

INSPECTION REPORT

KING EDMUND SCHOOL

Rochford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115337

Headteacher: Graham Abel

Reporting inspector: Grace Marriott
3674

Dates of inspection: 11th – 15th February 2002

Inspection number: 244276

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Vaughan Close
Rochford
Essex

Postcode: SS4 1TL

Telephone number: 01702 545771

Fax number: 01702 549662

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dennis Cotgrove

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3674	Grace Marriott	Registered inspector		How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements
9053	Vivienne Phillips	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
24142	Sylvia McConville	Team inspector	English, drama	
1503	Terry Browne	Team inspector	Mathematics	
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	Science	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art, equal opportunities	
2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	Geography	How well is the school led and managed?
10817	George Rayner	Team inspector	History	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (French and Spanish)	How well are pupils and students taught?
15308	Anthony Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
23880	Olivia Hall	Team inspector	Physical education	
11746	Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Religious education	
23487	Patricia Kitley	Team inspector	Special educational needs, English as an additional language	
27407	William Stoneham	Team inspector	Business education	
31139	Jill Judson	Team inspector	English (Sixth Form)	
30597	Robina Howells	Team Inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas, Langshaw, Pastens Lane, Limpsfield, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor.

Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	10
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	22
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	27
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	28
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	33
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	57

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The King Edmund School is a large, 11-18 mixed comprehensive school in Rochford in Essex. It has 1441 pupils on roll, with equal numbers of boys and girls, and including 180 students in the sixth form. Pupils are mostly from white UK backgrounds, very few are from ethnic minorities, and none are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and the proportion of pupils entitled to free meals is broadly average. Around twenty per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is average. Just over one per cent students have a statement of special educational need. This is also broadly average. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment at the start of Year 7 is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school, which is providing a good education overall though with some areas of weakness in English in Years 7 to 11. The school has been affected by staffing difficulties, particularly in science, but has worked hard to minimise these, with some success. Teaching is good in the sixth form and sound in the school as a whole, with considerable strengths in the humanities, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), and physical education (PE). The head teacher provides strong leadership and he is well supported by senior managers and the governing body. They manage the school's finances and resources very well and provide very good facilities. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well and at GCSE the proportion gaining 5 or more A* to C grades is better than similar schools
- GCSE results in history, geography, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE) are above the national average, as are the results in A Level in English, drama, ICT and advanced vocational business studies.
- The school has very good facilities and good resources for learning
- Extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, and music, dance and drama productions make a significant contribution to pupils' education
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is good
- The school's educational and personal support and guidance is effective in raising pupils' achievements.

What could be improved

- In Years 7 to 11 pupils are not achieving as well in English as they are in mathematics or science
- In most subjects better use could be made of assessment information to track pupils' attainment and plan work
- ICT is not being used enough in most subjects and the provision for developing numeracy skills across the curriculum is not well-coordinated enough
- The management of special educational needs provision is not maximising the effectiveness of the support for pupils in class

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1996. At that time the school did not have a sixth form and its successful establishment is a significant achievement. There have also been some significant improvements in teaching, attendance and the facilities. Academic standards are similar to the last inspection though with improvement in science, design and technology, history, geography, physical education and music. Systematic monitoring has improved the quality of teaching, but there is scope to take this further through the sharing of good practice. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is much improved through courses better matched to pupils' needs. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory, mainly because of the efforts in different subjects. Attendance is much better because of better monitoring and following up of absence. The responsibilities of staff in middle management roles have been clarified and most middle managers are good, but there are weaknesses in supporting less effective managers. Special educational needs provision is more extensive but the management of the provision has not significantly improved. The health and safety concerns in the last report have been dealt with. Statutory requirements

for religious education (RE) are now fully met in Years 7 to 9, though not in the sixth form. The requirements for ICT are fully met in Years 7 to 9 but not in Years 10 and 11. The rate of improvement has been satisfactory overall.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A Level and AS Level examinations. **Similar schools means those with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.*

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

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

In the national tests at the end of Year 9, the results in recent years have been similar to the national results in English, mathematics and science and better than similar schools. This is good achievement overall since the school has a below average intake in Year 7. However, in 2001 English results were below average. In mathematics the pupils did better at the higher Level 6 than they did in English or science. Teacher assessment shows broadly average standards in most subjects. In ICT the assessment was well above average. In art the assessment was very high and the inspection evidence suggests that this may have been an over-estimate.

GCSE results are around the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades and the school came very close to achieving its target. It is doing better than similar schools. In 2001 pupils did better in geography, history, PE, and computer studies than they did in English, mathematics, science and modern languages. GCSE results were average in science and mathematics and below average in English. The comparison with the tests at the end of Year 9 shows that most pupils making better progress than might have been expected in most subjects. At the end of Year 9, girls are performing at a significantly higher level than boys, but by the time they take GCSE examinations the gap has narrowed, though not in English where boys are still underachieving.

In Years 7 to 9 current pupils are achieving well in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, music, PE and Spanish. In these subjects standards are average overall. In art, standards are above average. Standards are below average in French and RE, but given their starting point, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. It is not satisfactory in English, mainly because expectations are not high enough and because of the effect of classes split between teachers. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects. It is good in design and technology, history, ICT, music, business education and very good in art, geography and PE. Standards in English are improving and are now average, as they are in mathematics and science. Pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory overall, though they vary from subject to subject. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as do the very few pupils with English as an additional language.

Sixth Form results have improved in the three years since the first sixth form students took A Level and vocational examinations. They are now broadly in line with the national average, with students taking advanced vocational courses doing better overall than those doing A Levels. The entry for most subjects is small which makes comparisons with the national picture unreliable, but results in English and drama were very good and in business studies and ICT were better than most schools and colleges. Students' achievement is never less than satisfactory though generally better in vocational courses.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are happy to come to school, enjoy the activities. They respond very well to stimulating teaching, but are not avid learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Most pupils behave very well most of the time, in response to the positive example of adults and to the civilised environment.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are good overall. Pupils get on well and are usually willing to work together in pairs or groups. They are less willing to take the

	initiative in planning their own work.
Attendance	Attendance is well above average. The number of unauthorised absences is above average because the school is not prepared to authorise holidays in term-time.

Pupils' attitudes toward academic work very much reflect the quality of teaching. They respond well to lively and stimulating teaching but when it is not as good, their interest wanes and they do no more than the minimum. Poor behaviour in lessons is rare. Any bullying is dealt with effectively and pupils know that such behaviour is unacceptable here. The incidence of exclusions is lower than average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some notable strengths. It has improved since the last inspection, with some excellent teaching, more that was good and less that was unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 11 it was satisfactory or better in over nine out of ten lessons seen and slightly better in Years 10 and 11 because the proportion of very good lessons was greater. In the Sixth Form the teaching is good. A quarter of lessons were very good and almost half were good. There are particular strengths in geography, history, science, PE, business education, design and technology, drama and music throughout the school, and in business studies and English in the sixth form. The teaching by temporary and unqualified staff was always satisfactory and on occasions it was good.

Teachers have generally good subject knowledge. In good lessons in all subjects expectations are high and they manage pupils well, using interesting and challenging work, clear explanations and skilful questioning to motivate pupils to want to learn. In the best lessons the step by step approach helps pupils to achieve good standards. In the satisfactory lessons, the challenge was not as great. Pupils did not have the opportunity to develop independence and their own thinking. Planning is mostly good, though not always for double lessons, when pupils sometimes ran out of steam. Inconsistencies in marking and in using information from assessment, mean that pupils do not always have enough guidance on how to improve and work is not always matched as effectively to need as it could be. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. In English, though some of the teaching is good, teachers tend to work in isolation and are not sharing expertise and good practice to the extent that they could. In mathematics, teaching is affected by the use of non-specialists and in science by recruitment difficulties. At times this means that work does not meet pupils' needs as well as it could and occasionally there was not enough challenge for higher-attaining pupils. In Years 7 to 9 the effect of non-specialist teaching is greatest in ICT even though the specialist teaching is good. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory.

There are many examples of independent learning especially in ICT, design and technology, business education, music, art. Pupils were observed working collaboratively in most subjects and they were good examples of pupils being creative, especially in drama, design and technology and art. Pupils are generally focused on their work and when the teaching is stimulating, they are enthusiastic, answering questions, giving explanations and expressing opinions. Good classroom discussions were observed, especially in English and mathematics. Occasionally pupils were inattentive, not involved actively in lessons or worked at a slow pace. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in withdrawal groups, but the effectiveness of the support in class is too patchy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, the curriculum meets pupils' academic and personal needs well and promotes good standards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Staff in the Learning Support Centre provide pupils with caring support but the provision is not being managed as effectively as it could be to maximise its potential for supporting pupils in class
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has very few pupils with English as an additional language and their needs are appropriately catered for
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social	Provision is good overall. It is satisfactory for spiritual development and good for social and moral development. Cultural development is satisfactory,

and cultural development	with significant strengths in music, dance and drama.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has generally good systems for supporting and monitoring pupils, academic and personal development.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and in Years 10 and 11 the provision for vocational education is good. There is still a need to improve the use of ICT in most subjects. Provision is made for a daily act of collective worship, but its implementation in tutor groups is patchy. The provision for literacy is just satisfactory, but for numeracy it is unsatisfactory. In both, too much is left to the efforts of individual departments.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher has provided very good leadership during a period of expansion, which has seen the successful establishment of a sixth form. He has been well-supported by senior staff and governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are conscientious in monitoring the school's work. They have good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Their involvement in strategic planning is satisfactory.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has good monitoring systems and staff have a wide range of data which is well used at a senior level and satisfactorily at departmental level.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very effective use of resources to support its educational priorities.

This is a well-managed school. The head teacher, staff and governors are strongly committed to continuous improvement and use the principles of best value very effectively in planning. The staffing situation is satisfactory overall, though the school has been affected by recruitment difficulties in science and ICT in particular. The head teacher and staff have worked hard, and with some success, to minimise the impact of these. The school's facilities are well maintained and constantly being improved. Resources are good overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress • The school has high expectations • Behaviour is good • Teaching is good • Extra-curricular activities • They feel able to approach the school with questions or problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework • Information about progress • How closely the school works with parents • The effect of teacher shortages

The parents were generally supportive of the school, though a significant minority feel that the partnership with parents is not strong enough. The inspection team broadly supports the parents' positive views but there are inconsistencies in communication with parents which explain the negative views. There is some variation in the consistency with which homework is set. The greatest area of parental concern was over teacher shortages, particularly in science. Not all parents were convinced that the school was doing enough to minimise the impact of this, however the inspection evidence indicates that the school continues to work hard to minimise the impact of recruitment difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form was established in 1997 and now has 180 students on roll. The school offers a wide range of A Levels, a number of GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced level, including business studies, advanced GNVQ in ICT and the provision of accounts through a distance learning arrangement. The diploma in child-care and education (DCE) is also offered and attracts a number of adults as well as sixth form students. GCSE re-sit courses in English and mathematics are also available. All students also take key skills courses in literacy, numeracy and ICT and are expected to participate in extension and enrichment activities. The students start their courses from a relatively low GCSE baseline.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The school has established a good sixth form in a short space of time and it is well-managed. Results have steadily improved over the three years since the first sixth formers took A Level and are now in line with national averages. This represents good achievement. The range of subjects and courses is well-matched overall to students' needs, with particular strengths in vocational courses. The teaching is good overall. The provision for careers education and guidance is not yet satisfactory.

Strengths

- A Level results in English, drama and ICT are above average
- Advanced GNVQ results in business studies are above average
- Students generally do better than might have been expected from their GCSE results
- The overall quality of teaching is good

What could be improved

- Assessment: use of data at subject level in tracking students' attainment and planning work
- Careers education and guidance

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. A Level results were average in 2001. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some teaching that is enthusiastic and supportive. The students are well motivated and work hard.
Biology	Good. Students generally do well relative to their GCSE results and the teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations and students are very well motivated.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Results are below average and achievement is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give students good advice on how to improve, but students though interested, could achieve well if they acted more on the advice.
Business studies	Good. Standards at A Level in 2001 were a significant improvement on 2000. Retention rates, especially on vocational courses are excellent, a wide and varied curriculum is offered, the quality of teaching is good and the department is well led and managed.
Physical education	Good. Students achieved better results in sports studies than in their other subjects. Though standards have been below average, the AS results last year were an improvement and students are achieving well. Teaching is good.

Music	Satisfactory. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and students are well motivated. Standards are very variable because the students start the course with widely different skills and experience. There is scope for standards to improve.
History	Good. The teaching is knowledgeable, supportive and often highly imaginative. Most students are achieving well. The AS results in 2001 suggest that students are working at a much higher level than previous years when results were well below average.
English	Good. English results in 2001 were much better than the national average. Current students are working at an above average level and are achieving well. The teaching is satisfactory overall, with strengths in the subject knowledge. Marking is variable with not enough really good evaluative comments.
French	Satisfactory. Though few students take French, those who do are achieving good standards in listening, speaking and reading and satisfactory standards in writing. The teaching is generally good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support for students is good in individual subjects and just satisfactory overall, but there is, as yet, no structured programme of careers guidance. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory overall. It is good in the vocational courses and in A Level English.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The management of the sixth form is good and the current leadership of the sixth form is very good. Important issues relating to monitoring and supporting the progress of all students are being tackled vigorously and successfully.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching • The willingness of teachers to provide help and support • The way in which they are helped to study independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and support about future options • The range of enrichment activity • How the school responds to their views and treats them as responsible young adults

The inspection team supports the sixth formers views on the quality of teaching and support. Many of the criticisms of the sixth formers related to difficulties last year which are now being vigorously tackled and in discussion the students were much more positive in their views than these results indicate. Their criticisms of careers advice and support are justified but in other aspects of sixth form life they are well supported. The range of extension and enrichment activity is satisfactory but not as great as in some schools.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements

1. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the school's results in recent years have matched the national results in English, mathematics and science and have been better than similar schools in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or better. This is good achievement overall since the school has a below average intake. There are however, differences between subjects, and in 2001 the English results were below average. Mathematics and science results were average, and in mathematics the pupils did better at the higher Level 6 than they did in English. The teacher assessments show broadly average standards in most subjects, and in ICT the assessment was well above average. In art the assessment was very high but the inspection evidence suggests that this may have been over-generous.
2. At GCSE the pupils are performing around the national average in terms of the proportion achieving five or more A* to C grades. The school is doing better than similar schools. In 2001 pupils did better in geography, history, PE, and computer studies than they did in English, mathematics, science and modern languages. The school came close to achieving its targets for the proportion of pupils achieving 5 A* to C grades, though the proportion achieving 5 or more A* to G grades was well below the target. Comparisons with standards at the end of Year 9 shows that pupils achieved well, making better progress than might have been expected in most subjects. At the end of Year 9 girls are performing at a significantly higher level than boys, but by the time they take GCSE examinations the gap has narrowed, though not in English.
3. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average in art and broadly average in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, music, religious education. They are below average in English, science, modern languages, ICT. When compared with attainment when pupils started the school, this means that in those subjects such as mathematics, where standards are average or better, pupils are achieving well. Achievement in science is satisfactory, but is beginning to be affected by the staffing difficulties. Similarly achievement in ICT is being affected by non-specialist teaching. In modern languages, recent staffing changes are leading to higher standards and achievement is now satisfactory. In English, achievement is unsatisfactory, mainly because expectations are not high enough, but to some extent also because of the effect of classes being split between teachers.
4. In Years 10 and 11 standards are average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Standards are well above average in art and above average in design and technology, geography, history, music, PE and average in other subjects. In terms of pupils' starting point this represents satisfactory achievement in the core subjects and RE, good achievement in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, business education and very good achievement in art, and PE. Where there are differences between previous years' examination results and current standards, this reflects differences between year groups.
5. Pupils' standards of reading and writing are satisfactory overall. They vary from subject to subject, though all departments make an effort to improve literacy. In subjects such as history, geography, PE and the good lessons in mathematics, very good use of literacy skills results in high standards of written work, which is often better than work in English books. This is because teachers have high expectations. In other subjects where the demands are less consistent, literacy skills are not as good, for example in science, pupils' weaknesses in written English affect their ability to express their ideas and write up their investigative work. Numeracy skills are satisfactory in mathematics but in most other subjects pupils' numeracy skills are not developed sufficiently.

6. Pupils on the register of special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Their attainment on entry is clearly recorded, but their test and examination results are not analysed in detail. However the examination results in subjects suggest that these pupils do at least as well as others. The school enters a high proportion of the year group for GCSE in English, mathematics and design and technology, and achievement at lower grades is better than the national averages. Similarly in all year groups lower attaining pupils make sound or better progress in these three subjects. There are some small withdrawal groups, but pupils are mainly supported in subject lessons. Scrutiny of their books shows that they take pride in the presentation of their work, and their work is valued by teachers. In Years 10 and 11 the provision of courses such as the ASDAN Youth Award and Trident Gold enable pupils to achieve well. The very few pupils from ethnic minorities achieve at a similar level to other students.

Sixth form

7. In the three years since the first cohort of students took A Levels, sixth form results have improved from well below, to broadly in line with, the national average. The entry for most subjects is small which makes comparisons with the national picture unreliable, but results in English and drama were very good and in business studies and ICT were better than most schools and colleges. Given their relatively low starting point, students' achievement at AS and A Level is never less than satisfactory when compared with their GCSE results and it is good in English, drama and ICT and the vocational courses. In 2001 students taking advanced vocational business studies course did particularly well. Of the 16 candidates who took advanced business studies, all passed the course, eight achieved a merit and six achieved a distinction.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The positive picture of standards in attitudes, values and personal development described by the previous inspection has been preserved. Pupils of all ages are happy to come to school for the range of social and educational experiences offered. They enjoy activities, such as sport and the recent dance production, that give scope to those taking part to rise to the occasion and have a real sense of achievement. In lessons, pupils respond very well to stimulating teaching, but are not avid learners. To do more than the teacher asks, they depend on a lively mix of activities to catch and hold their interest. When teaching is unexciting or not focused on what different pupils need to know, understand and do, their interest wanes and they do no more than the minimum required of them. Their overall enthusiasm for school life is good.
9. Pupils' behaviour is good in and out of lessons. Most pupils behave very well most of the time, in response to the generally positive example set by adults and to the civilised environment in which they spend their time. In the best lessons, behaviour is exemplary and makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and standards. In most lessons, they listen attentively to what the teacher says and carry out instructions without fuss, unless they are unsure about what they are supposed to be doing and why. This provides a good foundation for learning. Most pupils understand that they should not spoil other people's chances of learning, so disruption to lessons is rare. It occurs occasionally when work is not matched well to pupils' skills, or misbehaviour is handled ineffectively. Bullying happens, as in other schools, but is not part of the culture because pupils know that such behaviour is unacceptable here. It is dealt with effectively. The incidence of exclusions is lower than average.
10. Personal development and relationships are good overall. Pupils get on well together, which is a significant factor in the good quality of everyday life in the school. They are usually willing to work together in pairs or groups identified by the teacher, whether or not they are with their friends. They help each other and praise particular effort or achievement when they notice it, as in a Year 10 textiles lesson where pupils supported each other impressively in working out how to modify designs successfully. Such relationships foster a good working atmosphere.

