' capabilities are well known by the teachers, who are sensitive to individual needs. The planned work covers the requirements of the National Curriculum, although provision for control technology is underdeveloped. The teaching is successful in generating a positive attitude to learning and good behaviour in most lessons. Students' show much enthusiasm in their work and are very

supportive of one another, quite readily helping each other to overcome problems. The technician provides an excellent contribution to students' learning by supporting the teaching and in maintaining the computers, ensuring the efficient operation of the equipment.

160 The leadership and management of the timetabled ICT provision are satisfactory. The acting head of department has effectively managed the frequent staff changes and teaching by non- specialists. At present there is stability in staffing and specialist teachers are deployed effectively, promoting good progress in lessons and ensuring that students receive their full entitlement within the timetabled ICT lessons. The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and is assuring improved teaching and good learning in most lessons. The assessment system is successful in enabling students to make good progress with the set tasks in lessons. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. However, students are not as fully aware of the National Curriculum levels they are working towards as they should be. Outside of timetabled ICT lessons the use of ICT is very much dependent upon the interest, expertise, experience and enthusiasm of subject teachers. There is currently no strategic management of ICT work across subjects to provide a clear cross-curricular educational direction for the subject. The assessment of students' ICT capability across all subjects does not yet contribute to the overall judgement on levels of attainment achieved by students, which explains why so few are identified as attaining at the very highest levels.

161 Standards have improved since the previous inspection and all students are now taught ICT skills. Teaching has improved and is now mostly good. The computer to student ratio remains well below the national average although greatly improved in quality. The lack of resources restricts access for subjects when required which means that the application of skills by students in subjects across the curriculum is underdeveloped. Funding has been established to substantially increase the provision over the next few months to help resolve the issue of access. One notable and innovative development is the key skills course in Years 9, 10 and 11, which leads to accreditation. This represents satisfactory improvement overall since the previous report.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The proportion of students attaining grades A*-C in GCSE is rising.

- Students achieve well in German at GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- The provision, within the planning of lessons, for more opportunities to encourage and increase the oral participation of students.
- The improvement in accuracy of written work, by ensuring that students redraft work and complete corrections.

- 162 In 2001, the proportion of students attaining a grade in the range A*-C in the full-course GCSE examinations in French was just below the national average in French and very close to it in German. Girls' attainment was at the national average for girls in French, whilst their attainment in German was above that for girls nationally. All students achieve well in this subject. The proportion of students attaining a grade in the range A*-G was above the national average. Compared with the other results in the school, students' achievement in German is significantly better. Boys' results in French, however, show significant under-achievement. For more than half the male candidates, the oral component of the examinations was the weakest. No boys attained a grade A* in either language. Over the last three years, French results show a rising trend; German results show an improvement over two years, with a dip in 2000.
- 163 Students' overall standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 are average. Students' understanding is good. They understand the foreign language, which the teachers use extensively in the classroom. They extract information from conversations on cassette appropriately. In a Year 9 German lesson, average attaining students noted the vast majority of the 30 hobbies which they heard in conversations. In a Year 8 French class, students identified opinions about films. Students' oral skills are not as well developed as their understanding; this is because teachers do not always provide sufficient opportunities for students to practise speaking and to improve their pronunciation. However, students in a Year 7 French class spoke well, using *on va* appropriately with infinitive constructions of activities to plan a festival. Students write at appropriate levels in their books. Higher attaining students in Year 9 in French use the past tense to write about leisure activities, and in German to write about holidays.
- 164 Average attaining students in the same year in French are not yet secure with the past tense, omitting accents and auxiliary verbs. Year 8 students write about their families, and in Year 7 students write about their likes and dislikes. Accuracy in written work varies, and there is room for improvement, particularly with the use of accents in French. Although teachers correct the work well, few students redraft it or complete corrections in order to improve its accuracy.
- 165 Students' overall standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 in French and German are average. Students' understanding of the foreign language is generally good. They identify speakers on cassette or extract information from conversations, for example about eating habits. Higher attaining students in Year 11 in French used the imperfect tense with reasonable accuracy to say what they did when they were small, and higher attaining students in German gave reasons for not smoking, using *weil* clauses correctly. Lower attaining students in a Year 11 German class spoke with a good accent about illnesses. Lower attaining students in French say what illness ails them and other students find a solution. Average attaining students in a Year 10 French class read aloud hesitantly, and pronunciation only ranged from approximate to satisfactory. Students complete a range of exercises to develop their writing skills. In their coursework, students write with varying degrees of accuracy about holidays,

work experience and the school uniform. They use different tenses and show a good knowledge of the relevant vocabulary. Teachers prepare their students well for the coursework