11. Pupils are happy to be passive and to wait to be told what to do, rather than using initiative to plan their own work. They find it hard to work out for themselves the best way to complete a task successfully. This is because their skills in problem solving, investigation and critical thinking are less well developed than usual. They are not always sure when to persist with a problem and not just give up, or when to ask for help, or work with someone to solve it. This is because the development of study and organisational skills that underpin independent learning is not consistently promoted. However when given the opportunity to work independently, as they are in many lessons, pupils respond well. They also enjoy the chances to learn to take responsibility and use initiative, for example, as prefects and members of the anti-bullying council, and would welcome wider opportunities to contribute to school life. They do not have a real voice in what happens in school yet because the school council is at an early stage of development.
12. Pupils show interest in and tolerance of ideas different from their own. They listen politely to what others have to say, but lack regular opportunities to think about and discuss views and feelings different from their own, or outside their immediate experience. As a result, they find it quite hard to reflect on their own actions and attitudes and see the impact of these on others. They have reasonable respect for other people's different feelings and beliefs, but with room for this to be developed further. This was clear in a very good personal and social education lesson in which Year 7 pupils were asked to set aside their prejudices and consider the plight of refugees from the perspective of someone just like them, who lost everything that mattered.
13. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to what the school offers. Before transfer at eleven, pupils from feeder schools gain confidence through visits and a two week summer literacy programme. The Learning Support Centre is a welcoming and supportive environment. Pupils seen there were confident and gaining in independence. For example, many pupils are using laptop computers to word-process work in lessons. They return to the centre and print out their work without adult help. Relationships between adults and pupils in the centre are good and this supports development of their social skills.
14. Attendance is very good. It is well above average after significant effort by the school, supported by the resident education welfare officer, to bring about improvement in response to a key issue raised by the last inspection. The number of unauthorised absences is above average. This reflects the school's continuing determination to reduce absence rates and to discourage term time holiday absences, which it does not authorise, so that pupils have every chance of making good progress.

Sixth form

15. In the sixth form, students' attitudes to work and their attendance are good and most students complete the courses they choose. As with pupils in the main school, students are used to doing what is asked of them. They find it difficult to go beyond this to take initiative with their learning. They are more dependent on teachers than usual for sixth form students. Most are very willing to put in the effort, but are not always sure about how to study independently to best effect and respond well to the constructive guidance they receive. Their capacity to work independently is developing satisfactorily. Their study skills and competence in problem solving, though satisfactory, are not particularly strong. This is partly because the key skills course and enrichment sessions have not met their needs well, disappointing students who expected more opportunities to debate issues and think critically.
16. After an unsettled period, while the new curriculum was being introduced and changes were made to the management of the sixth form, very firm boundaries have been set. Before that, expectations and ground rules were unclear, some students had more freedom than they could manage. They sometimes missed lessons and failed to keep pace with the demands of their courses. With the tighter rules now in place, a few new sixth formers keen to try to become independent, feel that they lack opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and their work.

17. As in the main school, students are co-operative and willing to help each other or members of staff. They, too, would welcome the chance to contribute to the life of the school in a more meaningful way. They develop good, positive attitudes to the benefits of study, which is an important step in helping them to continue to learn in adult life, as is their willingness to work co-operatively with others. Overall, their personal development and relationships are good

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some notable strengths. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection, both in the reduction of the amount of unsatisfactory teaching and an increase in the teaching that is good or better. Much of the good teaching was seen in business education, design technology, drama, history, geography, music and PE. The teaching of ICT was also good at Years 10 and 11. Much of the very good teaching was seen at Years 10 and 11 in geography, music, and PE. The teaching by supply and unqualified staff observed during the inspection was always satisfactory and on occasions it was good. Non-specialist teaching in mathematics and science, though not unsatisfactory overall, is having a negative impact on standards. In ICT in Years 7 to 9 the effect of non-specialist teaching is greatest and here the teaching was not satisfactory even though the specialist teaching was good.
19. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in well over nine out of ten lessons observed. It was very good, with a few excellent lessons, in one lesson in five, and good in two out of every five lessons. The quality of teaching was slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 mainly because the proportion of good and very good teaching was higher. The impact of non-specialist teaching is greater in Years 7 to 9 than it is in Years 10 and 11. The improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school is reflected in satisfactory learning by the pupils generally.
20. The school has spent a great deal of time since the last inspection improving teaching. The head teacher, senior management team and heads of department have been involved in a programme of monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching to help raise standards. These strategies have been successful in the main, although there is not always consistency among heads of department in their procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching.
21. Teachers' subject knowledge is good in nearly all subjects and relationships in most lessons are positive. Most teachers have high expectations and they manage pupils well. Teachers also explain the aims of lessons well. For example, in an excellent Year 9 geography lesson on the impact of tourism in Tenerife the teacher provided very good explanations of difficult technical terms and questioned pupils very carefully to make sure that everyone understood these and the task they had to undertake. In good lessons in all subjects teachers motivate pupils to want to learn and acquire good skills and knowledge. The pace in these good lessons is brisk, the work is challenging and teachers raise standards by clear explanations and use of skilful questioning techniques. In a good Year 9 mathematics lesson the active teaching methods, good relationships, use of humour, and the involvement of all pupils in demonstration meant that all pupils developed and consolidated their understanding of graphs of quadratic equations. There is good guidance and a carefully structured step-by-step approach in, design and technology, history and modern foreign languages and some science lessons. In physical education there was a very strong focus on teachers using the same teaching and learning strategies. In a very good Year 10 PE lesson the teacher adopted a problem solving approach when teaching football which really made pupils think for themselves.
22. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the level of challenge was not as great and the pace of work was usually slower so that pupils did not complete as much work or make as much progress as they might. Some teachers of modern foreign languages teach predominantly in French or Spanish, but others

speak most of the time in English, which limits learning and achievement. In many lessons, pupils were encouraged to develop independent learning skills, but teaching in some English lessons is too teacher-directed and pupils do not have the opportunity to develop independence and their own thinking.

23. Schemes of work and planning are good in many subjects, especially in design technology, business education, physical education and modern foreign languages. Pupils are generally prepared well for examinations as teachers have a good understanding of examination requirements. Sometimes the planning for double periods is not adequate and pupils run out of steam. There are inconsistencies in marking across the school and pupils do not always have enough guidance on how to improve. There are also variations in the use of assessment and data and as a consequence work is not always well matched to need.
24. In most lessons the objectives are made explicit to the pupils at the start of lessons and usually instructions are made clear so that pupils know what to do. In most lessons they carry out these instructions well. The lesson objectives are generally reviewed to check what has been learnt, though in some business studies lessons in Years 10 and 11 not enough time was allowed for this and the lessons drifted at the end. The teaching of basic skills of literacy is satisfactory in most subjects, though this is more because teachers make an effort to use key words and writing frames rather than as a result of a concerted whole-school policy. Similarly in teaching numeracy, though individual teachers and departments such as geography, science and design and technology are making an effort, this is not yet part of a whole-school approach. ICT is used to great effect in music, but is not used enough in English, maths, science, history, design technology, modern foreign languages and physical education.
25. The management of pupils is good overall and pupils are frequently praised for their efforts and attainment, which creates a positive working atmosphere. In a few lessons teachers were not able to establish their authority over the class and this was the main reason for the unsatisfactory teaching. This situation is not helped in some larger classes where there is no additional support available to the teacher. In the lessons where pupils with special educational needs are supported, the learning support assistants give satisfactory support to individuals and small groups but they are not always deployed as effectively as they could be to ensure that pupils make maximum progress. Modern language assistants are used well. The teaching of the very few pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory, though there were occasions in science when non-specialist teachers were not able to provide a high enough level of challenge.
26. Overall the use of homework is satisfactory. In the best cases, homework consolidates and extends what has been covered in the lesson and is linked to the drive for higher standards. Some homework requires research, often using the Internet.
27. Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall, but there were many examples of good learning spread across all years. When given the opportunity pupils worked well independently, especially in information technology, design technology, business education, music, art and music, though there is scope to develop this further. Pupils were observed working collaboratively in pairs and groups in most subjects and pupils were particularly creative in drama, design and technology and art. Pupils are generally focused on their work and they show enthusiasm for their learning when answering questions, giving explanations and expressing opinions. Good classroom discussions were observed in many lessons. Occasionally pupils were inattentive, not involved actively in lessons or worked at a slow pace. The learning of gifted and talented pupils and pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory.
28. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is in line with fellow pupils. It is effective in lessons where work is structured to build confidence and teachers set an appropriate level of challenge. More experienced learning assistants are effective at keeping students focused and help their understanding of new work. However, many have only recently been appointed and are still receiving training from the

special needs co-ordinator. When teachers do not know assistants will be present in a lesson, or have not planned their role, students benefit less. Where teachers and learning support assistants work well together and provide effective support for pupils in the classroom, for example in some mathematics, science and geography lessons. The extent to which teachers make best use of learning support assistants is variable and remains an area for further development. Standardised individual education programmes have recently been circulated to departments and replace a system of notes with key ideas prepared for individual students by the co-ordinator. Teachers are adapting booklets in history, and worksheets provide writing frames in geography and some modern language lessons. Teachers in design and technology lessons ensure that students receive appropriate support with practical tasks because learning support assistants do not accompany students to these classes. Discussions with pupils support the view that the good quality of teaching in many vocational courses motivates them to maintain their places on these courses.

Sixth form

29. Teaching is good in the sixth form. A quarter of the teaching observed was very good or excellent and half was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. While all subjects contribute to this good teaching, there are particular strengths in English, French, history, science, physical education, business education and music. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. This results in lessons which challenge and inspire as, for example in a Year 13 French lesson on the views of terrorists in a set book and in a Year 13 history lesson focusing on the opposition to Hitler in Nazi Germany. Here the standard of discussion from both teacher and students strongly developed qualities of critical thinking. Teachers' expectations in the sixth form are high. This was seen to very good effect in an excellent Year 13 biology lesson where the teacher insisted on a high degree of precision in the use of scientific terms and ensured that all students were able to contribute to the discussion. In a very good Year 12 business education lesson the teacher managed to make the teaching of accounts lively and interesting with the result that students made significant progress.
30. Teachers manage the students very well and relationships are very good. The quality of teachers' assessment is variable, however and there are inconsistencies in marking which result in students not always being aware of their current standards and not receiving sufficient guidance on how to improve. Information communication technology is used to good effect in music, but there is insufficient use in mathematics, science, history, design and technology, modern foreign languages, English, and PE. Students are generally prepared well for examinations. Students' learning is extended well by the homework assignments, which often require research, sometimes using the Internet. In many subjects, but notably in ICT, design and technology, art, PE and history, students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills, but in a few English lessons teachers, though rigorous and challenging in their approach were giving too much information rather than making students think. In most lessons students are enthusiastic learners who are confident about their work. They generally work at a brisk pace and are fully involved. On rare occasions, students are not fully involved or display less positive attitudes.

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

31. The school offers a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum in all years and is satisfactory overall. Good emphasis is given to providing a curriculum that meets pupils' academic and personal needs and promotes good standards. The overall weekly teaching time is greater than in most schools and the time allocations to subjects are generally good, although only just satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in science and design and technology. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 meets statutory requirements, which is an improvement upon the situation in the last inspection. However, there is a lack of whole-school co-ordination of some aspects of the curriculum. The full programme of study is covered in ICT, and departments such as music use it well to enhance standards, some subjects are not providing it in much depth. Provision is made for a daily act of collective worship, but its implementation in tutor groups is patchy. The whole school approach to

developing basic skills is just satisfactory in literacy, but not in numeracy. In both, too much is left to the efforts of individual departments.

32. In Years 7 to 9, the statutory curriculum is complemented by the teaching of drama and the opportunity for all pupils to take ICT as a separate subject. There are some inconsistencies in the way in which time is organised in Years 7 to 9, with single and double lessons not allocated in a systematic way. This results in some groups in one year having one double lesson each week, which provides more time for in-depth study or practical activities, and one single lesson while others in the same year have three single sessions. In some classes double lessons present problems for pupils in terms of sustaining interest and concentration. These inconsistencies are having an impact in English, mathematics, art and history.
33. The school has recently changed the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to improve motivation and better meet the needs of all pupils. These changes have been effective in providing good vocational opportunities. Almost half the pupils in Year 10 do not take modern languages, in order to take one of the GNVQ courses in ICT, business, leisure and tourism, or health and social care. This is appropriate for the pupils involved. In Year 11, a small number of pupils are able to follow a work related education programme, including the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme. In addition to GNVQ business, the school also provides a business education GCSE to complement the list of more traditional GCSE subjects offered.
34. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and provides late transport, at its own expense, on the two main days of after-school extra curricular activity to ensure that these pupils who live at a distance are not excluded from these. Most years have homework clubs, which provide good opportunities for pupils to benefit from a working environment that is conducive to concentration. Pupils are able to take the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, to the Gold Award level. Skiing trips take place regularly to Europe and Canada, with a group of pupils departing for Italy on the day after the inspection finished. The school has a link with a school in Orlando, Florida and regular exchanges take place. In addition to being able to take part in a wide range of sporting activities during lessons, the PE department provides opportunities for pupils to be involved in many individual and team events outside lesson time. The department also runs a successful 3-night Dance Extravaganza. The school has a flourishing orchestra and a Motown choir, run by the music department. Each year, the drama department puts on a large-scale theatrical production, as well as a lower school play. The design technology department organises an annual fashion show and a cookery club, during the Easter holiday, in conjunction with a national store. Some subjects do not provide such strong opportunities outside the classroom. For example, pupils would benefit from more fieldwork in geography and history.
35. The arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The results of tests and examination are closely analysed and comparisons are made between the achievements of girls and boys. In Years 8 and 9 setting has been introduced across all subjects in an effort to address the widening gap between boys' and girls' achievements. The curriculum planning for most pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, and they take part in residential visits and ski trips, as well as school-based activities. The school is not yet fully adapted for wheelchair users though a programme of modifications is making more rooms and parts of the building accessible. Additional support in withdrawal groups is part of the provision for Years 7 and 8 this year. While this is having a positive impact on learning, in mathematics the variations between groups mean that all pupils do not benefit equally. In relation to English, the effect of the withdrawal is not being monitored carefully enough to ensure that pupils still have equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum in English.
36. The school's programme for personal and social education, (PSHE) including provision for health related matters, is good. The weekly lesson for all classes is taught by a team of specialists and the school is well placed to teach citizenship, because it is already covering most of the required elements. Careers guidance is satisfactory, with some strengths, but also areas for improvement. The careers programme is taught to

all years, within the personal and social education syllabus. Its work in school is well planned to meet the needs of the school's pupils but it would benefit from further enrichment by visits to the school by employers or other relevant speakers or by planned opportunities to visit businesses and exhibitions. There is a satisfactory programme of two weeks work experience for Year 10 pupils. The school benefits from the services and advice of the Trident Trust, although it is currently organising a high proportion of placements itself, after pupils have made the initial contact with hosts. The careers library is adequate and well organised.

37. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is satisfactory, although few subjects are making extensive use of available opportunities. Volunteers from the community act as mentors to pupils. The local community police officer makes a useful contribution to the personal and social education programme, by talking to pupils about such issues as drugs. The local Member of Parliament also visits the school. Pupils take part in inter-school debates in the local council chamber.
38. Links with partner institutions are effective. The school has worked hard to help primary schools to provide relevant information about the attainment and needs of transferring pupils, with the result that this has improved in quality and usefulness. Teachers visit primary schools in the area to assist with teaching and equipment is loaned. The school successfully bid for New Opportunities funding so that it could lead an out of hours initiative and provide "catch-up" classes for Year 6 pupils. Another successful bid enabled the school to lead a cross-phase literacy initiative that was continued after grant funding finished and is now to be extended to numeracy. The physical education department maintains strong links, both through competition with other establishments and by providing opportunities for other young people to take part in activities in the school. Although it is keen to attract pupils to its own sixth form, the school provides objective advice for those considering alternatives after Year 11. The personal and social education programme considers the various possibilities and posters from local colleges are displayed in the school.
39. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The school has improved its provision for pupils' spiritual development which was a weakness at the time of the last inspection. It is now satisfactory, with strengths in art, geography and PE. Clear planning in these subjects identifies opportunities for spirituality through the curriculum. This helps teachers to create the right climate for pupils to reflect on their own values and beliefs as well as develop an awareness of others. For example, the effects of war on civilian populations represented by Picasso in 'Guernica', the delicate balance between the environment created by man and the natural world, and the reflective element of dance. Other opportunities for thoughtful reflection occur in weekly year assemblies and in some tutorial groups. However, there is considerable variation in the quality and content of these. One year group had run out of activity sheets so once registration was completed pupils chatted, whereas a Year 10 tutor made constructive use of this time to discuss evidence reported in the 'Damilola Taylor' trial.
40. The quality of provision for pupils' moral and social development is good and also makes a contribution to their spiritual development. Many examples of good practice are found across the curriculum and in all year groups. Pupils' discussions show clear moral codes and anti-bullying culture that reflect the ethos of the school. Year 7 pupils consider what they would hate to lose most if they were refugees. History lessons encourage pupils to think about moral dilemmas faced by leaders in the past and whether compromise is better than confrontation. The consequences of exploitation are explored in geography and leisure and tourism. The effects of moral and social issues are also discussed in religious studies and English lessons.
41. Pupils' social development is strengthened through good opportunities for collaborative learning in PE, drama and music. They work well together in class, in sports teams and on other activities such as fashion shows, dance and musical productions. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and residential visits encourage independence. PHSE provision is helping pupils develop an understanding of citizenship and how crime and

disorder affect people's lives. In Year 12, pupils are considering 'obedience', 'ethics' and 'conformity' in relation to the Holocaust. Pastoral care is good and supports a strong moral and social ethos well. Pupils act as librarians during lunch. A school council is being formed and selected representatives are proud of their role. There is a system of prefects, but many feel they have little purpose other than to patrol corridors during break. In general, there are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to develop personal qualities within the school organisation.

42. The school makes sound provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils take part in multi-cultural projects in art, textiles and dance. Year 8 pupils experience some music from non-western countries, and a guitarist from the USA is giving a workshop this term. Science supports work in religious studies by examining the changing attitudes of religion to science. The study of a wide range of texts in English gives rise to discussion about multi-cultural issues as well as opportunities to understand the English literary tradition. There are few gallery or museum visits, but some theatre visits are organised.

Sixth form

43. The sixth form curriculum is good with a broad range of learning opportunities being offered. There is an extensive and growing list of over 20 AS and A Level courses and this is complemented by some vocational provision at both advanced and intermediate level including the provision of accounts through a distance learning arrangement. The school also provides the national diploma in child-care and education (DCE) which attracts a number of adults as well as sixth form students. However, the school is not providing religious education and in this respect statutory requirements are not met.
44. Though the sixth form has only recently been established, students are offered considerable choice in their subject options. Students are also expected to follow courses in key skills which is an issue of some contention, with students arguing that they could more usefully spend the time involved on other pursuits. Curriculum planning indicates that the school would like to increase the vocational aspects of its work. This provision for vocational education improves equality of access and offers students more opportunities for progression into the world of work, as well as to further and higher education. The school's commitment to inclusiveness is shown in the flexible entrance requirements for courses and the attempts to provide all students with the courses of their choice.
45. The sixth form curriculum has undergone recent changes and there is now an improved provision for enrichment and personal and social education. Students are offered various experiences including producing their own newspaper, but the range of opportunities, especially for sporting and recreational activities, is not yet as great as those enjoyed by sixth formers in many other schools. The main weakness of the curriculum is the provision for careers education and guidance. Students are given advice and information about further and higher education and those seeking employment are also given assistance, the local business and industrial community is not used as a resource other than for business studies students. There are few examples of partnerships with local firms that enliven the curriculum and enhance learning. The provision for good quality work placements is similarly unsatisfactory. There is no planned work placement programme beyond the business studies courses and the DCE. This is a missed opportunity to use careers education and guidance in an enterprising way to raise aspirations and to provide students with good quality experiences that will help them to decide on their future career paths.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

46. The school takes careful steps to ensure that the welfare of pupils of all ages is safeguarded. It has good arrangements for child protection, which are understood well by staff and used as required when concerns arise. Teachers know pupils well and are good at noticing changes in their behaviour or approach to work. This leads to good formal and informal monitoring of pupils' personal development and behaviour by the

pastoral team, who manage personal problems with the goal of ensuring that individuals continue working hard and making progress. Support for pupils' personal development, based on careful monitoring, is good. In general the school's educational and personal support and guidance is effective in raising pupils' achievements.

47. The school fosters high standards of behaviour through effective use of procedures based on well-understood policies with an emphasis on rewards and personal rights. Where necessary, sanctions are used to set firm boundaries so that pupils have a clear understanding of the code of conduct. Procedures for monitoring behaviour and discouraging bullying are good.
48. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. The school has a comprehensive database that is carefully analysed to evaluate examination results and provide information for setting targets. It is used well at the level of senior management and is available to all staff but is not used as effectively as it could be. Some departments are better than others in using assessment information to plan work, track pupils' progress and set targets. For example in mathematics, history and geography this information is used effectively in raising standards, whereas in English its use has been less effective.
49. The special needs co-ordinator maintains records for all pupils identified as having special educational needs and this information is shared with staff. Files are also kept by Heads of Year and these also include some information concerning support for these pupils from outside agencies. Learning support assistants are attached to year groups and assist in collating information. Pupils are carefully assessed on entry to the school and the register is compiled. However relatively little assessment information is recorded, beyond what is recorded for all pupils, as the special needs pupils move through the school. This means that the information about their development and progress in the classroom is not always detailed enough. However the introduction of a standardised format for individual education plans is a helpful development which should give teachers better information with which to plan work, and enable assessment and recording of progress to be more effective. Statutory reviews are carried out at appropriate times and parents, carers and outside agencies are informed and consulted. The assessment of pupils with behavioural and social problems is good. These pupils with behaviour and social problems are well supported by the behavioural support assistant and members of the school's pastoral team.
50. The school monitors attendance rigorously with regular checks of recorded absence and very efficient follow-up of any that are unexplained. The presence of the educational welfare officer on site and at pastoral team meetings contributes significantly to this. Occasionally, the use of a mix of electronic and paper registration procedures allows lateness to go unchecked, particularly with the time taken for records to appear on screen. Sometimes, the delays distract tutors and teachers who, understandably, overlook late arrival to lessons. Punctuality is not always as sharp as it could be, which is not helped by such delays.

Sixth form

Assessment

51. Procedures for assessing attainment and monitoring students' academic performance are satisfactory and take satisfactory account of examination requirements. Assessments give students adequate information about how well they are doing and how to improve. Targets are set. The school reports assessments regularly to students and parents. At its best, assessment ensures that students have opportunities to discuss their strengths and weaknesses fully and agree on exactly how to improve, with focused support from the teacher. In such cases, students have accurate information about their progress and the gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding that need to be filled. In other cases, the focus on individual strengths and weaknesses is not as clear as general feedback about how to achieve particular grades. Information based on assessment is uneven in quality, particularly in the extent to which it is diagnostic and

accurate about a student's performance. As a result diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs are satisfactory overall, rather than good. Help is positive, but not always focused sharply on a specific skill such as arguing a case with reference to key evidence.

Advice, support and guidance

52. The school offers satisfactory educational and personal support to the sixth form students. Staff want students to succeed and offer them much encouragement, occasionally being agreeable rather than demanding. The quality of care offered to pupils in the main school is extended to students in the sixth form, whose welfare, health and safety are still a priority. Students are helped to settle in satisfactorily. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance in the sixth form are good. Useful records are kept, which tutors use for discussions about progress and difficulties. Support is available if personal problems occur. Guidance on careers and future options is not as effective. Students receive individual advice on applications for further and higher education and employment. However, other than in business studies and DCE, there is little systematic input from visiting speakers and other specialists, work experience, or workplace visits to help raise aspirations and support students in their choices of what to do next. Students were disappointed in the quality of advice and support offered. The school has recognised the need to improve this aspect of its work and has begun to make appropriate changes.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. As at the time of the last inspection, parents think that the school is doing a good job. They are pleased with the school's high expectations and believe that pupils make good progress. They are less satisfied with how closely the school works with them, including how well informed they are about individual children's progress. They have mixed views about whether the amount of homework is right.
54. The school's links with parents are effective and relationships are usually productive. Information for parents about the life of the school in newsletters and other printed material is regular and useful. The school has been working hard to improve written reports about pupils' progress because it recognises that the termly grades and annual reports are not as clear as they could be. Parents have good opportunities to speak to tutors at the review day and at parents' meetings, so this filled some of the gaps left by lack of detail in last year's reports when problems with computer systems resulted in reports with a bare minimum of information. The school gives satisfactory information to parents.
55. Most parents are pleased to see their children doing well. They are particularly supportive of live performances, such as the dance production, and the awards evening involving an audience of two thousand people. Not all families see education as a priority. The school has to work very hard to encourage regular attendance, motivation and academic achievement, sometimes without support from parents. In general, parents' involvement with the school's work and their children's learning is satisfactory and supports standards adequately.
56. The school aims to work closely with parents, but there are inconsistencies in the way in which agreed procedures are operated and parents do not always receive a response within a reasonable period of time, or, occasionally not at all. If parents feel that a problem or complaint has not been taken seriously, they do not always know what to do next, or who might help them to sort things out. Over a quarter of parents responding to the questionnaire felt that the school does not work closely with them. This feeling stems partly from lack of consultation about changes that affect their children. A recent example is the way in which reorganisation of English sets in Year 10 was managed. A few parents contacted the school and they were re-assured by the explanation, one or two still feel that their children have been disadvantaged.

57. Parents and students have no major concerns about the sixth form. Their overall views are positive because they feel that the school provides satisfactorily for their needs and they are happy to be here. They are pleased with the quality of teaching and access to teachers for help with their work. About half of them have one or two specific reservations about sixth form life. Dissatisfaction with the quality of advice offered about options for the future stems from unsatisfactory arrangements for careers guidance in the sixth form. Students' perceptions that they are not treated as responsible young adults and that the school is unresponsive to their views are the result of fluctuations in procedures and management in the sixth form. Leadership of the sixth form is now stable, so the school is well placed to consult with students on a way forward.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. The head teacher has provided very good leadership for the school during a period of expansion that has included the successful establishment of the sixth form. He implements a very worthy philosophy founded on providing a quality education involving a range of challenging and meaningful opportunities for children of all abilities in a caring environment. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour provide a strong endorsement of the effectiveness of the head teacher's vision for the school's ethos.
59. The management by the head teacher and key staff is good overall. A good range of management systems ensures that the school runs very smoothly. The systems also provide valuable data for identifying weaknesses, informing planning and ensuring that priorities for school improvement are appropriate, challenging and achievable. Since the time of the last report the senior management team has been extended, detailed job descriptions make their responsibilities explicit and there is a clear understanding of their roles in developing the school. Senior managers support the head teacher very strongly and share his commitment to further improvement. They would benefit from the opportunity to exercise greater responsibility within their own areas and scope to use their initiative more. The only significant weakness is in timetable construction which is affecting work in a number of areas, though in history, geography the impact is lessened because of good co-operation between teachers.
60. Priorities for development have been good. The school has concentrated on raising pupils' and students' success through the improvement of teaching. The findings of this inspection demonstrate the success that has been achieved in this area. More recently, in continuing this drive for further improvement, the focus has shifted to ensuring pupils have high expectations, to raise their self-esteem in their own work and have confidence in their success. A comprehensive bank of information has been built up to monitor pupils' achievement, predict their attainment and set them challenging targets. Increasing use is being made of this by those responsible for pupils' personal and academic development.
61. Following consultation, a new system for the performance management of teachers was introduced and all teachers have now followed the very good procedures. The senior management structure provides for the line management of middle managers who have a key role in performance management. Appropriate training has taken place to enable staff to identify areas for development and to secure suitable training for achieving their intended professional development. This effect of this is being seen in improvement of the quality of teaching. Middle managers have also been closely involved in the introduction of 'Continual School Improvement' system, a very useful tool which is involving all staff in school development.
62. The management of departments is satisfactory overall and good in science, design technology, geography, physical education, history and business education. The management of music is very good. Heads of year

and heads of department now have a stronger and more concerted voice in the determination of policy as a result of changes made since the last report. The very good assessment information available and accessible to teachers has not been exploited fully by all, for example English and special needs. Consequently there is a lack of consistency in development planning and implementation of action plans between departments. Senior managers carry out regular monitoring which focuses on school priorities for improvement, but support for the less effective heads of department needs to be more systematic.

63. Governors carry out their statutory duties conscientiously, for example, in response to the previous report all pupils in Years 10 and 11 now receive religious education. Governors are well informed about school developments through the work of a number of committees which have decision making powers and delegated budgets, and are able to respond promptly to needs. Teachers make occasional presentations to inform the governors of new developments. Individual governors are linked with subject departments but they visit lessons rarely. Governors have a detailed schedule for monitoring aspects of the school's management and provision, for example, they challenge and influence the draft school development plan. They play a less effective role in planning for the school's future development. Overall, their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses is good.
64. The school has made good provision to ensure equality of opportunity and has been active in tackling areas of weakness. For example, information on results has highlighted a gap between the achievements of boys and girls that is wider than the average. The school has invested heavily in the training necessary to implement strategies to address this problem. Senior managers have been prepared to take difficult decisions, for example, the shift to setting with groups having a balance of boys and girls.
65. The special educational needs co-ordinator is well qualified and is involved with co-ordinators from other schools in planning the introduction of the revised Code of Practice. There are strengths in the support provided in small group withdrawal sessions and in the provision made in some subjects, most notably design and technology. The team of learning support assistants has been increased since the last inspection and an induction programme has been developed. Most undertake additional training and individually work hard to provide support in lessons. However, the management of special educational needs provision is not maximising its potential to support pupils with special educational needs. There is not enough liaison between subject departments and the Learning Support Department to ensure that support is targeted as effectively as it could be and thus that pupils are supported as well as possible. The information available to subject staff is of limited value in planning work. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, for example at GCSE is not routinely evaluated. The monitoring of effectiveness of provision is an area for further development. This area has not improved significantly since the last inspection.
66. Overall, the school makes good use of new technology. Its use for administrative purposes is very effective. Heads of subject and year heads have unrestricted access to the technology to maintain and interrogate their records. The very valuable bank of data which has been compiled to monitor pupils' academic and personal development is accessible to all staff. Lessons in the lower school ensure that pupils have the skills necessary to use ICT in their learning and there are good opportunities in Years 10 and 11 for them to build on these. A particularly strong aspect of the school's resources is the number of computers available for pupils' use. The computer to pupil ratio is well above the national average at 1:5. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply these skills in all subjects.
67. Overall provision for staffing is satisfactory. The match of qualified teachers to their curriculum responsibilities, and non-teaching staff to the various demands of the school and its curriculum, is appropriate in most departments. Recruitment problems, beyond the control of the school, are having an impact. For example, the staffing of the science department has been particularly difficult and there are not enough specialist teachers of ICT to meet the curriculum demands in Years 7 to 9. The senior management and heads of department have worked very hard and with considerable success to ensure

that the education of the pupils has not been significantly affected. Some creative appointments have eased the situation.

68. The school has very good arrangements in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school. It offers a very good level of subject guidance and support, complemented by the school's provision for professional development. The school's graduate training programme is successful.
69. The school's procedures for managing its finances are very good. The head teacher retains responsibility for budgeting and an assistant head teacher manages finances on a day-to-day basis. As a result, budgeting is carefully linked to educational priorities for both the main school and the sixth form. The school development plan is thoroughly costed; after careful scrutiny, departmental needs are generously met. The governing body maintains a careful watch on the school's finances, which are externally audited each year. The head teacher has shown great initiative in securing grants, which have proved of considerable benefit in several recent building projects. Clerical, maintenance, catering and cleaning staff are directly employed by the school, which reduces the costs and enables the school to manage directly its human resources. All grants are scrupulously spent for their intended purpose. The school is careful to secure good value for all of its expenditure. The school has shown particular financial awareness and acumen in balancing financial and educational priorities while successfully establishing its sixth form over the past four years. They are very good at achieving best value in the provision of resources and facilities, but not quite as clear about how to evaluate the extent to which the school gives good value for money.
70. Accommodation is very good overall and much improved since the time of the last inspection, a result of the efficient and imaginative use of the funds available. The current building programme will provide a new library, improved facilities for special needs and increased access to the curriculum for pupils with physical disabilities. The buildings themselves, and the surrounding grounds, are well maintained and include many good features. The teaching rooms of the faculties are located close to each other and in most cases this helps promote effective departmental working. The PE department makes good use of the gymnasium, sports hall and other outdoor facilities. The accommodation provided for business education, modern languages and ICT is very good. However, a few aspects are less than satisfactory. Some history and geography lessons are in rooms dispersed about the site and teachers spend time moving resources and equipment. There is no soundproofing in any of the music rooms and some classes are not taught in the music rooms.
71. The overall level of resources in the school is good. Some departments, such as ICT and modern foreign languages, make particularly effective use of a very good range of resources. Most departments have good resources or at least sufficient to teach the national curriculum and for examination requirements. The effective teaching of religious education is constrained by the unsatisfactory resources provided. The library is small but provides an interesting and welcoming environment, though the number and range of books is limited.
72. This is a well-led and managed school with some very strong features. One major issue, that of the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is not within the school's control. The school's plans for development are appropriate; the staff are strongly committed to the further development of the school. The school has a good capacity for further development.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

73. The sixth form is led and managed very well. The head of sixth form is newly appointed and has clear ideas about the future development of the sixth form. The strategic management is the responsibility of the senior management team. Governors are committed to the success of the sixth form. They share the

vision for a fully open access sixth form with a flexible curriculum that meets the needs of the students and is cost effective. They have been largely successful in achieving this. Students have been provided with a good range of AS and vocational courses, which enable those students who so chose, to continue their studies to A Level. The school's aims and values are reflected well in the work of the sixth form. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity.

74. New courses for the forthcoming year are planned as a result of discussions with Year 11 pupils. These include performing arts, leisure and tourism and a diploma of childcare. Good monitoring systems have recently been established with tighter monitoring of students' academic progress. Results are increasingly compiled and analysed and decisions are made on the basis of this evidence. A new early warning system to identify potentially disillusioned students is working well. Students now take part in a progress report to discuss their personal targets every five weeks.
75. Staffing problems prior to the appointment of the new head of sixth form resulted in some lack of motivation from students and staff and had a negative impact on standards. However, students now appreciate the care for their personal welfare shown by tutors and the head and deputy head of sixth form. The match of teaching staff to the sixth form curriculum is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified to teach sixth form subjects. There is an extensive programme of professional development that results in teachers having good knowledge of the latest developments in their subjects.
76. Accommodation for the sixth form is very good. However, most of the teaching is delivered in mainstream accommodation. Resources are generally good. They are very good in modern languages, and ICT. The ratio of computers to students is well above the national figure and there is very good access to computers for independent learning. The very good equipment for AS and A Level PE is having a positive effect on standards. The music technology equipment is good quality and the recording studio is well used by sixth formers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To continue the drive to raise standards the governors, head teacher and staff should work together to:

- (1) Raise attainment and achievement in English by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can be expected to achieve, particularly in written work, through
 - Adopting a more unified approach to planning and teaching so that teachers share expertise and good practice,
 - Implementing more consistent approach to the marking of work to give pupils more guidance on how to improve,
 - More systematic monitoring of teaching and learning by the head of department,
 - A better co-ordinated approach to the teaching of literacy skills;

Paragraphs 5, 24, 31, 83, 84, 85
- (2) Make more systematic use in most subjects, of assessment information and the evaluation of test and GCSE results to track pupils' attainment, and plan work;

Paragraphs 23,62,84,93,103,125,171,189
- (3) Ensure a whole school approach to and specific planning for the development and application of numeracy and ICT skills;

Paragraphs 5, 24, 31 ,96, 94, 117,133, 135, 139, 171, 176, 180
- (3) Improve the management of special educational needs provision to maximise its potential for supporting pupils by
 - Better liaison with subject departments over the deployment of learning support assistants,
 - Better information for teaching staff on the specific needs of individual pupils and guidance on appropriate strategies to meet these needs,
 - Evaluation of the effectiveness of provision through better analysis of pupils' progress and examination results.

Paragraphs 6, 28, 49, 65, 81

Sixth form

- (1) Make more systematic use of assessment information and the evaluation of previous results to track pupils' attainment and plan work;

Paragraphs 30, 51,193, 239
- (2) Improve the quality of careers education and guidance to ensure that students a secure basis for planning their future education or employment.

Paragraphs 45, 52

In addition the governors should consider including the following issues in their action plan to

- (1) Improve the timetable to reduce the number of split classes and improve the distribution of lessons so that different groups have a comparable timetable;

Paragraphs 32, 59,83,107,127,134
- (2) Improve the implementation of the school's policy on collective worship in tutor time

Paragraph 39
- (3) Ensure that the arrangement for RE in the sixth form fully meet requirements

Paragraph 43

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	176
	Sixth form	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		60

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	33	68	61	10	0	0
Percentage	2	19	39	34	6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	10	24	16	0	0	0
Percentage	4	19	46	31	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1274	173
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	182	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	284	9

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2000/2001.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	133	131	264

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	85	92
	Girls	88	95	90
	Total	142	180	182
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (75)	68 (71)	69 (55)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (29)	29 (41)	24 (17)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	79	95
	Girls	101	78	91
	Total	188	157	186
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (57)	64 (81)	71 (61)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (23)	44 (47)	20 (13)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	125	122	127

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*- C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	48	105	119
	Girls	63	109	116
	Total	111	214	235
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	45 (39)	87 (93)	95 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.4
	National	39

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS Level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	38	40	78

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15	13	14	4	5	4.5
National	17	18	17.5	n/a	n/a	n/a

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	16	100
	National	n/a	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	5
White	1432
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	79.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	177

Deployment of teachers: Y 7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
---	----

Average teaching group size: Y 7– Y13

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	3575796
Total expenditure	3647171
Expenditure per pupil	2645
Balance brought forward from previous year	194569
Balance carried forward to next year	523167

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	38.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	45.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	8
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1441
Number of questionnaires returned	588

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	24	61	11	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	29	60	8	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	62	9	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	50	21	6	2
The teaching is good.	17	68	10	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	49	23	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	48	11	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	49	22	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	23	57	10	4	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	62	10	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	58	7	2	9

The greatest area of parental concern was over teacher shortages, particularly in science. Not all parents were convinced that the school was doing enough to minimise the impact of this, however the inspection evidence indicates that the school continues to work hard to ensure that recruitment difficulties do not unduly affect pupils' education.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**, but with some significant weaknesses

Strengths

- Much teaching is good and teachers work hard individually to help pupils succeed
- Pupils' behaviour is good.
- Good links with primary schools are helping to develop literacy provision in Year 7
- Small group teaching of lower-attainers in Year 7 has enabled their good progress

Areas for development

- Standards are not high enough.
- There is no consistent departmental strategy for raising standards
- Teachers need to make more use of assessment information to help pupils learn
- Pupils' are over-reliant on the teachers and lack confidence in learning independently.