- 166 Students' achievement over Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. They acquire a sound grammatical base as they progress through the topics, consolidating the present and past tenses. They learn constructions in each language that they can recycle in different situations, such as the *on peut* construction in French and *man kann* in German. Students acquire over time a good knowledge of the relevant topic vocabulary, for example about the various constituents of foods and the problems with drugs, alcohol and smoking in relation to healthy eating and keeping fit. However, achievement for several classes taken by an unqualified supply teacher during this term has been adversely affected. In Year 11, irregular attendance by some students also impedes their progress. Higher attaining students in Year 10 in French have learnt how to use the past tense to write about household tasks and to introduce adverbs and conjunctions to write more complex sentences. Higher attaining students in Year 10 in German use the conditional tense appropriately to give opinions about clothing, linked to reasons in subordinate clauses, with good word order. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress. They are well integrated into classes, some of which are small. Support, when it is present, is good. Assistants work well with the teachers.
- 167 Students' attitudes and behaviour vary from unsatisfactory to very good; generally, they are good. Many students are well motivated, and they apply themselves well to their tasks. They respond well to the teacher, as in a Year 9 French class of students with special needs, when they responded particularly well to the teacher's reward scheme. Concentration is maintained in most of the 70 or 80-minute lessons. Students work co-operatively with each other in role-play situations. However, in a minority of lessons, students' responses to teachers' questions are very limited. Few hands are raised to volunteer information or for a particular task. In a Year 9 lesson with a supply teacher, students talked persistently, despite repeated requests for quiet from the supply teacher; their interest was not engaged by the teaching, and consequently the learning in the lesson was poor. Students do not respond positively to the marking of mistakes in their written work, and there is room for improvement in the presentation.
- 168 The quality of teaching and learning ranges from poor to good: overall it is satisfactory. It is better in Years 10 and 11. Two lessons by an unqualified teacher on supply were deemed to be poor. Despite much help, advice and support from the department, this teacher's methodology has not improved and students' productivity in the lessons observed was very low. This situation has now been redressed. Otherwise the teaching is never less than satisfactory. Two of the teachers are native speakers. Teachers' expectations are high. All teachers make very good use of the foreign language in the classroom, and this helps to promote students' understanding. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught, but the accuracy of students' written work is a concern. Students need to redraft their work or to complete corrections to improve. Teachers plan their lessons well with different activities and skills in order to make the best use of time. This helps students to maintain their concentration. Students work productively and at a satisfactory pace in lessons. Pair work is used effectively in some lessons, but there are few opportunities for students to present the results of the situations to the class or for the quality of the speaking to be assessed by the teacher. All lessons start with revision, and the objectives for the lesson are shared with the students, so that they are focused on what they have to learn. Teachers use a variety of methods well to consolidate what has been learnt

and to introduce new material. Worksheets of good quality complement the textbooks effectively. The management of students in the classroom is good. Homework is set regularly, and students' work is well marked, in some cases with helpful comments on how to improve. Some of the classes in both languages contain over 30 students – particularly in Year 8 where the classes have been re-grouped because of teacher shortage – and this constrains the effective development of students' oral skills. Generally, students lack confidence in speaking. However, there are occasions in lessons when students are not provided with an opportunity to participate more fully and to make an oral contribution.