77. In 2001, the results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 were the lowest for five years. They were below schools nationally, especially at the higher levels, but close to results in schools with pupils from a similar background. They were lower than at the time of the last inspection, particularly girls' results, and lower than results in mathematics and science. However, there has been much fluctuation over the last five years. In 2000, for example, results were well above national figures.
78. In lessons and work seen, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is below average. Pupils are most successful in speaking, though their contributions and answers to questions are usually expressed briefly. When teachers structure oral lessons with care, pupils are polite, listen, and respond well to each other. They rise to the challenge when the teachers' questions are skilful and the expectation of the task is to think more deeply. Pupils enjoy reading aloud. Lower attainers in Year 9, helped by a tape recording, made a reasonable attempt at reading and understanding Shakespeare's 'Macbeth', in preparation for examination. By the end of Year 9, the higher attainers explain plot and motives in their work on literature and write at length about personal experiences. Middle and lower attainers' writing is far less developed, especially when teachers' demands are not high enough. Pupils spend too much time colouring pictures, drawing cartoon storyboards and responding in single word answers to comprehension exercises. Some teachers encourage thorough drafting and editing but this is not universal and pupils of all attainment would benefit from working on their writing to produce final pieces that are their individual best.
79. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly below average in English and results have deteriorated since the last inspection. The proportion gaining at least a pass was in line with the national average, but fewer attained the higher grades. Pupils did less well in English than in most of their other subjects. Boys' results were particularly low. The gap between boys and girls was much wider than when the same pupils were tested in Year 9 and wider than the gap nationally. Boys have been under-achieving. About half the pupils in Year 11 took GCSE English literature in 2001 and achieved results above the national average. However, comparisons must allow for the proportion of the year entered being much lower than by schools nationally.
80. The evidence of pupils' work and lessons observed show that by Year 11 standards are satisfactory and have improved since last year. The concentration on GCSE helps pupils focus on specific tasks and they understand the requirements of the examination. Higher-attaining pupils respond well to literature and this is evident in their writing as well as in their discussion in class. They contrast different literature skilfully, and are able to draw on quotation to support their views. Discussing Andrew Marvell's poem, 'To His

Coy Mistress', Year 11 pupils increased their understanding of the poem and reflected on its secondary meanings as a result of the sensitive but probing style of the teacher's questioning. However, on other occasions, pupils have little opportunity to engage with or think about the ideas in front of them, because the teacher directs the pupils to find a 'right' answer. This is a factor in pupils' lack of initiative and intellectual effort, a passive dependence on the teacher and dull written work. Pupils of all abilities are forthcoming in discussion, though when lessons lack structure, they can become rowdy. Lower-attaining pupils' work is less developed. Weak literacy skills restrict their writing and presentation is often disorganised, with a lack of planning and paragraphing. Writing frames, first sentence prompts and more detailed marking of drafts by some teachers could improve this.

81. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in English and many have serious reading and writing difficulties. Pupils' achievement in English is unsatisfactory by the present Year 9, but satisfactory with faster progress in Years 10 and 11. Currently, lower-attaining pupils are making good progress in Year 7 in response to the newly introduced small group teaching. Year 7 literacy lessons, which link with pupils' experiences in primary school, are well focused in a structured 60 minutes. However, many pupils find it difficult to concentrate when faced with 80 minute lessons. Nevertheless, the good progress made in Year 7 indicates a better foundation and rising standards. Progress through Years 8 and 9 is relatively slow, and continuity in work is hindered by some pupils having two or even three different teachers for English during the week. Moving into Years 10 and 11, pupils work with more interest, the pace is faster, but the goal of examination success does not always produce the most inspiring teaching. The progress of pupils with special educational needs varies, though for most it is satisfactory. Some are in relatively large classes and receive little individual help. When the support given matches their needs, achievement is satisfactory.
82. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are satisfactory. Some pupils claim English is a favourite subject; others strongly disagree. Largely, their level of interest depends on who teaches them. The seating of boys next to girls sets a good pattern for behaviour that continues throughout the school.
83. The teaching observed was satisfactory overall, much was good and, occasionally, it was very good. Lessons were most effective where teachers were confident, were focused on clear lesson objectives and allowed the pupils an element of individual interpretation. Pupils learned well when teachers used praise to encourage and reward. The purposeful teaching meant that learning was satisfactory overall, although some pupils were difficult to manage and over-reliant on adult help. English teachers give good support to the non-specialists, who mostly contribute well to the teaching of the subject. The main weakness observed was the lack of cohesion within the department, and this over time has a detrimental impact on learning, especially when different teachers share classes. Marking is too variable: teachers would benefit from identifying the good practice within the department which emphasises pupils' targets for improvement, and by adhering to the same school marking procedures. The well-supervised library, and its development in a much larger space, is a promising start to improved support for pupils' research using books and the Internet. The use of ICT is developing though difficulty of access to specialist rooms limits whole class use.
84. As in the last inspection, the quality of monitoring and assessment, both at pupil and subject level, is underdeveloped. Teachers tend to work as individuals, they do not plan together and do not share good practice. Teaching and learning are not monitored systematically enough and not enough use is made of assessment information. The department does not have a detailed departmental plan of action designed to raise standards and results have not improved since the last inspection. However, indications of better improvement are evident in the new literacy initiatives in Year 7, and in the priorities in tackling underachievement in GCSE, especially of boys.

85. Across the curriculum, standards in literacy are satisfactory overall, with strengths in some subjects and weaknesses in others. In general, progress in literacy is very dependent on the efforts of the various departments and there is not yet a whole school approach to teaching the reading and writing demands of their subjects and this restricts all round progress. Teachers are aware that pupils' learning is held back by their difficulties in literacy and key words are displayed in most classrooms and in art, for example, they are clearly defined and regularly used. In history, geography and physical education, there is very good use of literacy skills, which results in high standards of written work.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9
- Pupils gain good skills in routine work in number and algebra
- Pupils mostly behave well and have positive attitudes
- Some teachers are very enthusiastic and effectively motivate the pupils
- Most lessons include an effective starter and activities that consolidate pupils' knowledge and skills

Areas for improvement

- The use of a wider variety of learning activities and resources to extend pupils' understanding of mathematical ideas and their ability to apply mathematics
- Improved precision and rigour in the teaching of mathematics
- Extending the use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics
- Improved arrangements for staffing and timetabling, especially for lower sets in Year 7
- Co-ordination of and staff training for numeracy across other subjects.

86. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9, having entered the school in Year 7 with standards overall that are below average. The results for Year 9 in 2001 were in line with the national average compared with both all schools and with similar schools. Results have risen broadly in line with the national trend since the last inspection. Over the last three years there has been no significant difference in the performance of boys compared with girls, and Year 9 results in mathematics have been better than those in English.
87. Evidence from pupils' work and lessons illustrates that standards overall at the end of Year 9 are in line with those expected. Higher and middle-attaining pupils are good at routine methods such as decimal calculations, solving simple equations or finding areas of parallelograms. Most lower-attaining pupils have sound calculation skills with whole numbers, can name simple shapes and angles, and can collect data and draw simple charts. Achievement overall in Years 7 to 9 is good.
88. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. The mathematics GCSE results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national averages compared with both all schools and with similar schools. Results have risen very slightly since the last inspection. The school enters an above-average proportion of pupils for GCSE mathematics. Although there has been little significant difference in the performance of boys compared with girls, the girls did slightly better than boys in 2001. GCSE mathematics results in 2001 were better than those in English.
89. Evidence from pupils' work and lessons indicates that standards overall in Years 10 and 11 are average and their achievement is satisfactory. The higher-attaining pupils are accurate in manipulating algebraic expressions and calculating in statistics or trigonometry. The work of some middle-attaining pupils includes much practice of algebra and trigonometry. Lower-attaining pupils usefully experience a range of mathematics, although their skills with multiplication tables and calculation methods are less secure.

Overall pupils carry out more work on routine methods than exploration or problem solving. Although they tackle some investigations in lessons and for coursework, pupils are weaker in understanding ideas and in applying mathematics than routine methods in number and algebra.

90. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in lessons, and results for the lower-achieving pupils generally reflect this. However, some of the current timetable arrangements are unsatisfactory. For example the very large lower sets in Year 7 do not provide well for the individual needs of pupils. Pupils who are gifted in mathematics are beginning to have good opportunities, for example from additional after-school sessions and from involvement in national mathematics contests. More precision and rigour in teaching is needed to cater fully for such pupils, and this would be indicated by more pupils achieving GCSE grades A* or A. Overall, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes. In most lessons pupils were sensible and co-operative. A good feature was the perseverance of pupils over the long, 80-minute lessons. Pupils responded very well to teachers who made learning fun through a variety of activities including mathematical games.
91. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some very good teaching in Years 10 and 11. Partly because of the need for additional staffing in support groups (Springboard 7), over twenty teachers are currently involved in teaching mathematics. Their expertise and experience vary considerably, and this affects the quality of teaching and learning. Most lessons start well with an effective mental exercise and the best teaching involves a variety of activities, including practical work, discussion and exploration as well as teacher explanation and practice. A Year 9 class gained a good understanding of transforming graphs because the idea was explored in many ways. These included drawing quick sketches, pupils explaining answers and even the whole class standing up and making shapes of graphs of different equations. Although only rarely were pupils asked to discuss mathematical ideas with each other, they often had to explain their answers at the board. This worthwhile activity helped with understanding ideas and methods. The better teaching also recognised the literacy needs of pupils, often focused on key words. Relations between staff and pupils are good, and the enthusiasm, energy and sense of enjoyment that some staff put into their teaching are particular strengths.
92. Though satisfactory overall there were some weaknesses in teaching which are reflected in the recorded work and pupils' understanding of ideas. Insufficient attention is given to accuracy and rigour in the teaching. For example the naming of some shapes and aspects of symmetry were imprecise, and some teaching of graphs and gradients was not thorough enough. Teachers sometimes made insufficient use of a variety of resources, often relying too heavily on textbook exercises. Teaching about measurement and geometry was less effective than routine number work. Too little use was made of practical resources such as prepared materials, squared paper or demonstration with an overhead projector.
93. Overall, marking and assessment are sound. The availability of computer data to track the progress of pupils is a strength. The marking of work varies in quality and pupils need more guidance about how to improve. The analysis of assessment data, especially the use of value-added information, needs further development to help evaluate provision.
94. Leadership and management within mathematics have been effective in maintaining standards over a period of changes in staffing and courses. However, there are some areas for improvement. There is no clear and shared understanding about what is effective teaching and learning in mathematics. Monitoring and evaluation within the department are too informal, and the department development plan is not an effective tool to aid further improvement. The department recognises the need to plan better use of ICT within mathematics lessons. Although there are good numbers of computers and printers, these resources are under-used. Teacher expertise and provision of software need further improvement.

95. Since the last inspection improvement has been broadly satisfactory as standards in mathematics have been maintained and there have been good developments, such as the development of sixth form courses and the introduction of the national numeracy strategy in Years 7 to 9. Although many points for development from the last report remain, the department now has the capacity to improve and build on provision that is currently satisfactory.
96. The co-ordination of numeracy across other subjects is weak at present. The development of numeracy skills is too dependent on the efforts of individual subjects. In mathematics, numeracy skills are satisfactory. Pupils show competence in graph work in science and in collecting and interpreting data in technology, such as in the evaluation of food products. The use of numeracy in geography is satisfactory through work on drawing and interpreting graph, although pupils have too few opportunities to collect, analyse and present data. However, in business studies in Years 10 and 11, numeracy is a weakness. The school plans to provide appropriate staff training for numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Good management of the department has limited the effect of difficult circumstances
- Detailed schemes of work and supporting resources and accommodation
- Behaviour and relationships
- Strengths of the good and better teaching
- Use of data to track pupils' progress

Areas for improvement

- Staffing including technical support
- The large size of lower school sets
- Inconsistency of teaching including a lack of challenge for the most able
- Low literacy levels of pupils
- Lack of development of cross curricular ICT

97. Pupils enter the school with below average knowledge, skills and understanding. Their results in the 2001 Year 9 tests were close to the national average and better than those of similar schools. Boys performed slightly better than girls. Results in science were similar to mathematics and better than English. Over the last three years, results have broadly followed the national trend but performance improved in 2001. This represents good achievement. Staffing difficulties are starting to affect standards and in the current Year 9, the attainment is below the national average and achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Some lessons were taught by cover staff and although these lessons were satisfactory, pupils had to work from books and could not experience the same stimulus as those taught in very good lessons. For example pupils in a top set worked from a book answering questions about environmental pollution. The work was a comprehension exercise and although pupils worked willingly, they found the work unchallenging. In a very good lesson, pupils from a middle set were fully engaged plotting time/distance graphs. The teacher had structured the learning so that all pupils were able to understand the work and progress at their own rate.
98. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were close to the national average and pupils achieved at a satisfactory level. The percentages of A* to C grades in double science was close to the national average. Boys and girls performed similarly. School data shows that in terms of the amount of progress they had made, the lower-attainers did better than the higher-attainers. Results in the single science examination were just below the national average. The standards of pupils in the current Year 11 are also close to the national average. In a lesson on reflection, pupils in a top set did practical work on

reflection. During discussion, though the group was performing close to the national level, pupils lacked a sense of urgency and needed reminding of work they had done earlier with a different teacher. In a very good lesson, a low ability set following a single science course worked with great enthusiasm on the origins of the universe. They asked questions and wondered how the sun could burn since there was no oxygen in space. Orally pupils were working close to the national average. In the written work seen all pupils had difficulties expressing their ideas when writing up investigations, making grammatical and spelling mistakes.

99. Pupils have a good attitude to science. They showed that they were keen and willing to learn. When given the opportunity, they showed curiosity about scientific ideas and were willing to take responsibility for their own learning. They behaved well in the majority of classes, even if the work was unchallenging.
100. Overall the teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the good or very good lessons, teachers used their very good subject knowledge to structure learning so that pupils of all abilities could understand the lesson. The range of activities they used ensured a good pace to the lesson and they challenged pupils to think. Pupils responded well and showed that they were interested and enthusiastic learners. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, a middle set worked close to the national standard during a lesson on microscopes. Pupils worked collaboratively and took responsibility for their own learning as they discussed the properties of cells. Pupils in a single science set in Year 10 worked well on an investigation using different materials as insulators. The support assistant moved to points of need thus helping pupils to avoid frustration that could have caused them to go off task. In some lessons pupils were encouraged to think for themselves. In one lesson with a middle set, pupils worked on aspects of the solar system. They showed interest in the video and used the Internet to find information about different planets. Only a third of the pupils were able to copy information into word in order to edit it. The rest made notes using pen and paper.
101. The teachers managed their classrooms well and good relationships ensured that the pupils were able to answer questions with confidence. Pupils with special educational needs are included in all science lessons. They are helped to teach by their support teachers who are well used. They make satisfactory progress in both key stages as is shown by their placement in appropriate ability sets and the A*-G results being close to national averages
102. Where teaching was unsatisfactory as in a Year 7 lesson where a top set worked on ideas of burning, the lessons lacked pace and the work was unchallenging. Pupils went off task and were not thinking about their work. In the weaker lessons, although relationships remained good, tasks were often not matched well enough to pupils' needs and sometimes teachers talked for long periods. Pupils lost their focus in such lessons and the pace slowed. In a few unsatisfactory lessons, the pupils went off task and became noisy. They did not make as much progress as they could have done. The variation in teaching also meant that some lower sets were working at a higher level than higher sets.
103. Marking of work was inconsistent. Pupils responded well to detail marking with helpful comments from teachers. The quality of work produced by the same pupil varied from teacher to teacher. However the staff have access to a very good range of data which helps them track pupils' progress, and set challenging, yet appropriate targets.
104. The management of the science department is good in difficult circumstances. The detailed scheme of work has enabled new and temporary teachers to continue to teach the science curriculum. Resources have been deployed to ensure that examination groups are taught appropriately. This has inevitably led to more cover in lower school classes which is having a detrimental effect. However new staff have been appointed and this should help to improve teaching further. The accommodation for the subject is good and the material resources are adequate. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. It

has tackled all points successfully and has improved achievement. It has also introduced three sixth form courses for which numbers are growing.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall the provision in art and design is good.

Strengths

- Pupils' good achievement in Years 7-9 and very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers' good management of pupils' behaviour
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and effective lesson planning
- The quality of teaching is good at Years 7 to 9 and very good at Years 10 and 11

Areas for improvement

- Years 7 to 9 schemes of work that more closely reflect the revised National Curriculum
- Giving pupils in Years 7-9 more information about what will be assessed in each unit of work
- Providing improved access to information and communication technology in all years

105. Most Year 7 pupils have limited skills and some have experienced a fairly narrow art and design curriculum in their primary schools. The 2001 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed attainment to be above expectations. On the basis of the work provided by the school of pupils currently in Year 9, these assessments may have been over-generous. Most pupils are working at average levels for their age.
106. All pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs. In a Year 7 lesson pupils demonstrated very good attitudes and benefited from the teacher's skilful organisation and planning. As the lesson progressed pupils were able to understand how they could make their own patterns using the techniques that Escher used. Pupils in a high attaining set in Year 8 were able to name the complementary colours and use a subject specific language to describe accurately how they were selecting the elements that made up their final composition. Pupils confidently used specialist language to explain and interpret artists' work. In a Year 9 class pupils studying paintings by Picasso, were able to describe the characteristics of cubism, picking out the fragmented violin and still life objects. They were very well supported in these descriptions by a dictionary of subject specific words and terms displayed around the room. There was not enough time for the teacher to help pupils recognise the artist's use of multiple viewpoints and for pupils to apply this to their own work. Nevertheless a very good start had been made towards achieving an understanding of the artist and his work that would be picked up again in subsequent lessons.
107. However because most lessons are single periods, pupils do not have enough time to apply what they have learnt to their own art work. In single lessons only fifteen or twenty minutes remain for practical work. As a result the skills of refining, finishing, evaluating and modifying are under developed, particularly in three-dimensional work. A further disadvantage is that the two or three single periods each week are often split between different teachers. Despite this teachers do what they can to ensure the breadth of the curriculum is not lost. For example in one class pupils prepared the first stages of their clay and wire models based on their interpretation of Giacometti's work. Computers are used mainly for research rather than a tool to manipulate images and access to computers is limited.
108. Attainment in GCSE examinations has been well above average for several years. In 2001 there were no A* grades but a very high percentage of A-C grades. There are no significant differences of achievement between boys and girls, both achieve well. Overall achievement in art is very good. In lessons the work of the current Year 11 pupils shows similar standards and very good achievement.

109. All students, including those with learning difficulties, were making very good progress. Portfolios have examples of a good range of two-dimensional work and show the quality of drawing to be very good. Pupils are very interested in the work of surrealist artists and in a Year 11 lesson they demonstrated an awareness of the symbols and reoccurring images used by Dali. Some offered suggestions as to the meaning and significance and could give examples where the same image had been used in other paintings. The teacher provided an effective balance of instruction, questioning, and exploration of text and images. Once the practical work is underway pupils concentrate hard and work in silence. Examination groups benefit from very good teaching. Although the classes are shared between two teachers, pupils' progress is closely monitored. All pupils are on course to meet or exceed their target grades.
110. Teaching and learning are good overall and in Years 10 and 11 they are very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very strong. There is a good rapport with pupils that leads to positive working relationships. There is a strong work ethic particularly in Years 10 and 11. In lessons where pupils are guided by teachers' very good questioning, they learn very well. They are prompted to use the language precisely and to give extended answers. The structure of the lessons was very effective in contributing to improvements in standards of literacy. At the end of most lessons a brief summary effectively consolidates learning.
111. Pupils are keen to learn and they work hard. Some lower ability sets present challenging behaviour but generally they very well managed through well-structured lessons that include a mix of whole class question and answer and individual practical work. Maximum use is made of the available time. Very good use is made of resources particularly reproductions of artists' work. The library has a very good selection of books for loan and is well used by staff and pupils. There are no regular planned visits to major galleries to give pupils a wider appreciation of the breadth of the subject. However exhibitions of pupils' work showing good standards of drawing help to raise pupils' expectations. Pupils in examination groups receive very good quality information on their progress and target grades but this has not been the case for younger pupils. Pupils would benefit from having information about National Curriculum levels both to help them gain a better picture of their attainment in relation to their other subjects and to give them information on how to improve.
112. Leadership and management are sound. Improvement since the last inspection is sound overall. Opportunities to consider art from western and non-western cultures make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding. Staff training in the use of ICT is well under way, but there are still problems of access to computers and suitable software. Documentation and the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 need to be revised to more closely reflect the recent changes to the National Curriculum and assessment. Pupils are not provided with sketchbooks so this aspect of the National Curriculum is greatly under developed. However, the major areas for improvement have been recognised and staff training is planned.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The standards achieved at GCSE, particularly in textiles
- Good teaching by a strong team of committed teachers is enabling all pupils to achieve well in all aspects of design and technology
- Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour
- Well-structured courses and programmes of work
- Good accommodation and resources

Areas for improvement

- More detailed planning for the progressive development of knowledge and skills, including literacy, numeracy and use of computers
- To improve the provision of computer aided design and manufacturing equipment to enable the design and technology national curriculum requirements for ICT to be met

113. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been in line with or just above those reported nationally and current work indicates that these standards are being maintained. The overall GCSE results for design and technology subjects have been consistently above the national average and better than at the last inspection. All pupils achieve well and the higher attaining girls, who regularly chose textiles, attain standards well above the national average. In 2001, the proportion gaining A* to C grades continued to be above the national average in all subjects, and for textiles, it was well above. Though both boys and girls are achieving well relative to the national results and are doing slightly better in design and technology than other subjects, girls are doing better than the boys.
114. Pupils' current work in Years 7 to 9 shows standards in line with the national expectation. Standards in both designing and making are satisfactory. Pupils are developing sound levels of technical knowledge, communication skills and skills in designing and making. The quality of research, analysis, development of ideas and presentation improves as pupils move through the key stage and is very good for the higher attaining pupils. Practical work is good in all materials and there is good application of knowledge, sound use of tools and equipment and an emphasis on good quality outcomes. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, respond well to structured learning activities and as a result make good progress and achieve well.
115. Current work in Years 10 and 11 indicates that standards are good overall. The structured approach to course work is enabling all pupils to meet the requirements of the examination well. In the best folders the quality of research, analysis, and development and evaluation of ideas is very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils understand how materials and components can be used safely, effectively and sometimes creatively whilst developing their ideas and skills. Presentation of work is often very good and some computer-generated work is used effectively in many coursework folders. Practical work is often very good because a range of skills are used well to produce well finished products which meet the specifications set out in design work. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, those of lower prior attainment and those on the ASDAN course, make good progress. They are well supported by the structured programmes of work and assessment procedures in place, and their positive attitudes enable them to apply their technical abilities well.
116. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils research their work by using both books and the Internet and often produce well-presented annotated drawings of their ideas. In Year 7, pupils had learnt how to make a flashing badge by assembling electronic components. Year 8, experimented with different fabric decoration techniques and used these to design and make cushions based on an African or Indian theme. In Year 9, pupils extend their designing and making skills through tasks which build up their knowledge and skills, and through more extended designing and making projects. For example, some studied technological influences on the food in their diet by comparing convenience food with home made pizzas. In the robot project, pupils learnt the principles of making working models, research ideas and methods of control by using the Internet, as an integral part of the process for designing and making their own working models. Pupils' recorded work shows increasing depth of research and good drawing, presentational and evaluation skills. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through Years 10 and 11. All courses are well structured and enable all pupils to address the requirements of the examination systematically. All pupils gain and apply knowledge very effectively in well-researched and presented design folders. Many achieve good standards and the work of higher attaining pupils is sometimes very good.

117. Overall, teaching is good and sometimes it is very good. All teachers have good technical knowledge, which is reflected in demonstrations and their individual support of pupils. Teachers give clear explanations and ask focused questions that reinforce pupil's learning well. Overall planning is good, however, the planning of some individual lessons could be improved by setting more clearly defined targets for pupils' work that are based on proposed marking schemes. In the vast majority of lessons, time is used well. Pupils are managed well and teachers use a range of teaching methods very effectively. For example, in a Year 8, textiles technology lesson, a good initial presentation by the teacher clearly reinforced pupils' existing knowledge. Targeted questions enabled pupils to make informed responses before moving quickly and effectively into their practical activity. They were sharing workspaces well and demonstrating good use of materials and equipment. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are being addressed through oral and written work but more could be done to plan specifically for this in schemes of work. The use of computers is increasing but this is still an area for development. Good marking and assessment procedures are in place and include good support and discussion with pupils' about their work. In Years 10 and 11 the regular assessment, with written comments, is very effective in enabling pupils to improve their work.
118. Pupils have very positive attitudes and they settle to work quickly in most lessons. They respond very well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour, are keen to do well and feel secure and supported in their work. Levels of concentration are high and pupils respond well when given opportunities to organise their own work and act more independently. Many Year 10 and 11 pupils spend considerable time and effort outside of lessons in improving their work. The success of lower-attaining and potentially disruptive pupils, is a positive reflection of the good teaching they receive and the effort and concentration that they give to their work.
119. Leadership and management are good and the improvement since the last inspection has been good. Close co-operation between teachers is enabling good courses to be developed and standards to be raised. Departmental documentation is good and there is a very positive approach to monitoring the development and improvement of the subject. Teachers are very well deployed to make best use of their strengths. Accommodation is good. It is used well and there are very good displays of pupils' work. Access to computers is good but the lack of equipment for computer aided design and manufacturing is preventing this aspect of the design and technology National Curriculum from being delivered.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning in all years
- The achievement of pupils
- The high attainment of boys and girls at Key Stage 4

Areas for improvement

- The inconsistent marking of pupils work. Pupils are given too little guidance on how to improve.
- The relatively low number of pupils opting to take the subject at Key Stage 4
- The incidence of shared groups at Key Stage 3
- The attainment of boys at Key Stage 3

120. Pupils join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding which are below the national average. Their work showed that a significant proportion of Year 7 have problems with written work, though, as seen in a lesson on change and settlement, they made very good progress in their understanding of the ideas covered and orally they could express this clearly and accurately. In 2001, the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed standards to be in line with the national expectations. At this stage girls outperform boys by a wider margin than that reported nationally.

121. The work of pupils in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection reflected the teacher assessments. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. They are able to apply a developing range of skills in their studies of places and themes, for example, Year 9 were able to identify the positive and negative effects of tourism in Kenya, relating these to the social and cultural values of that nation. Lower attaining pupils in the same year made equally good progress. While a Year 8 class showed a developing understanding of water storage and flow as they studied deforestation in the Italian Alps.
122. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. In 2001, they were very high when compared with national results. Pupils achieved very well and did better in geography than in almost any other subject. A notable feature of the results was the high proportion of pupils who achieved the higher grades A and B. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls was significantly less than that reported nationally and in other subjects in the school. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that current standards are above the national average in Year 11 and pupils are achieving well. The variation between current standards and previous results reflects differences in the year groups. Unfortunately, the number opting for this subject at the end of Year 9 has fallen dramatically over recent years.
123. In Years 8 and 9, pupils are taught in sets. Pupils in a top set made very good progress as they studied the impact of tourism on the society and culture of Kenya. The work provided excellent opportunities for these higher attaining pupils apply their very good skills. In another Year 9 set, low attaining pupils made excellent progress as they used data to draw a map of population density in Tenerife, improving their skills and recognising the relationship between population density and centres of tourism. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because teachers are aware of their individual requirements and adjust the teaching and learning accordingly.
124. The teaching and learning of geography are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and effective class management skills. They have a clear understanding of the National Curriculum, examination requirements and what pupils need to do to succeed. This makes their teaching particularly effective at all stages. They have high yet realistic expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, and make these very clear. Questioning at the beginning and end of each lesson checks understanding and links the work with that done previously. The consistent emphasis on developing literacy skills, for example the use of key words, was a feature of all lessons. This helps pupils to use geographical vocabulary more confidently when answering questions and in writing.
125. As a result of the interest generated by the teaching pupils are able to sustain their concentration and complete a considerable amount of work during lessons. Homework is set regularly. The very good teaching of subject skills and the frequent challenge of written and oral-work leads to a growing independence as pupils progress through the years. Their attitudes and behaviour are good overall and often very good. The only relative weakness in teaching relates to assessment. Teachers mark pupils' books regularly, but the quality of marking is inconsistent and pupils are provided with too little guidance on how to improve their work.
126. The contribution of ICT to learning in this subject and the opportunities for pupils to practise their skills is certainly satisfactory and improving. The department makes good use of the available resources. In a lesson on the 'Arctic National Wildlife Reserve', Year 11 pupils demonstrated very good skills as they sought information and processed their findings.
127. Geography is well managed. The specialist teachers work well as a team. Reliable data is being used to predict attainment, to monitor the progress of pupils and, with the observation of lessons, to evaluate teaching. Detailed schemes of work are being developed in order to provide more opportunities for fieldwork, information communication technology and the promotion of numerical skills. The teaching of

too many groups in the lower school is shared; teachers having to work hard to lessen the impact on learning. The head of department has clear priorities and a commitment to improvement that is shared by the team. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Well above average GCSE results in 2001
- Good teaching strongly supports pupils in improving and achieving well and teaches the subject in a way that increases its popularity
- A cohesive and well run department that has secured good improvement
- High quality resources have an impact upon learning, homework and revision.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities to use computers or improve numeracy skills while learning history
- Imbalance in the organisation of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9
- Not enough opportunities for extra curricular activity or fieldwork

128. In 2001 teacher assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 were above average. This slightly overestimated standards. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is close to average. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9, with their standards rising from a little below average when they enter the school. They develop a sound knowledge of the topics studied and an understanding of the effects of changes. This is shown in written accounts of the replacement of the open-field system with enclosures and the effects of this upon people living in the countryside. Imaginative reconstructions of the lives of slaves were among the best pieces of extended writing seen during the inspection. However, a significant minority of Year 9 pupils continue to reproduce spelling mistakes also seen in Year 7. For example, both Queen Boudicca in Year 7 work and slaves in Year 9 work were 'wiped' (whipped) as a punishment. Pupils move forward well in their ability to use sources to learn about the past, as shown in some work on 19th century factory conditions.
129. GCSE results were well above average in 2001. All pupils gained at least a pass grade. However, although A* to C grades were well above average, the proportion gaining the very highest grades was below average. History is more popular than in many schools and pupils gained better grades in the subject than in most of their others, unlike most schools, where pupils' history grades are usually lower. Although girls did slightly better, boys also achieved well, with their results also better than in most other schools.
130. Current Year 11 pupils are not yet reaching quite such high standards. However, they are continuing the good achievement of earlier years and are working at above average overall levels. Good knowledge development is shown for example, in work describing the development of the Civil Rights movement in the USA. Explanations of the reasons why black people were treated the way they were in the South and of the effects of events at Little Rock show that most pupils have a good understanding of what they have learned. The written work of lower-attaining pupils is less detailed. For example, some pupils listed the reasons that anti-communism grew in the USA after the Second World War, but did not explain them. The written work of a few pupils does not fully demonstrate the knowledge and understanding that they show in oral work. For example, some pupils do not always write in complete sentences.
131. Pupils enjoy history and their response in lessons is a highly positive factor in their achievement. Attitudes and behaviour are almost always at least good. They are often very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils listen attentively to teachers and to each other. They willingly take part in whole class discussions

and work quietly and with good concentration at their own tasks. In discussions with inspectors, pupils in a number of years said that history was one of their favourite subjects.

132. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years and often very good in Years 10 and 11. The skill and knowledge of teachers who teach in an interesting and knowledgeable way is clearly an important reason why history is so popular with pupils. Clear explanations effectively support pupils in increasing their knowledge and understanding. Teachers show high expectations through challenging tasks and questions. Feedback to pupils on how well they have done provides clear indications of the strengths and weaknesses of their efforts. Pupils are guided on how to ensure that they meet appropriate criteria when answering examination style questions. Praise is often used to boost confidence. Booklets, produced to a high standard by the school's reprographics department, are used well to provide support for pupils in improving their evidence skills and revision techniques. They also contain a range of effective homework tasks. In most lessons, work is provided to meet the needs of all pupils. In a few lessons, which are nevertheless satisfactory, teachers provide too many answers for pupils, rather than challenging them to find their own. Occasionally, teachers are less good at ensuring the participation of all, tending for example, to take answer only from volunteers.
133. History provides good opportunities for improving and practising literacy skills. Teachers give good attention to helping pupils to learn and use key words. Techniques such as writing frames are often used well to help pupils improve the structure of their writing. Opportunities for using numeracy skills are provided. For example, a homework task required a Year 10 class to interpret graphs to estimate the way in which opposition to the Vietnam War grew in the USA. However, not enough work is planned to develop numeracy skills. The opportunities to use computers are unsatisfactory and the scheme of work does not guide teachers in providing these.
134. In Years 7 to 9, the subject benefits from an above average time allocation. There are some unhelpful imbalances in the way in which this time is organised however, with the allocation of double and single periods to different sets, or numbers of pupils in lower sets not being sufficiently systematic. Pupils would also benefit from the provision of more extra-curricular and fieldwork opportunities.
135. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE results worsened in the years immediately after the inspection, but have improved since then, culminating in the best ever results in 2001. Appropriate and successful attention has been given to improving writing skills, although a minority of pupils still do not do themselves full justice in their writing. Strengths identified in the last inspection, in teaching, pupils' response and the cohesion of the department and the quality of leadership and management, have been emphatically retained. The subject is well led and managed, with a perceptive awareness of areas still in need of improvement. For example, staff are well aware of the deficiency in ICT and have specific plans to improve, including training all teachers within the present academic year and giving one teacher a specific responsibility to improve planning and use to meet criteria set out in an action plan.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall provision for ICT is **satisfactory** with strengths in the teaching of ICT and weaknesses in its cross-curricular use.

Strengths

- Standards attained in 2001 in GCSE
- The proportion of A* and A grades at GCSE
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11
- Accommodation and resources.
- Attitudes of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching and assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9
- Standards currently being attained in Years 7 to 9
- Leadership and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum but particularly in Years 7 to 9
- Use of and access to computers in other subjects

136. In 2001, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above with those reported nationally. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average for the proportion gaining A* to C grades. Boys attained approximately twice the national average proportion of A* and A grades and girls nearly three times the national average for girls. Both boys and girls did significantly better in ICT than in their other subjects.
137. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have opportunities to gain knowledge and develop skills in using computers for word processing, desk top publishing, spread sheets and data bases, but overall standards are currently below the national expectation for this age group. Evidence from the inspection indicates that whilst the high standards were justified for 2001, current standards are much lower and below the national expectation mainly because of the impact over time of non-specialist teaching. The programmes of work are well-planned but the variation in pupils' achievement between teaching groups is too great and too dependent on which teacher they have had. When well-prepared work sheets and guidance notes are used well, all pupils, including those with special needs, achieve well and higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge and skills effectively. However, when teaching is weak pupils' progress and achievement is unsatisfactory.
138. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils, most of whom have already achieved well in Years 7 to 9, have the opportunity to extend their knowledge and skills through GCSE or vocational courses and they are likely to achieve good or very good GCSE results. Their progress and achievement continues to be good because all pupils develop and apply knowledge and skills in set contexts. Pupils are good at following set procedures. They can identify how computers might be used to solve problems, produce solutions to these specifications and then write reports and critical evaluations about the effectiveness of their work. Higher attaining pupils achieve very well in the 'fast track' extra curricular course, and all pupils involved in ICT examination work, including those with special needs, achieve well because the courses are very well structured and well taught.
139. Although all pupils have good access to using computers through the lesson programmes for ICT, the opportunities for pupils to use computers in support of their work in other subjects are limited. Some subjects, for example music, include more significant amounts of computer based work, but for most other subjects not enough ICT work is planned into schemes of work. Consequently the national curriculum requirement for subjects to include ICT is not being fully met.
140. Pupils like working with computers and show good levels of concentration and commitment to their work. Behaviour is good overall, however, when teachers' expectations are not sufficiently clear and the management of pupils is weak a small proportion of boys in Years 7 to 9 can be inattentive and achieve little.
141. The quality of teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. However, in Years 7 to 9 teaching is unsatisfactory overall because, although almost half was good or very good, a significant proportion was unsatisfactory. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and provide good levels of individual support to all pupils in lessons. In most lessons, pupils and resources are managed well and this creates a very positive learning environment in which all pupils are able to learn effectively at an appropriate pace. A range of teaching methods are used effectively and as a result, pupils learn quickly and develop good knowledge which they apply with confidence. In the unsatisfactory lessons taken by non-specialists in Years 7 to 9, the activities were not planned in enough detail and the teaching methods, including managing behaviour, were in

effective. Expectations were not high enough. The quality of marking, written assessments and advice given to pupils are good and enable pupils to improve their work. All courses are highly structured and supported by well-prepared guidance materials. When this material is used effectively learning is good. Pupils work at a good pace and demonstrate high levels of concentration.