- 169 The leadership and management of the department are very good. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching have taken place. The new head of department has introduced many effective measures in the short time that she has been in post; for example, the reading scheme in the library to support the school's literacy strategy. This provides the opportunity for teachers to work individually with students, whilst students read or work at the computers. The examination results are scrutinised in great detail and the analysis is used well to inform the planning of the curriculum, for example on the under-achievement of boys in speaking. A significant number of students in Year 10 and 11 study two languages, comprising more or less equal numbers of boys and girls. Two of the lessons in Year 10 take place after school. A very enthusiastic team supports the head of department, and relationships are good. Teachers make a good contribution to students' cultural development with good displays, visits abroad and the opportunity to have contact with native speakers. One room in the department is too small to take a very large class of 33 students; the teacher is unable to circulate to observe students' work. This room is also subject to the offensive odour from the boys' toilet, which is adjacent.
- 170 Staffing within the department has been unsettled over the last year. The new head of department took up her post in September 2001, following the resignation of the incumbent. An overseas graduate teacher left after one term at Christmas, and two part-time teachers are at present on maternity leave. An unqualified supply teacher has been helping in the department for this term. A French teacher, who is a native speaker, has recently been recruited to help in the department. Timetables have had to be rearranged, and some teachers have changed classes. These features have obviously had an impact on students' continuity and progress, but the teachers are working hard to minimise the disruption.
- 171 Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved. Good use is made of assessment to monitor students' progress. ICT has been incorporated into the work of the department. The department does not have a foreign language assistant to assist in the teaching of oral work. The department has the capacity and the commitment to improve further.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Students attain high standards at GCSE.
- Students' achievement at all stages is good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to students' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Improve provision for ICT in order to meet requirements of National Curriculum in music.
- Further raise the attainment of boys in Years 7 to 11.
- Review the assessment system to ensure it supports the raising of students' standards of attainment effectively.
- Seek ways of improving the allocation of time for some younger students and for the GCSE course.

- 172 Teachers' assessments of the attainment in music by students at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations; the attainment of girls is above this level and that of boys below. In the work seen during the inspection the attainment of students in Year 9 was below national expectations. However, the department has already recognised the situation and is employing strategies to redress it and most students are now making good progress. By the end of the year their attainment is likely to be close to national standards. The attainment of boys has already improved. Standards of attainment are similar to those of the previous inspection.
- 173 Students in Year 9 compose properly structured pieces and acquire satisfactory performing skills. More able students develop their ideas, co-ordinate parts well in ensemble work and communicate effectively to an audience. Their written work is perceptive. However, students of average ability do not have sufficient opportunities to develop listening skills, which would improve their ensemble playing, and in their written work the use of appropriate vocabulary is poorly developed.
- 174 Throughout Years 7 and 8 students make good progress and achieve well, becoming imaginative in using sound and skilful in controlling it. Many develop good performing technique; they learn to listen well and to evaluate each other's performances and compositions. Students in Year 8 created lively instrumental arrangements of 'The Drunken Sailor', co-ordinating parts well and using syncopated rhythms imaginatively. Others showed very good understanding of style and awareness of underlying harmony in their improvisations for a class arrangement of Boosey's Blues'. Less able students are reluctant to experiment and their playing technique is not secure. Their written work is often rudimentary. Students' progress, particularly in Year 7, is inhibited because there is not sufficient time within a single lesson to explore ideas, make decisions and refine the results. Most students sing enthusiastically but the tone is rough.
- 175 Students with special educational needs learn well and make good progress. Students who are recognised as gifted and talented also make good progress but there are no strategies to identify potentially gifted or talented students.
- 176 Standards of attainment of students by the end of Year 11 are above average. Results in GCSE examinations over recent years have consistently been above average.
- 177 During the inspection similarly good attainment was observed in the work seen. Higher attaining students, both boys and girls, play and sing in an accomplished manner and students of average ability perform with a good sense of style. Their compositions are well structured, with secure understanding of harmony and melody, although few experiment beyond the familiar idioms of popular music. Because of the very limited amount of time allocated to this course, standards of students' listening and understanding are not as high as they could be. Students do not acquire background knowledge and understanding in sufficient depth and they are not confident in their responses to the music they hear.