142. The time allocated for ICT lessons in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is good and National Curriculum statutory requirements for ICT are met. However, whilst the programme for ICT lessons has increased, the requirement for other subjects to include computer-based work is under developed. At present, the school's intention to develop the use of computers across the curriculum is not sufficiently planned or co-ordinated. Consequently not all subjects have plans in place to use computers sufficiently, as required by the national curriculum.
143. Assessment procedures for Years 10 and 11 are good and provide a good system for informing pupils about the standard of their work and how it can be improved. However, the highly effective system for teacher assessments, previously used at the end of Year 9, has not been replaced and current arrangements are unsatisfactory.
144. Successful recent developments in expanding the Years 10 and 11 curriculum continue to improve standards for older pupils. However, the extra demands on staffing and the fact that the school has been unable to recruit a new head of department for ICT have resulted in lower standards in Years 7 to 9 and insufficient co-ordination of the use of computers in other subjects. The almost exclusive use of experienced specialist staff to teach examination work to older pupils is affecting the standards being achieved in Years 7 to 9
145. Resources have been improved and good teaching has resulted in positive expansion of the ICT curriculum with considerable improvement in the standards being achieved in examinations. However, teaching and current standards in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory and insufficient progress has been made in the co-ordination and use of computers in other subjects. Overall improvement since the last inspection is therefore satisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- There is a largely new team of teachers, who are committed and working well together to raise standards and motivate pupils
- The schemes of work are good
- Resources and accommodation are very good

Areas for improvement

- Improving attainment in GCSE French and Spanish
- Developing strategies to improve pupils' learning skills in order to build up vocabulary and basic structures
- Improving pronunciation and intonation
- Reducing the amount of English used in lessons

146. Standards in French at Years 7 to 9 are generally below average. Standards in Spanish are also below, but this is because the Year 8 class is for beginners. The results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below average. Girls achieved much higher standards than boys. These results match standards observed during the inspection. In one Year 7 French lesson during the inspection pupils demonstrated average standards` otherwise standards were below average.

147. The scrutiny of pupils' written work, showed that the standards of work of some higher-attainers in French are broadly in line with national expectations, but the work of pupils in middle and lower sets is below expectations. By Year 9 higher-attainers write, with the aid of models or writing frames, short texts in French containing present and past tenses. They can write simple opinions and give reasons and are starting to have a awareness of very basic grammatical patterns, for example gender, adjective agreement, prepositions and some common verbs. Many average-attainers can copy sentences and short dialogues fairly accurately and write short paragraphs and dialogues when fully supported. Lower-attainers find it difficult to copy words and phrases accurately. Writing in Spanish is largely copying vocabulary and short texts. The reading skills of some high-attainers are satisfactory, but most pupils find it difficult to skim and scan a text. Teachers encourage pupils to use dictionaries to find out the meaning of unknown words. Some pupils do this well, but many find it difficult. Many high-attainers make satisfactory progress in their writing skills through Years 7 to 9.
148. The achievement in French of many pupils at Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but the progress they make in skills and knowledge in lessons is from a very low starting point. In some lessons pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress for example in a Year 9 lower set which included several pupils with special educational needs, many pupils could ask and answer with support, simple questions using the past tense. In a Year 7 class most pupils understood simple instructions in French and described people physically and in terms of their character, with good pronunciation.
149. In the Spanish Year 8 beginners group pupils could follow a lesson conducted entirely in simple Spanish and could ask for drinks in a café. Many pupils repeat words and phrases in Spanish with satisfactory pronunciation and intonation. However in both languages pupils need more practice to improve their pronunciation. Writing in Spanish is largely copying vocabulary and short texts. Achievement in this class is good in view of the fact that they only have one lesson a week. Achievement in the Year 9 beginners' Spanish group is satisfactory.
150. Occasionally pupils make simple requests in French. They ask for a book or for permission to take off their jackets. Such use of French and Spanish and the use of the foreign language amongst pupils needs further development.
151. GCSE results in 2001 were below average in French and well below average in Spanish. Girls performed significantly better than boys. The attainment of most current pupils in both French and Spanish is below national expectations in listening, speaking and reading and there are gaps in pupils' knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary. In a Year 11 French group the pronunciation of pupils was so poor that their dialogues about school were unintelligible and they were unable to answer accurately standard GCSE oral questions. In a Year 10 French top set many pupils had below average reading and listening skills and poor grammatical awareness. They had difficulty doing a simple dialogue to buy fruit and vegetables. In a Year 11 Spanish class some pupils could follow a lesson conducted in Spanish and could talk about school uniform with reasonable confidence and good pronunciation. The evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' written work confirms that the attainment in writing of some higher-attainers in French and Spanish is average, but the standard of written work of most pupils is below national expectations.
152. In Years 10 and 11 achievement in French and Spanish is satisfactory relative to their previous standards. In most lessons they make appropriate gains in knowledge and skills, but there are so many gaps in their knowledge that progress is slow and many are not making the gains required to ensure success in obtaining higher grades at GCSE.
153. The newly formed team of teachers is having an impact on the quality of teaching. In French and Spanish teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons at Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 in Spanish, teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons, in French, only half the teaching was satisfactory. All lessons are

well prepared and most have a brisk pace, with very good use of home-produced resources. Effective use is made of deadlines to keep pupils on target. Most lessons match the needs and interests of pupils and have different tasks and activities. This ensures that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs made appropriate progress. The very best lessons are delivered with enthusiasm and use of humour and consist of a several activities. In some lessons teachers use the foreign language extensively to the great benefit of pupils' listening skills, but often too much English is used. Effective use is made of the overhead projector, cassette recorder, video recorder and resource sheets. Some use is made of computers but information communication technology should feature more. Where the lessons were unsatisfactory this was mainly because the teachers were less skilled at managing difficult behaviour of older pupils.

154. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good in both languages. Many pupils are enthusiastic and keen to show what they can do. In several classes they take part in language games and communicative activities. They are enthusiastic about playing noughts and crosses and bingo in French or Spanish. Many pupils show good levels of concentration and contribute fully to oral activities and concentrate hard on writing and reading. Very occasionally, pupils do not work well and their attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory. Sometimes some pupils are disruptive and prevent others from learning.
155. The newly established trips to France and some of the up-to-date reading materials in French and Spanish ensure that the department makes a contribution to the cultural development of some pupils. The two foreign language assistants also make an important linguistic and cultural contribution. Though improvement since the last inspection has not been satisfactory, the situation is now changing and the department is better placed to bring about improvement. The teachers are working together well. This is helping to raise standards. Leadership and management of the department are now effective and are starting to make an impact on improving the image of languages in the school. The new schemes of work are good. The monitoring of teaching in the department is good. Accommodation and resources are very good though provision in the school library for languages continues to be poor. Assessment policies and procedures are good and ensure that pupils' progress is well monitored. Most pupils understand national curriculum levels and GCSE grades, which helps them to make progress. The department offers support to pupils outside lessons.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject
- Quality of teaching, especially knowledge of subject and enthusiasm for it
- Good pupil teacher relationships
- Pupils enjoyment of the subject and their eagerness to learn

Areas for improvement

- Access to non western music and instruments within lessons
- Equality of opportunity for some pupils to experience the full range of practical musical activities
- The current staffing situation

156. Teacher assessments show that by the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with national expectations. Girls performed better than boys. In GCSE examinations for 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A*-C was below average. However, pupils attained above the national average for A* - G grades. The small number of candidates entered for GCSE makes comparison with national figures unreliable.

157. By Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with expectations. No significant differences were observed between the standards achieved by boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils know how to combine musical elements appropriately to compose music on the electronic keyboards. The majority of pupils can compose simple tunes, and rehearse and perform them in groups. They work collaboratively when composing. Higher attaining pupils can control sounds effectively and perform with an awareness of the different parts within their group. Year 9 pupils have a developing vocabulary of technical musical language. Several can perform to a good standard on their chosen instruments. In one Year 9 lesson a group of instrumentalists harmonised and performed “Love changes everything” with the rest of the class accompanying them using keyboards and untuned percussion. Lower attaining pupils have limited performance skills and do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of music to develop or write down their ideas using musical notation. Pupils have good music ICT skills and are able to create, manipulate and refine sounds.
158. There is some variation in pupils’ previous musical knowledge when they arrive at the school, with the majority achieving below average standards. As a result of the good teaching and the well-planned lessons pupils’ achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs and musically talented pupils are presented with appropriately challenging work and achieve good standards relative to their different starting points. Contributions to literacy and numeracy skills are small, but attention is given to the use of key words and musical vocabulary.
159. In Years 10 and 11 attainment is generally above average and pupils are achieving well. Some Year 11 pupils are reaching high standards in performing and composing. Higher-attaining pupils create well-structured and coherent pieces by applying the key components of melody and harmony to their compositions. They are very good independent learners. One Year 11 girl skilfully structured her composition with an imaginative harmonic accompaniment incorporating such devices as syncopation, sequence and modulation. She then stored it onto computer so she could further refine and develop her musical ideas. Year 11 pupils can use musical terminology well when describing their pieces. Standards in Year 10 are low for this stage of the GCSE course. Year 10 pupils are not confident about reading staff notation. Very few can accurately read notes written in the bass clef. They tend not to use technical vocabulary when writing about music. Their listening skills are satisfactory and usually well focused. However, pupils’ theoretical knowledge is generally of a much lower standard. Pupils enjoy music lessons working very well both independently and in small groups.
160. Pupils learn well because teaching is generally good. At Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, which they pass on effectively to their pupils. Teachers’ expectations are generally appropriate for the ability of the individual pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, with pupils feeling comfortable enough to contribute appropriate suggestions when listening to each other’s work. As a result pupils stay on task and behave very well. In practical sessions teachers give good support to pupils. However, the pace of these practical activities is occasionally slow, with too much time spent on a single activity. Where teaching is very good, enthusiastic whole class question and answer sessions are incorporated to assist the recall of information from the previous lesson. Questions are phrased so that teachers are sure pupils understand correctly. In the weaker lessons pupils are set low-level tasks that fail to challenge them, as in one Year 8 lesson where pupils performed “London’s Burning” in unison on the keyboards. At times there is a tendency to give the pupils too much support with the result that some are rather passive in the lessons. Homework when set enhances and extends work in lessons.
161. The quality of instrumental tuition provided by the county music service is satisfactory with nearly ninety pupils learning instruments. In addition to the head of department there are currently two part time supply teachers and one full time unqualified teacher delivering the subject. Though teachers have good knowledge and skills, the lack of continuity is affecting the planning and delivery of the curriculum.

162. The music department is very well led and managed. The head of department has ensured that schemes of work are comprehensive and model effective planning. Assessment procedures are clear and effectively support achievement through target-setting and detailed feedback. All pupils know where they are in relation to their own achievement. The department's use of new technology is a major strength. Teaching in music is specifically geared to making pupils aware of, and progressively responsible for, their own learning. As a result the music provision is effective for all its pupils. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Accommodation has significantly improved with two good-sized teaching rooms, two practice rooms and a recording studio. Unfortunately, none of the rooms are sound proof and this occasionally hinders learning. ICT resources have improved considerably with 14 computers with sequencing and score writing software and a selection of midi compatible keyboards.
163. There are still a few areas for development. The school library is underused as a resource for learning because there are not enough musical textbooks to enhance pupils' independent study. Two Year 7 and one Year 8 classes receive half the access to practical activities due to timetabling restrictions and availability of specialist rooms. This is hindering their learning. There is not enough use of music and instruments from other non-western cultures within lessons. This restricts coverage this important element of the national curriculum.
164. Music makes an important contribution to the lives of the pupils. Large numbers of pupils choose to be involved in the wide menu of musical extra-curricular activities. There is a departmental musical showcase each year and an annual school production, in which a large number of pupils from across the whole age ranges are involved and perform to a high standard. There are regular performances throughout the year both within school and the local community. Two groups are performing in the forthcoming Music for Youth Festival.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very high standards of attainment at GCSE
- Games skills for Years 10 and 11 pupils
- Very good teaching expertise and relationships that have a positive impact on pupils' achievement
- Very good extra-curricular provision
- The very good range of learning opportunities for all pupils
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support learning

165. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 meets expectations. Teacher assessments in 2001 showed that just over half of the year group are achieving or working beyond expectations across all areas of activity in physical education by the end of Year 9. These assessments are just below the national average but they appear to be under-estimated when compared to boys and girls attainment seen during the inspection where standards are meeting expectations.
166. Standards are variable on entry and overall, below average. By the end of Year 9 pupils display an average level of competence in games skills and overall in PE pupils are achieving well. In a Year 9 swimming lesson, all pupils swam with confidence using at least three strokes and the majority showed

good awareness of safety in life-saving skills. Pupils are encouraged to learn from each other through partner coaching which develops their observation and evaluative skills. Lower attaining and special needs pupils show good application in reinforcing skills and are achieving increasingly improved techniques in triple jump, because teachers demonstrate and often encourage other pupils to show good practice so that they increase their confidence and self-esteem. The majority of pupils understand the need to warm-up before vigorous exercise and pupils take turns in leading these sessions. They know how to prepare for specific activities, for example, in stretching the relevant muscles. Many pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own safety and personal well-being is limited, in that they do not tie their footwear. This is also having a detrimental effect on the quality of movement seen in some lessons.

167. GCSE physical education results in 2001 were above national levels. Pupils taking GCSE courses continue to perform significantly better in PE than in all other subjects. Standards in lessons and in GCSE work seen in Year 11 are well above expectations. Standards of attainment in core PE (taken by all pupils) are above average for boys in football and swimming. In Year 11 dance, the girls with the potential to do well are reaching above average standards in quality and control of movement and in refining and adapting actions at different levels. Pupils show good levels of selecting and applying skills, tactics and rules and in organising collaborative and competitive team activities. Most demonstrate competent footwork and use of space, taking advantage to score when they can. Many pupils undertake different roles, such as performer, coach, choreographer and referee in various activities with good levels of confidence in instructing others. Pupils show increasing awareness of planning, performing and evaluation in health related fitness.
168. The standard of work seen in the scrutiny of pupils' folders shows a wide spread of attainment in Year 10, with lower attaining pupils achieving good levels of understanding of the skeletal system because they use a writing frame to help them identify and remember types of bone. Achievement for different attainment levels is very good, where, for example in football, lower-attaining pupils benefit from video presentations to help them analyse their movement so that they increase skills of playing the ball 'wide' while higher-attaining pupils increase their awareness of fast play and focus on keeping the ball 'live'.
169. Pupils' involvement in extra-curricular activities has a significant impact on achievement. Girls make good gains in developing good use of space in inter-house hockey and boys of different ability levels work together well to score in football so that all feel they contribute. Lower-attaining and special needs pupils make very good progress and many 'D' grades at GCSE reflect a higher than expected result.
170. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good and sometimes excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Strengths lie in teachers' expertise and very good relationships with pupils. They explain what pupils are going to learn and demonstrate techniques clearly to all levels of attainment. Tasks set are interesting and work is challenging and competitive. Pupils are managed effectively in pairs and groups to encourage them to make progress. In one lesson, which was satisfactory overall but where progress was slower than expected some pupils were chatty and off-task. This inhibited effective concentration and at times, important instructions, such as those used for life-saving techniques, were not heard. In the best lessons, pupils were given time to practise new techniques through effective partner coaching. Teachers' very good use of questioning helped them improve, reinforce and extend learning. Effective evaluation through well-focused group discussion and demonstration is a positive feature in most lessons, enabling pupils to learn new skills. Non-participants were well involved in evaluating others' performances in most lessons. Teaching activities inconsistently explore the benefits of a warm-up or cool-down session. The opportunity to take a shower after the lesson is insufficiently stressed as an integral part of fitness and health. Homework for GCSE pupils effectively consolidates and reinforces what they have learned in the lesson.

171. The department is effectively led and good improvements since the last inspection have been well managed. The shared commitment and teamwork of PE staff is maintaining the very high standards at GCSE. Opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular and competitive sport are very good. Assessment analysis is used effectively for predicting GCSE grades, however, monitoring Year 9 teacher assessments across teaching groups is inconsistent. The quality of indoor and outdoor sporting accommodation is very good and has been improved to include an excellent sports hall and fitness suite since the last inspection. Dance is often timetabled in a sectioned off portion of the sports hall at the same time as basketball and the noise from the basketball game makes teaching dance more difficult. The lack of departmental ICT facilities restricts the use of new technology in teaching and learning. Resources including PE texts and library books for theory studies are good though pupils' use of the library for independent research is limited.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good relationships between teachers and pupils
- Clear focus on GCSE requirements
- Some well-directed discussions

Areas for improvement

- Tasks are sometimes unchallenging
- Marking often lacks rigour and does not tell the pupils how to improve their work
- Inadequate use of ICT by pupils

172. Results in the short course, which counts as half a GCSE, followed by pupils in Year 11 have been rising in recent years. In 2001, the GCSE short course results for A* to C grades were above the national average. The course has grown in popularity in recent years. Girls achieve more highly than boys.
173. Pupils' knowledge of religious education is below expectation when they join the school. By Year 9, they acquire satisfactory knowledge of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. They become familiar with the Christian story of Creation; they understand what a faith means to the followers of a religion and how a faith is governed by a creed. They understand the symbolism of church buildings and of ceremonies in various religions, including the Feast of the Passover. At various stages, pupils learn to apply religious ideas to their own lives. They consider, for example, heroes in their lives or what it feels like to be tempted. Some topics on moral and religious issues allow good opportunities for artwork. Good examples are displayed in classrooms concerning topics such as the Passover in Judaism and moral issues surrounding bullfighting. However, the quality of pupils' writing is below expectation generally, particularly that of potentially higher-attaining pupils. Some work is too brief to cover topics adequately. The work of lower-attaining pupils is sometimes incomplete. Overall, pupils' achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory.
174. Achievement is satisfactory too in Years 10 and 11, where the work is closely matched to examination requirements and pupils are likely to achieve similar results to previous years. Pupils learn the required topics very thoroughly and develop well the skills of answering written questions. Written work is terse and note-taking is well developed. Topics such as 'life after death' stimulated interesting writing when pupils compared beliefs in a range of religions on this topic. Many pupils are articulate in discussion. For example, Year 10 pupils expressed sensitive and thoughtful views when discussing discrimination and racism. They showed a good understanding of differing points of view and listened readily to what others had to say. Some pupils expressed their own views forcefully and eloquently when exploring moral topics such as, 'abortion is always wrong'.

175. Teaching and learning in religious education are satisfactory. Although none of the teachers of religious education is a specialist, their subject knowledge is satisfactory. Teachers maintain good relationships with classes and pupils' behaviour is good. As a result, pupils respond well to their teachers and are courteous and positive in their attitudes. Teachers are generally proficient in leading discussions and encouraging pupils to consider their own views and express them publicly. Worksheets and other resources are of good quality and carefully chosen to extend pupils' understanding. When introducing video extracts, teachers introduce them well so that pupils will gain the most possible benefit from what they see and hear. Teachers include a good range of activities within lessons to sustain pupils' interest. They mark exercise books regularly but marking is generally very complimentary and does not often tell the pupils how they can improve their work. Opportunities for pupils to engage in serious research are limited and they do not have enough chances to select ideas from resources as part of independent research. Occasionally tasks are too simple and too much time is allowed.
176. The management of religious education is satisfactory. The schemes of work reflect the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus and GCSE board satisfactorily. However, the narrow concentration on examination requirements in Years 10 and 11 is at the expense of pupils broadening their knowledge and developing their learning skills. There are at present insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in religious education. Teachers receive good support informally, but there is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching. Good practice is not shared enough and the overall quality of teaching varies too much, from very good to unsatisfactory during the inspection. Religious education provides pupils with good opportunities for developing their moral and social awareness and satisfactory opportunities for developing spiritual awareness. Opportunities are more limited than is often the case for developing an appreciation of the multicultural aspects of society. Teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection, since when there has been satisfactory improvement in provision, but the school does not provide religious education in the sixth form, which is a statutory requirement.

OTHER SUBJECTS AND COURSES

BUSINESS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of assessment procedures, both formal and informal, is having a beneficial impact on standards
- In the better lessons, the quality of planning and the variety of teaching methods is contributing to good quality learning

Areas for improvement

- The library needs to be developed as a learning resource
- The provision for key skills needs to be reviewed to ensure that key words are displayed, all opportunities to develop numeracy are seized and that ICT is always used appropriately
- Staff should consistently present examples of high-class practice in all their work

177. In Years 10 and 11 two courses are offered: GCSE business studies and Part 1 GNVQ (Foundation) business. As both have been introduced since the last inspection, no comments on improvement can be made. GCSE results in 2001 for grades A* to C were well above average; but for grades A* to G results were below average. The number of pupils sitting this subject was comparatively small and an analysis of results based on gender is not reliable. The school's analysis of the 2001 GCSE results shows that most pupils gained grades that were similar to those forecast, which suggests that they made at least satisfactory progress.
178. For present pupils standards of work in the GCSE course are, overall, below average but there is a wide range of ability. Some pupils following the course are recording standards that are above, and even well above, the average level. The main impediment to standards rising further is the pupils' writing skills. Many answer well in lessons and all are gaining a good, basic knowledge and understanding of businesses and how they work. Comparatively few pupils, however, are producing written work that shows sufficient depth and application of the knowledge gained. Where high standards are identified, it is usually boys who are working at a higher level. Similarly, boys also dominate the lower end of the spectrum. Work seen during the inspection, especially coursework being completed by Year 11 pupils, showed that most pupils make good progress over time. Their work is continually improving, with higher attaining pupils displaying prowess in their application of accounts. Some of the business plans produced by Year 11 pupils are of a high quality. Standards on the Foundation course are at least average. They are all learning basic information about types of business and the environments in which they operate. Pupils on this course are making good progress and achieving well.
179. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good overall, though one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. A number of key strengths are all contributing to the pupils' good learning. In the good lessons teachers plan well, the work is challenging and the quality of assessment is often very good. For example, Year 11 GCSE coursework projects show that the pupils have been set good challenges and staff have planned this aspect of the course well. In lessons where pupils were finishing their projects, staff offered very good support by asking pupils to explain particular pieces of their work, or by questioning pupils on how their work might be improved. These tactics helped pupils to clarify their views and to improve the quality of their written statements. In a very good Year 10 lesson on introductory accounting principles, very good learning resulted because of the enthusiasm of the teacher. A combination of the teacher's own knowledge and the imaginative way that drama and humour were used, succeeded in engaging all pupils. All pupils made very good progress in this lesson.

180. Where the teaching is less strong, learning suffers. For example, in a different less well planned Year 10 lesson on accounts, the level of challenge was lower and pupils became confused because the teacher's demonstration of how to set out accounts was not clear. Teachers also need to think carefully about the provisions made for developing key skills. Few key words are displayed and there were a number of occasions where teachers had not corrected wrong spellings of key words such as 'business' and 'environment'. Opportunities to develop numeracy are not always seized, however, pupils are offered very good opportunities to use ICT, and many display high levels of skill. In lessons where pupils were set work involving the use of ICT, time was not always found to review what had been learnt.
181. The management of the department is good, with the potential to improve further. The faculty manager for business is a recent appointment, but in a short time he has already had an impact on the department. A clear vision exists about how the department can develop and this is reflected in the bid for business and enterprise college status. Staffing and accommodation are both very good and resources in the department are very good and improving, though library resources are a weakness and this is an area that needs to be improved. Teaching is monitored but this could be sharper to ensure that standards of teaching are consistent across all lessons. Target grades are increasingly being used and this will help to improve the standards of work recorded by all pupils.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Consistently good results at GCSE and A Level
- Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development through drama
- Good teaching
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work which include some consistency between classes and continuity between years
- Planning which includes criteria for assessing pupils' attainment and progress

182. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly above the national expectation. The proportion of girls gaining grades A* to C was very high and, although fewer took drama, boys also gained good results. For some pupils, drama was one of their most successful subjects.
183. In lessons, the attainment of Year 9 pupils is above the national expectation for this age. In their exploration of feelings, moods and reactions to events, pupils show confidence in working together to convey their ideas in a dramatic form. They invent and develop convincing and clearly worked out roles in situations which they create in groups.
184. In lessons, Year 11 pupils achieve well above average standards. In their improvisations, they use a wide range of expressive gesture and language, and show a refined understanding of dramatic conventions and skills. They speak and write about their work in good detail, evaluating and improving it through practice. They bring to their performances a sound level of knowledge of the factors that influence the creation of credible characters. Those who have literacy difficulties receive appropriate help with their written work from the learning support department.
185. Pupils enjoy drama. Their very good attitude to the subject is a strength. They take a pride in their work and value the confidence that drama gives them. The overall quality of teaching is good, with some particularly good teaching in both key stages. Teachers have high expectations. This is very evident in the skilful presentation of progressively more challenging tasks. As a result of the teachers' good

management, they are organised, disciplined and focused on their work, and good at working independently in developing their ideas. Boys and girls work easily with each other in a supportive atmosphere and this is also a direct response to the good teaching and enthusiasm of the teachers.

186. Pupils' achievement is good at all stages in the school. They make good progress from Year 7 when they tackle a range of work chosen by the teacher. One class showed very good understanding of physical theatre, with pupils using their bodies to make inanimate objects from a frying egg to a helicopter. A second class created improvised scenes involving a pop idol, whilst a third devised scenes involving visiting aliens. In each case, the pace of work with timed activities, clear instructions and the enjoyment of both pupils and teachers, resulted in work of a high standard. Moving into Year 8, pupils work on dramatic sequences in response to peer group pressure from smoking and alcohol. Classes in Year 9 took further their knowledge of body language - the manner of self-presentation and of people's power in different situations - in role-play job interviews.
187. Those who choose to study drama in Year 10 and 11 start with a very good grasp of drama skills and concepts. A unit of work in Year 10 based on the Elephant Man showed considerable imagination and maturity in approach. Higher attaining pupils distinguished between symbolic and real expression and showed confidence in using dramatic skills.
188. The two drama studios offer very good spaces. The opportunities for pupils to visit live theatre are very good, as are the opportunities for all pupils to take part in large school performances of plays and musicals.
189. Since the last inspection, high GCSE results have been maintained. However, the lack of a detailed scheme of work with clear drama objectives and assessment criteria is a weakness. This is particularly important for the inexperienced and unqualified teachers on whom the school relies to deliver and assess drama from Year 7 to Year 11. Their energy and undoubted talent is invaluable. However, with the head of department also teaching other subjects, there is a current lack of leadership that offers clear direction, consistency in curriculum planning and use of assessment in targeting pupils' performance and subject evaluation. The capacity of the department to improve further depends on these issues being resolved.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	50	n/a	17	n/a	1.5	n/a
Biology	12	75	n/a	17	n/a	1.2	n/a
Chemistry	4	100	n/a	0	n/a	2.3	n/a
Physics	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	3	n/a
Design and technology	8	88	n/a	0	n/a	1.3	n/a
Sports studies	4	100	n/a	50	n/a	3.5	n/a
Computing	25	100	n/a	28	n/a	2.8	n/a
Art	11	100	n/a	18	n/a	2.3	n/a
Drama	2	100	n/a	100	n/a	4	n/a
Music	4	50	n/a	0	n/a	0.75	n/a
History	24	96	n/a	46	n/a	2.9	n/a
Law	11	73	n/a	36	n/a	2.3	n/a
Psychology	18	83	n/a	33	n/a	2.6	n/a
Sociology	11	85	n/a	23	n/a	2.3	n/a
English Lang and Lit	5	100	n/a	80	n/a	4.2	n/a
English Lit	6	100	n/a	17	n/a	3	n/a
French	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	5	n/a
Spanish	3	100	n/a	67	n/a	3.3	n/a
Accounting	11	91	n/a	18	n/a	1.5	n/a
Business Studies	11	91	n/a	18	n/a	1.7	n/a
Media Studies	14	100	n/a	79	n/a	3.4	n/a
Geography	10	90	n/a	30	n/a	2.4	n/a

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England

Mathematics	13	85	87	23	43	2.8	5.8
Biology	3	100	88	33	34	4	5.25
Chemistry	1	100	90	100	43	8	5.9
Physics	5	83	88	0	40	4	5.7
Design and technology	7	57	91	14	30	3.4	5.4
Computing	3	100	92	0	23	2	5.1
Sports studies	8	88	86	38	25	5	4.6
Art	5	80	96	40	46	4.8	6.5
Drama	6	100	99	50	38	7.7	6.5
Music	2	100	93	0	35	5	5.7
Music technology	2	100	n/a	0	n/a	2	n/a
History	20	70	88	15	35	2.4	5.4
Law	7	100	n/a	14	n/a	4.6	n/a
Psychology	11	91	n/a	18	n/a	3.7	n/a
Sociology	7	43	n/a	0	35	1.7	5.3
English Lang and Lit	4	100	92	25	30	6.5	5.3
English Lit	10	100	95	80	37	7.6	5.9
French	5	71	89	0	38	2.3	5.6
Spanish	1	100	89	0	39	2	5.7
Accounting	8	100	n/a	13	n/a	4.5	n/a
Business Studies	16	100	92	6	32	4	5.5
Media Studies	7	100	n/a	29	n/a	7.1	n/a
Geography	10	90	92	30	38	5.6	5.7
General Studies	31	63	85	12	30	4.6	4.9

Vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Foundation GNVQ							
Business	10	80	n/a	60	n/a	10	n/a
Health & Social Care	6	83	n/a	17	n/a	67	n/a
Leisure & Tourism	2	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Intermediate GNVQ							
Business	10	90	n/a	30	n/a	60	n/a

Advanced GNVQ							
Business	16	100	n/a	12	n/a	50	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- A Level results were in line with the national averages in 2001 and overall the number of students involved in A Level mathematics has been increasing
- Students are well motivated and work hard in applying written routines and standard procedures
- Some of the teaching is enthusiastic and supportive, for example in providing extra sessions after school

Areas for improvement

- Enhancing students' understanding of ideas and their confidence in selecting methods to solve problems
- Producing a scheme of work and guidance for the teaching of A Level mathematics
- Enabling students to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and the evaluation of their progress by providing them with more course and assessment information

190. The inspection covered the A Level course offered by the school, which includes modules of work in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. Lessons were also seen in the re-sit GCSE course and the application of number aspect of key skills.
191. Results at A Level in 2001 were in line with the national averages. From the evidence of current work and lessons, the achievement of students is satisfactory. The subject has recruited and retained reasonable numbers of students. The GCSE re-sit results were good earlier in the year and the current students are progressing well. The standard of A Level work seen in lessons and in students' written work is wide ranging but satisfactory overall. Students learn the necessary facts, ideas and techniques and use these to answer problems closely matched to the syllabus requirements. Early in Year 12 the students learn a range of skills that they use effectively later. For example students competently manipulate quadratic expressions and learn standard techniques of co-ordinate geometry. In a Year 13 lesson students showed a good recall of formulae when calculating whether a point was inside or outside a circle, given its equation. In a mechanics lesson the students had a sound understanding of the ideas of elastic collisions, although solutions showed some lack of precision in drawing and labelling diagrams.
192. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching builds on students' previous learning, especially consolidating algebraic skills early in the A Level course. Some teaching is very enthusiastic and motivating. Most teaching explains methods clearly. The best teaching makes good use of the board and actively involves students in demonstrating their answers. Teaching methods tend to be mostly explanation and practice, but often there is effective questioning and discussion. The students tend to be dependent in the teacher. Higher achievers need more opportunities to extend their thinking and select their own ways of solving problems. Lower achievers need to consolidate their learning through more discussion of ideas

and methods. Year 12 students were effectively helped to solve equations using graphic calculators. Year 13 students were usefully encouraged to use a spreadsheet for handling data on a computer, although there is limited other software to support learning.

193. The teachers' marking of work, tracking of progress and target setting are generally sound, but the students in all the mathematics courses need more help in assessing how well they are doing. Students have little recorded information about the course content, the assessment criteria and the steps they need to take to improve. This applies particularly to the GCSE and Key Skills courses where students have to work more independently.
194. The students are well motivated and hard working. This contributes to their progress, both during lessons and through homework. Students are attentive and responsive to the teaching, especially when this is lively and challenging. Teachers offer students a considerable amount of extra help outside lesson time. Good attitudes are also evident in the key skills sessions where the students are very co-operative, despite uninspiring provision and a perception that the course has little value.
195. Leadership and management have yet to have a major impact on standards and course provision at A Level. The department has little guidance for sixth form mathematics teachers or students, a scheme of work has yet to be completed, and the department development plan makes little reference to the sixth form. The school has good potential in both the students and the mathematics staff, and this needs harnessing to build on provision that is currently satisfactory.

Science

196. The school offers A Level courses in physics, chemistry and biology. The main focus for the inspection was on biology but work was sampled in the other two subjects. Chemistry and Physics are taught well. Groups have been small and results less good than Biology. However, numbers are growing as the delivery of the three sciences in lower school courses is becoming more balanced. In both subjects students are encouraged to become independent learners through the activities they experience, such as individual practical research projects.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Value added results of the students overall
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent and teachers have very good subject knowledge
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent, leading to a very positive learning environment
- Teachers have high expectations of students academic performance
- Student attitudes to the subject are very good. They find the work highly interesting, particularly its relationship to human biology

Areas for improvement

- Increasing experimental use of ICT
- Increasing the range of enrichment activities

197. Science subjects accept students who have achieved at least a grade C at GCSE level, and the current Year 12 includes students with a D grade. Achievement on entry to the sixth form is broader than is often the case. In relation to their entry levels, the majority of students in Year 12 are achieving standards appropriate to their prior achievement. In a Year 12 lesson on the use of enzymes, students were guided to extract key information from material in order to give a presentation to the class. One girl involved the

other students in her presentation by asking them questions from her prompts. She rewarded correct answers positively. The other students joined in and they learned collaboratively. Another girl gave a talk and used her very well produced written material to help her. The boys present were not confident enough to present their work and are finding the A Level course difficult.

198. Three students took GCE A Level in 2001. One student achieved a B grade and the other two an E. One student achieved an E grade on Year 12 work only, having missed Year 13. In 2000 when the group was large enough to allow a comparison with the national results in 2000, A Level results were above the national average.
199. The standard of work of current Year 13 students also varies according to their ability. Students are achieving well. The 2001 AS examination results showed that all those continuing on into Year 13 had improved well relative to their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, students consolidated their knowledge of hydrolytic enzymes in the process of digestion. The majority had revised well and could present their learning in a new context. They responded well to a research task looking at the relationship between metamorphosis and insect diet, using a variety of materials including Internet hyperlinks
200. Teaching is very good and student learning is very good as a result. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons, which bring the students up to date resources and activities, including the use of the Internet. They have very high expectations of their students' capacity to handle a range of learning materials and technical vocabulary. At times the teachers work very hard to help students to learn, as in a Year 12 lesson on immobilised enzymes where students had to be constantly reminded of technical vocabulary and encouraged to use it.
201. Students are given a lot of examination questions in order to help them understand examination requirements. They answer these well showing that they can apply their knowledge. They are able to make notes, interpret data and graphs and calculate quantities such as indices of diversity. They present their work well and can explain scientific ideas. They are more challenged by extended writing involving presenting an argument. Teachers' marking is helpful and students understand how to improve their work.
202. Students learn well. They have good attitudes in lessons and are keen and enthusiastic learners. They enjoy studying Biology. Students appreciate the good facilities that the school provides and chose to stay at school because they know the teaching is very good they feel that they are made to work hard and make more progress than they might at other centres. Students used the library because it had a good supply of high quality books. All Year 13 students are hoping to go on to university and are aware of the grades they need and that they are on target to achieve them.
203. Although the management of sixth form biology is informal, all teachers delivering the programme work well together. Newer members of the team are well supported by the more experienced teacher who takes a key role in monitoring overall standards. However the use of ICT in experimental work and extending the enrichment activities need further development.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- AS and A Level courses are well managed
- Reviewing, marking and assessment procedures that inform students and encourage them to achieve to their potential

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards
- Improving the depth of relevant research in individual projects
- More planned inclusion of the use of computer skills with opportunities to include computer aided design and manufacturing

204. Students have taken A Level design and technology courses for a number of years. Currently Year 13 are engaged in the A2 course for product design and for Year 12, this is the second year of the AS course for product design. Students join the course with a variety of design and making experience because of the different design and technology subjects taken at GCSE.
205. Attainment at AS and A Level has been well below the national average with the majority of students attaining lower grade passes or not being graded. In 2001, only four of the seven candidates taking A Level gained passes and of the eight who took AS level five gained E grades and one was not graded.
206. Current standards are overall below the national expectation and achievement is only satisfactory. Students make some but limited advances in developing knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through the course. For example they are developing skills in researching broad areas of potential products and, after some analysis and evaluation, develop their own ideas for adapting or improving products. However, current coursework indicates that in most cases students do not develop these ideas in sufficient depth. They are relatively good at producing a range of ideas in outline but few, at present, are able to develop their thinking to include more in-depth studies of the application of relevant knowledge, skills, production methods or alternative constructions. Drawing and presentation skills vary considerably with previous experience and ability. All students benefit from the good teaching of graphical skills and this becomes a significant strength of some students' work. However, some folders contain a lot of well-illustrated examples of similar products without the development of the more detailed analysis which is required to develop final products at this level. Students have satisfactory knowledge of materials but only limited understanding of how products are constructed. Similarly they have some understanding of technical processes, such as vacuum forming, but have not clearly identified how these can be appropriately applied to the manufacture of their own products. Understanding of industrial and manufacturing practice is evident in some research but the use of this information is under developed. Students use computers to research and present work but the use of computer-aided design and manufacturing is at present under developed.
207. Students make satisfactory progress overall. Progress varies depending on the commitment and attitude of individual students. Some are clear that the demands of other AS courses are affecting their ability to develop their design and technology work fully. Students are well supported and closely monitored. They are given regular, detailed oral and written advice about their work and individual performance which helps them to achieve at a satisfactory level. Students recognise this as a very supportive process but do not always act enough on the advice given. Behaviour in lessons is good and there are positive working relationships in all lessons. Opportunities are created for students to develop individual and sometimes creative ideas but students often rely on support and do not use these opportunities sufficiently for more independent learning.
208. Teaching is satisfactory. Shared teaching of the A Level courses is planned and executed effectively. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and this is used well to plan and deliver well-structured courses. Students and resources are managed well and good working relationships are developed. Good

standards of marking together with written comments provide students with good advice about how they might improve their work. A suitable range of teaching methods is used, but more effective use could be made of prepared teaching resources in order to use time more effectively. For example, overhead projection slides would improve the presentation of board work to reinforce technical words and discussions about health and safety. Teachers are good at guiding students' work but although students are very positive about their work they do not act sufficiently on the advice given and therefore opportunities to develop the necessary detail in their projects are lost.