- 178 The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is good. Although the course is held in a single hour after the normal school day, many students are firmly committed to achieving well and give a great deal of their own time to develop their composing and to improve their performing technique.
- 179 Students display positive attitudes to music. They work well together, listen carefully, and are considerate and careful with equipment. One Year 7 class sustained their concentration and energy very well in spite of having their lesson at the end of the long morning session.
- 180 The quality of teaching is good, and students learn well. Teachers have very good levels of expertise and their high expectations and enthusiastic style encourage students' positive responses. Good strategies of question and answer ensure that students participate and consolidate their learning, and the effective use of team teaching has helped to counter the under-achievement of students in Year 9. Lessons are carefully planned to make the best use of the available time. Because of the pressure on time in a number of single lessons there is not enough emphasis on developing students' sensitivity and discrimination, and on students refining the quality of their performances, particularly in singing. There is not always sufficient challenge for more able students.
- 181 Approximately 100 students have instrumental lessons. The quality of this teaching is good.
- 182 The leadership and management of music are good. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning, both of classroom teaching and of instrumental work, ensures that standards of attainment are maintained; in response to judgements of the previous inspection portfolios of work are kept in order to maintain consistency in assessing students' work. The system of assessment needs review to ensure that it is providing useful information about students' progress. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for students between the ages of 11 and 14 to learn about cultures and musical traditions other than their own, but needs review to ensure that it provides appropriate preparation for the GCSE course, particularly through the study of traditional western European music. Because there is no provision for ICT the department is unable to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in music in full. In Years 7 and 8 and in Years 10 and 11 the allocation of time for music is not satisfactory. Accommodation is unsatisfactory but is likely to improve when new building is completed later in the year.
- 183 The contribution made by the music department to students' personal development is good. A wide range of activities and musical events occur throughout the year, involving at times around 200 students, staff and parents, and visits to professional events are regularly organised.
- 184 Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. Standards of attainment have been maintained and the department has remained positive in the face of difficulties beyond its control, namely the unsatisfactory accommodation and very poor ICT provision, both mentioned in the previous report.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students' attainment is good.
- The teaching is very good and positively influences students' achievement.
- Leadership and management are very strong.
- The management of students is very effective.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- Very good extra-curricular provision is provided for boys and girls.

- 185 At the end of Year 11 standards in physical education are very good. Boys and girls perform above expected standards. In 2001 the first group of 27 students took the GCSE examination. Boys and girls took the course in similar numbers and achieved equally well. A*-C passes were 20 per cent above the national average. Seven students achieved A*/A passes. Standards of written work are good. Students make considerable use of ICT to produce coursework. Gains in practical skills are pronounced, particularly in basketball and badminton. In badminton boys persevere to acquire advanced skills and quickly learn to utilise them in competitive play. In a theory lesson about aggression in sport boys had good knowledge and expressed well-informed opinions. Some students, particularly girls, have very good communication skills, capably demonstrated on a sports studies vocational course.
- 186 By the end of Year 9 the overall level of students' attainment in practical activities is very good in badminton and gymnastics. Girls achieve really well in badminton. They quickly learn to apply newly acquired skills in games. A majority can play a range of strokes consistently well. In gymnastics, girls produce good quality movements, performing them in sequences which they have planned. The majority control their body weight on their arms. Boys, including those with special educational needs, make excellent progress in health-related exercise. They show sustained interest and raise searching questions. Both boys and girls make very good progress. Students with special educational needs are always integrated into lessons. They achieve well and participate with enthusiasm.
- 187 The overall standard of teaching is very good. Several examples of excellent teaching were observed. They resulted in students learning and attaining very well. Features of such teaching are exemplary preparation, excellent behaviour management and demonstrations of very high quality. Teachers have high expectations of students. Examples of such teaching, seen in badminton, health-related exercise and gymnastics, clearly influenced students' learning and their refinement of new skills. This was seen in boys' basketball where new defensive tactics were quickly learned and operated. Girls make noticeable improvement to the quality of their gymnastic performances because the teacher expertly demonstrates key features. Lesson plans are detailed and clear and learning objectives are shared with students at the outset of lessons. Written work is well marked.
- 188 Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good and often excellent. Relationships with teachers are very good. Boys, girls and students with special educational needs clearly enjoy physical education. Few miss lessons without good reason. They make sustained efforts, co-operating and collaborating extremely well. The number of students attending extra-curricular activities also reflects these attitudes.
- 189 ICT is extremely well used for administration and for the production of teaching materials. Students are encouraged to use ICT for GCSE coursework although wider usage of CD- ROMs and the Internet might be considered.
- 190 Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Reporting to parents is better and the teaching is closely monitored in line with the school policy.