209. Leadership and management are good. The shared teaching taking place is well organised to make use of teachers' expertise and the time available. Courses are well documented with well-organised experiences for all students and clear deadlines for work are in place. Suitable accommodation and resources are available but access to equipment for computer aided design and manufacturing is limited.

BUSINESS

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

Strengths

- The range of courses available enhances inclusiveness and equality of opportunity
- The quality of accommodation and resources are very good and these enhance learning
- The enthusiasm and expertise that staff show in most lessons enhances learning
- Course retention rates are excellent

Areas For Improvement

- The library needs to be developed as a learning resource
- The provision for key skills needs to be reviewed to ensure that key words are displayed, all opportunities to develop numeracy are seized and that ICT is always used appropriately

210. A number of courses are offered in the sixth form including A/AS level business studies, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in business (AVCE), GNVQ Intermediate business and A/AS level accounts, which is taught via a distance learning package with some support offered by school staff. All these options have been introduced since the last inspection, so no comments on improvement can be made.
211. A Level business studies results in 2001 were above average with all candidates gaining at least an E grade, though very few candidates gained either A or B grades. These results represent a significant improvement on the results gained in 2000. All students taking A Level accounts passed; though, again, there were few high grades. The results in both these subjects also show that students made at least good progress. Many commenced their A Level course with modest prior achievement at GCSE but progressed to record final grades that were often better than might have been expected. In the AS level examinations sat by Year 12 students in 2001, pass rates were high though, again, few of the highest grades were recorded. Results on the advanced business course were well above average. All 16 candidates passed with eight gaining merits and six being awarded distinctions. Students on this course made very good progress and achieved results that were considerably above expectations. Standards achieved by students on the Intermediate course were average. Though no distinctions were awarded, most candidates gained merit grades. A further strength of the school's vocational provision is the excellent retention rates that are recorded, with almost all the students starting a course of study gaining accreditation.
212. For present students, standards of work on the AVCE course are, overall, below average but stronger in Year 13 where they are average, though male students are doing better than their female counterparts. All students are making progress in their understanding of business and, for some, their progress is good considering their modest achievements at GCSE. All are confident users of ICT but some of the work

seen was too descriptive with a lack of detailed analysis. Some male students in Year 13, however, are recording higher standards and their work is detailed, analytical and well researched. Standards for students on the Intermediate course are in line with expectations but are very teacher dependent. Some are making good and even very good progress, especially in their communication skills. The quality of some work seen involving the writing of memos and business letters was very good. No work was seen in accounts, but on the A/AS level business courses, where numbers, especially in Year 13 are small, standards overall were below average. In Year 12 some of the students are struggling with the demands of the course. In Year 13, all students are building on their AS level results but most gained lower grades last year and still do not feature enough analysis of business situations in their work. One or two more able students are more confident and their work is more detailed and analytical, with well argued outcomes and conclusions to different business problems and situations.

213. Teaching on all sixth form courses is good overall but is stronger on the A/AS courses. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory, with most being at least good. This good teaching is helping all students to learn and to make progress in their knowledge and understanding. In the most effective lessons, students learnt well because of the well-planned challenges presented. Expectations were high, the work was interesting and students were encouraged to be analytical. Year 13 students benefited from the specialist economics input into a series of lessons on mergers. Learning was good with students identifying the advantages and disadvantages of mergers. Good references were made to topical examples of horizontal mergers. An effective lesson covered business letters and memos and students spent time composing their own examples. Standards of work were good and when using computers to word process their work, sensible use was made of fonts and presentation was good with all students suitably justifying their work, for example.
214. Where the quality of teaching is occasionally less strong, lessons lacked pace. This was especially noticeable in lessons where extensive use was made of ICT. For example in a Year 12 AVCE lesson on customer care, students used the Internet to research the policies of various companies. However, their searches lacked purpose. No clear instructions were given on which Internet sites to search. Consequently, some students wasted considerable amounts of time on forlorn searches. With better planning, time would have been better used, students would have had clear tasks to complete and learning would have been more effective. Indeed, staff need to review the provisions made for developing key skills. In addition to the issue outlined above, few key words are displayed and opportunities to develop numeracy are not always seized.
215. The management of the department is good, with the potential to improve further. The faculty manager for business is a recent appointment, but in a short time he has already had an impact on the department. A clear vision exists about how the department can develop and this is reflected in the bid for business and enterprise college status. Staffing and accommodation are both very good and resources in the department are very good and improving, though library resources are a weakness and this is an area that needs to be improved. The curriculum is very good offering students considerable choice. The provision for accounts involves the use of technology to improve choice and the department's successful association with the Young Enterprise scheme further enhances the curriculum, as well as offering students another opportunity to gain accreditation for their work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

216. Information technology was not a main focus of the inspection, but work was sampled. In the sixth form students have been successful in both ICT and computer studies examinations. In 2001, results were good with a significant proportion of students gaining higher grades. At AS level almost two thirds of students gained B or C grades and all gained B to E grades. The teaching of ICT in the sixth form is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sports studies (physical education)

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

Strengths

- Examination results in 2001 were above the school average
- Students achieve well in coursework, they have a good range of skills including ICT and their personal investigations demonstrate good levels of understanding in relating theory to practice

Areas for improvement

- Improve students' attainment in the higher grades at AS and A Level by promoting independent learning to increase knowledge through a wider range of reading material
- Provide a base to strengthen subject identity so that students have a secure area to store files, extend individual research and use ICT

217. In the three years since the first students took A Level Sports studies, the results have fluctuated. The number of students entered is not consistently high enough to make national comparisons reliable. Students have not attained in the higher grades over the past three years, however, in the past year, while results were below the national average for the four students entered, they performed better in sports studies than they did in other subjects. The introduction of AS level last year has improved opportunities for students to gain a higher interim grade with half of those entered being successful in the higher grades and half attaining C and D grades.
218. Inspection evidence shows that students currently in Year 12 are producing work of an average standard. The Year 13 group is very small. Attainment in Year 13 shows above average ability in planning, research, presentation and investigation of coursework. Within a wide ability range, most students in Year 12 achieve well in the anatomical and skills related aspect of course. They devise programmes as part of their individual portfolios, linking their own investigations, such as, measuring heart rate responses, to increase their knowledge and understanding of the body's circulatory system. In contemporary studies, they present information accurately and the majority are beginning to analyse sociological and theoretical models with growing confidence. Most can apply a competent knowledge and understanding of the course when they speak to an audience as part of a group assessment. The quality of students' work in Year 12 varies: the highest-attainers have a good command of a range of technical language and plan, analyse and present personal projects with increasing accuracy and understanding. Average and lower-attaining students demonstrate weaknesses in using a wide range of reading resources in their research and as a result, their writing lacks a systematic analytical approach.
219. All students have made good progress since they started the course and are achieving well in planning, presentation and writing skills. In presentations and discussions, most are developing technical vocabulary and some make good use of knowledge from their own participation in sport to make connections which helps to structure their writing through the use of first-hand exemplification.
220. Overall, the teaching is good. The most effective teaching involves the use of good resources and discussion so that students extend their thinking and analytical skills. Teachers are successful in encouraging students to present their work using ICT and extending their literacy skills in oral and written presentations. Teachers use good questioning and brainstorming techniques to engage students in discussion so that they know how to assess their own performance. Where teaching and learning were very good, students were effectively challenged and expectations were high. Clear outlines for presenting and assessing their oral skills were well planned by the teacher. As a result, students felt successful because of the supportive atmosphere and constructive advice. The very well-equipped fitness suite is

used well to support learning, but the range of reading material and visits to support research and portfolio investigation, is limited.

221. Students have a responsible attitude to their work. The sport and recreation contribution for all sixth formers offers a good practical base for those taking the AS and A Level courses. Most students are able to express themselves clearly and are keen to improve their enquiry skills, however, numbers are small in Year 13 and consequently, opportunities for students' collaborative learning are limited. Students are appropriately supported for higher education through well-focused independent study though the lack of a dedicated area to raise the standard of investigative research is having a detrimental affect on average and lower-attaining students' attainment.
222. Co-ordination of the sports studies curriculum is effective and the range of expertise in the PE department is an important contribution towards students' success in sixth form PE. The introduction of an AS level course has increased the number of students successfully taking a one year course. A careful analysis of A Level results and staff training for examination courses is steadily increasing students' attainment overall. Monitoring and analysis of the quality of students' investigation and research at the homework stage is limited.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

223. The main focus in the inspection was music but work was sampled in art, drama and media studies. In the sample subjects the teaching was generally good and in the A and AS Level examinations in 2001, most students did as well or better than predicted. The results in A Level drama have been very good.

Music

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject and enthusiasm
- Quality of relationships
- Attitudes and behaviour of students
- Well developed independent learning

Areas for improvement

- Attainment at A/S and A Level
- Recruitment to the course

224. When they start their sixth form course students' standards are variable. Some embark on GCE AS Level music technology without having previously taken GCSE music. These students struggle to achieve an AS Level pass grade by the end of Year 12 due to their low level of musical literacy skills. A small entry of 4 students in 2001 attained GCE A Level results above the national average with all passing though with no higher grades.
225. By the end of Year 13 attainment is close to the national average. Within a wide ability range most students achieve well. Two of the four students in Year 13 are re-sitting the AS Level examination. Students are competent in a range of topics based on sequencing and audio recording. A few are held back because they are less confident, or familiar, with musical notation and musical devices such as harmony and structure. Students can successfully sequence music such as an extract from a Mozart string quartet, but this takes them longer to achieve than is usual. They can create their own short pieces harmonised with simple chords using first and second inversions. Knowledge of more complex harmony is less well developed and Compositions are of simple structure and generally lack the musicianship normally

expected at this stage. Year 13 students fail to use technical musical vocabulary when they describe music. The majority of students in Year 12 have made satisfactory progress in the comparatively short time since they started the course. They are achieving above average standards.

226. Teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the technical aspects of sound recording and sequencing software so that problems students encounter are swiftly and competently answered. This is enhanced by the enthusiasm teachers have for the subject and their very positive relationship with students who appreciate the availability of teachers outside lessons in providing individual help. In the best lessons teachers fully involve students in discussion as a key part of the lesson. There is a strong commitment in the department to high standards and teachers give freely of their time to helping students realise their potential. Students concentrate well in lessons, they work independently very effectively with teachers giving help when necessary. Students appreciate the individual support they are given by their teachers, the good relationships established and the value of music to their personal development.
227. Music is very well led by an enthusiastic and competent musician. The new-style AS and A2 provision has been successfully introduced. Students' views are positive. They feel they were guided well as they chose music technology, and they value the very good support available to them during the course.
228. Within the departments there is a good range of sixth form resources including books, worksheets and very good ICT equipment, which are used comprehensively. The recording studio and the very good range of music related software is well used and highly valued by the students. The quality and number of books available for music technology within the library is unsatisfactory. There are too few music specific books and no materials relating to the courses studied by students. However, the department does have a small selection of good quality textbooks and very good facilities accessed by students on the Internet to enhance their individual research.

HUMANITIES

229. The main focus in the inspection was on history but work was sampled in geography, sociology, law and psychology. In geography, examination results were in line with the national average in 2001. One Year 12 lesson was observed and this was satisfactory. Students achieved a sound understanding of the characteristics of rural areas. However, they worked slowly, being reluctant to contribute their ideas despite the encouragement of the teacher. As the groups fed back their ideas the teacher used his very good subject knowledge in encouraging the students to identify patterns and generalisations. Their previously completed work shows them to be working at the expected level for the course. A very good law lesson enabled students to achieve well. Similarly good achievement was seen in psychology

History

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

Strengths

- Year 12 students did well in the AS Level examination in 2001
- The majority of students are achieving well
- Teaching is knowledgeable, challenging, supportive and often highly imaginative
- Students have positive attitudes and put considerable effort into their work

Areas for improvement

- A Level results were well below average in 2001
- There is considerable imbalance in the size of teaching groups in Year 12

230. A Level results were well below average in 2001. No students gained Grade A and their relative performance was worse than in their other subjects. Girls' performance was worse than that of boys. However, these results were a significant improvement upon those of previous years and the current standards are better than the previous year's A Level results would suggest. Almost all Year 12 students passed their AS Level papers, most with good grades. The work of these students now in Year 13, shows that the improvement is being maintained, with just over half showing above average standards. These students write good essays that are well organised and highly relevant to the question being answered. For example, an essay on the methods that Mussolini used to gain power shows a good understanding of the topic and issues surrounding it and uses well-selected material to sustain an analytical argument. The students who are reaching average standards produce work that indicates at least sound knowledge and usually, appropriate selection of material. However, omission of important details, such as the conditions in Italy that made it more likely that Italians would be susceptible to Mussolini's theories and policies, or in some cases, the inclusion of irrelevant material, prevents them from reaching higher standards.
231. The achievement of Year 13 students is good. The department acknowledges that the performance of students in the A Level examination has previously been disappointing, when compared with expected grades. It has thoughtfully improved its strategies for supporting students, by focusing on skills in writing, critical analysis of sources and examination technique.
232. In lessons, the attitudes of students to the subject are always good and often very good. The majority put considerable effort into their preparation. This was an important factor in the success of a lesson on the collapse of the Weimar Republic in Germany, in which students had to research and adopt roles, when debating the contribution of various individuals to this. In another lesson, students critically analysed the essay of a member of the class in a highly mature and balanced, but supportive, manner. In a discussion, students were highly complimentary about the quality of teaching and individual support that they receive. There was unanimous agreement that some of the teaching has an inspirational impact.
233. The quality of teaching is good overall and is often very good. The teachers have only developed their experience of sixth form teaching relatively recently. However, they have a strong knowledge of the topics that they teach and a good understanding of the historical techniques that students need to develop. In the best lessons, teaching is highly imaginative, providing students with challenging and highly motivating opportunities to research, discuss and critically analyse evidence. Very clear guidance is given on the criteria that students need to meet to succeed and individual support is well targeted. Essays are marked in considerable detail and this is complemented by discussion with individual students. In lessons, teachers ensure that all students are involved, although this is difficult in one very large group in Year 12. On a few occasions, teachers provide answers to students, rather than prompting them to seek their own.
234. In Year 12, there is considerable imbalance in the distribution of students into the two teaching groups, which leads to inequality in the opportunities available to those in each. One has twenty-three students, which makes it difficult for all to always be fully involved in activities and discussion. The other only has five, so that the range of activities and discussions is relatively limited. For example, a very effective lesson in the larger group, in which students enacted a court case, nevertheless had some relatively less involved students. It would have been more difficult to carry out with equal success in the smaller group, as this had too few students to allocate all the roles, unless they had taken on more roles, with consequent loss of specialised focus and depth.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

235. The inspection focus was on the English Literature course and the combined English Language and Literature course.

English

Overall the quality of provision in English Literature and English Language and Literature is **good**.

Strengths

- Good relationships between staff and students to work confidently
- Students have positive attitudes to work
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables students to make appropriate progress
- Attainment is good in English Literature in relation to national standards and other subjects

Areas for improvement

- Assessment is not used consistently enough to aid students' progress and the use of performance data is not secure
- Schemes of work need to be developed to support learning
- ICT is not being used as a tool for learning

236. A Level results in 2001 for both courses showed that all students achieved at least as well as predicted and a number of students significantly exceeded the predictions. The English literature results were good both compared with national results and other subjects. Not enough students took the English language and literature course to make comparisons with national results reliable.
237. The standard of work of current students is above average overall and students are achieving well relative to their starting points. The student presentations showed their understanding of the material being studied but lacked structure and detail. Students' files are detailed and well-organised, though with heavy reliance on printed sheets rather than their own notes. The amount of assessed work is satisfactory and shows evidence that students are making good progress over time, for example in the construction of introductory paragraphs. They are on track to achieve their target grades.
238. Teaching was never less than satisfactory overall, with some significant strengths. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they share readily and enthusiastically with their students. They have a very good understanding of the examination requirements so that students are well prepared for A Level. The teaching was thorough, with both intellectual challenge and stimulus. In all classes seen students contributed confidently and felt able to express views which contrasted with those of others. For example in a lesson on "1984" there was a lively debate about the fate of Winston. Some of the student contributions to discussion showed considerable insight of the lives and values of others, for example in a discussion of racism in "The Colour Purple". Relationships between students and between teachers and students are good and enable students to work confidently and with interest.
239. Opportunities were given for different types of learning, with three techniques used frequently, explanation by the teacher, clear and effective questioning leading to good class discussion, and presentation by students. However the small size of the teaching groups inhibited other activities. Limited use is made of ICT as a learning tool. Occasionally there was a lack of pace and rigour which detracted from the learning. The marking and assessment of work was variable. Comments on work were all encouraging, but there were few examples of evaluative comments giving clear guidance about how to improve standards.
240. The curriculum is well resourced within the department but the school library offers a limited range of supporting material. Both courses make a positive contribution to the development of communication skills and to the social and cultural education of the students. Members of staff who share a teaching group plan carefully and very appropriately for their aspects of the work discuss their work regularly but there are no documented schemes of work as yet. These would enable staff to share expertise and plan more readily.

Modern Languages

241. The main inspection focus was on French but Spanish was also sampled in Year 13. Comparisons of results with the national results are not possible because of the low numbers taking the subject. One lesson was observed. The teaching was very good and the student made good progress in listening, speaking and reading. Good use was made of up-to date reading material, some of which was from the Internet. A scrutiny of course work revealed satisfactory standards in written work.

French

Overall the provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good
- Planning and preparation of lessons are very good
- The standard of speaking, listening and reading is very high
- Teachers' subject knowledge and linguistic skills are very good
- Teachers effectively use French as the normal means of classroom interaction

Areas for improvement

- More use should be made of information communication technology to enhance learning
- The number of students studying French in the sixth form should be increased

242. The numbers opting for French have been low, and in one year only one student took A Level. No boys have taken A Level French. Comparisons with the national results are therefore unreliable. However in the three years since the first students took A Level, eight out of eleven students passed, though with few higher grades.
243. The current French groups are very small. Evidence from work seen in lessons shows that very good standards are now being achieved in listening, speaking and reading. The written work in course files is satisfactory. Current progress is good and work shows understanding of both the gist and details from a wide range of written and spoken texts. Lessons are conducted entirely in French and students have good pronunciation and intonation. Oral responses are fluent and accurate, after some reflection. Written work is fairly accurate and contains a good range of structures and vocabulary.
244. The sixth form teaching seen in French lessons was never less than good. Lessons are very well prepared and the aims are clear and appropriate. Teachers provide good strategies to develop reading and listening and improve speaking, with skilful use of guided questions and cues and prompts. Very good use is made of authentic listening and reading resources including material on video and from the Internet. Lessons move at a brisk pace and good use is made of deadlines.
245. There is good leadership for the subject and teachers have a common approach to teaching, assessment and correction of work. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and are very competent linguists. The French 'assistante' also has a good impact on developing speaking and listening skills.