The department has functioned with poor accommodation, mentioned in the previous inspection. However, this problem will be rectified when the school moves to completely new premises in September, 2002.

- 191 Leadership and management are very good. Documentation is thorough, clearly presented and completely up to date. Departmental procedures and policies are well specified. Schemes of work are carefully planned to meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Many really excellent displays both convey information to students and celebrate their achievements. There are very clear policies about literacy and numeracy in physical education. All aspects of the department's performance are recorded.
- 192 Extra-curricular provision is very good for both boys and girls. Many clubs and practices run both at lunchtimes and after school. A very considerable number of students, including those with special educational needs, take advantage of this provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are high in all year groups.
- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Teachers ensure that all students are included in classroom activities.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of all students.
- The subject has made very good improvement since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more opportunities to reflect on their progress at the end of lessons.
- A wider range of materials is needed to cater for lower attaining students.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped in the subject.
- More students should be provided with the opportunity to take public examinations in the subject.

- 193 There have been no full course GCSE entries for this subject in recent years. A small number of students have taken a short course after school and a certificate is awarded for successful completion of religious education units within the core humanities course. There are plans to increase the short course GCSE offer in the near future. In lessons seen and work analysed during the current inspection, more students are achieving high standards in the subject, despite the fact that many enter the school with a low level of subject knowledge.
- 194 During Years 7 and 8, students acquire a sound understanding of Christian beliefs and those of other world religions, such as Islam. They discuss these beliefs with confidence and their oral progress is particularly good. This has addressed successfully an issue arising from the previous report on under-achievement and superficial understanding of the subject in the first two years. During Year 9, students also develop their extended writing skills in more depth; for example, Year 9 students had produced some very detailed and well-presented projects on Buddhism. As a result of these advances, most students achieve standards above those expected by

the locally agreed syllabus by the time they reach the age of 14. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.

- 195 In Years 10 and 11, the subject is part of the GCSE humanities core course and complies fully with statutory requirements. In Year 10, students develop the capacity to examine beliefs and moral issues with sensitivity and maturity and have written some very impressive extended essays on Amish beliefs and customs. The generous time allocation for religious elements of the course also allows students to examine issues in considerable depth, and, as a result, most students reach standards that are above national expectations by the end of Year 11.
- 196 The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when one quarter of the lessons seen were deemed unsatisfactory. The specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this very effectively to promote students' learning. Lessons are planned very well so that students know precisely what they have to do and care is taken to include all students in the learning process through well-targeted questions. In order to build on this positive picture, students would benefit from more opportunities at the end of each lesson to reflect on their progress. Teachers are enthusiastic, and as a result students are encouraged to become active participants through debate and discussion. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 9 lesson during which students worked with considerable enthusiasm in pairs or groups to create their own wheel of life in order to develop their understanding of Buddhist beliefs. A variety of techniques is used to motivate students, including use of artefacts, class discussion, group work and short written tasks. Higher attaining students show maturity and confidence in their oral work and have ample opportunities to develop their independent research skills through extension work. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, are supported well in classrooms, but need a wider range of resources to suit their individual needs.
- 197 Relationships are very strong and, as a result, students have very positive attitudes towards their work in the subject. They show respect for their teachers and for each other, and clearly enjoy their learning. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 7 lesson, during which students explored Christian beliefs through a story about the Creation. They discussed the story in groups and the subsequent feedback by individual students was impressive in its depth and maturity.
- 198 The department is managed well and the new and very enthusiastic subject leader gives good support to non-specialist teachers within the humanities framework. The previous report noted deficiencies in the use of assessment and in subject resources. Assessment is now used well to monitor individual progress and rigorous marking gives students a clear idea on how to improve their work. There is now a wider range of resources in terms of artefacts and library provision but students have limited opportunities to visit local religious sites. There is a very strong emphasis throughout the curriculum on the development of literacy skills and this provides a considerable boost to students' progress. The department makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of all students, particularly in the area of multi-faith education. There is, however, a pressing need to develop the use of ICT within the subject curriculum.
- 199 Overall, the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in terms of the improved quality of teaching and learning. There is an enthusiastic and skilled teaching team and the key challenge now is to build upon

these strengths and develop a wider offer of public examination courses in the subject.