

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTH WALSHAM HIGH SCHOOL

North Walsham

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121154

Headteacher: Mr J Catton

Reporting inspector: Mr W Keast
1522

Dates of inspection: 12 - 16 May 2003

Inspection number: 249220

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 - 16

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Spenser Avenue
North Walsham

Postcode: NR28 9HZ

Telephone number: 01692 402581

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Solly

Date of previous inspection: 12 May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1522	W Keast	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion including race relations	How well are students taught?
9271	S Ward	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well is the school led and managed?
22423	J Lovgreen	Team inspector	English Drama	The school's results and students' achievements.
1503	T Browne	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3242	M Newman	Team inspector	Science	
1990	G Preston	Team inspector	Design and technology	
32208	D Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10761	P Willan	Team inspector	History English as an additional language Special educational needs	
17808	S Orpin	Team inspector	Geography	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15208	A Briggs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music	
27226	R Cribb	Team inspector	Physical education Religious education	
2501	R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art	
18178	I Matthews	Team inspector	Citizenship	How well does the school care for its students?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

North Walsham High School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls, aged from 11 to 16, situated in the small market town of North Walsham. The school has 925 students and is similar in size to most secondary schools. A very small number of students come from ethnic minority backgrounds and none is at an early stage of learning English. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and those on the child protection register receive external support or a statement of need. The proportion of students with a statement of need is broadly average. Although the proportion of students known to be eligible for a free school meal is broadly average, national indicators show that the majority of students come from areas with above average deprivation. Their attainment when they come to the school is below the national average. A significant proportion of students come with behavioural problems. Approximately three-quarters of the students continue in education beyond the age of 16. The school has had difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced teachers in some curriculum areas. The school has recently received a second achievement award for the improvement in its results. It has gained Investor In People status in recognition of its work. The school has successfully raised sufficient resources to allow a bid for specialist school status in Performing Arts.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

North Walsham is an improving school, providing a sound education for its students. GCSE results are rising more rapidly than the national trend. Students do not make enough progress in the early years but, over their time in the school, they achieve well. The new headteacher is providing very good leadership, and good management has resulted in much improved teaching over the last three years. Teaching is sound with much that is good or better. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Students do well by the time they leave the school. The good achievement by the end of Year 11 is demonstrated in the 2002 results and the standards of the current Year 11 students
- Pastoral care and relationships are good. Students are well known and get good individual support to help them develop as young people and as learners
- The developing curriculum in Years 10 and 11, with its three pathways and increased links outside school, is providing all students with more varied and appropriate learning opportunities
- The headteacher provides very good leadership; the school is well managed at all levels. This results in the school being self-aware and self-critical, with a strong focus on staff development and team building
- There are improved links with the community and a stronger partnership with parents. This consultation means that the school is both better informed and more responsive to the views and suggestions of these partners

What could be improved

- The unsatisfactory provision for music and citizenship, neither of which meets statutory requirements because the schemes of work do not systematically cover the necessary topics
- The standards which students reach by the end of Year 9, particularly in English
- The attitudes and behaviour of some students, principally in Years 7 to 9, which show a lack of motivation and cooperation
- The consistency of teaching, particularly in terms of: the recruitment of specialists; better basic classroom management; more regular marking of written work in Years 7 to 9 with a focus on telling students what skills they are using well, and what they need to do in order to improve further

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 May 1997. Since then, improvement has been good, particularly in the last three years. All the issues raised in the previous report have been tackled with significant improvements in GCSE results, the consistency of teaching, strategic planning, the sharing of a clearer understanding of educational goals, the provision for art, greater opportunities for spiritual development and a daily act of corporate worship. The time issue surrounding a second modern foreign language have been resolved, but staffing difficulties have meant that teaching improvement and the raising of students' expectations have still to be achieved. Additionally, strengths in student welfare have been maintained, much more assessment data is collected and used to set appropriate targets and there is greater consultation with parents. The school has gained two national achievement awards and has been awarded Investor in People status.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Similar schools are those in which the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is between 13 and 21 per cent. Schools with similar students are those whose students gained average points of at least 26 but less than 27 in their Year 6 tests..

Students' standards when they come to the school are below average and they are currently reaching the national average by the time they leave. Over the five years, therefore, they are achieving well.

In 2002, results in the end of Year 9 national tests were below national average. They were in line with similar schools but well below those achieved in schools with similar students. Results in English were well below all the respective averages. Those in mathematics were in line with the national average and those in schools with similar students. They were above average for similar schools. Science results were below national average and well below those in schools with similar students. They were in line with those in similar schools. This group of students made well-below average progress from their test results in Year 6. Overall, boys did better than girls. The trend over the last five years has seen results rise on a par with the increase nationally.

GCSE results improved in 2002 and the school met its relatively challenging targets of 44 per cent of students gaining five or more grades A* to C with an average point score of 42. Girls did better than boys, as they have for the last three years. Results, based upon the average point score, were above those of schools with similar students. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades was at the national average, and above average for similar schools and schools with similar students. Students made good progress from the standards they reached in their Year 9 tests, two years previously, and they achieved well. When compared to their performance in the other subjects they studied, there was significantly stronger performance in English language, mathematics, and statistics. Students did less well in science, design and technology, geography, German, physical education and sociology. Results, over the last five years, show a rising trend which is above the national trend.

The school has set particularly challenging targets of 52 per cent of students gaining five or more grades A* to C with an average score of 40 points for 2003.

Standards of the current Year 9 students are, overall and in many subjects, broadly at nationally expected levels. They are at the expected levels in mathematics and science. Standards in English are below the expected level but are higher than last year because of better focused teaching. In other subjects, standards are below expected

levels in design and technology, modern foreign languages, music and citizenship. Compared to their attainment on entry in Year 7, this is at least satisfactory achievement in all but music. Standards in Year 11 are at national expectation overall, and in most subjects. They are above in history and below in design and technology, geography, music, and well below in French and German. Achievement overall is good, but there is underachievement in music, French and German.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most students have a positive attitude to learning, particularly in the older classes, although they are rather passive participants in lessons. A small but significant minority of younger students are reluctant learners and can be disruptive when they are not closely supervised and supported.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory in most lessons and good around the school. In some lessons, students' behaviour is unsatisfactory and this detracts from their learning. Students feel safe and that any reported incidences of bullying or other inappropriate behaviour have been effectively tackled. There have been 23 temporary and two permanent exclusions over the past year. This is quite a low number for the size of school.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is satisfactory and relationships throughout the school are good. Students get on well with one another and with their teachers and other adults. Those that take up the opportunities offered to take on responsibilities become more mature, but a minority of students are unwilling to take part in school activities.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. It is a little below average. There is a particularly high proportion of parentally condoned absence. Punctuality could be improved. Too many students amble in to school with no sense of urgency after the time they should be in registration or assembly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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 in mathematics and science is satisfactory throughout the school. Teaching in English is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in most other subjects is satisfactory. It is good in history, information and communication technology, and physical education throughout the school. It is also good in design and technology, drama and art in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is unsatisfactory in music throughout the school, and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. There have been staffing difficulties in both these subjects.

Particular strengths in the teaching lie in teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of examination requirements. This leads to good planning of three-part lessons which, by their consistency and structure, support students' learning. Students' learning is satisfactory overall, and generally better in Years 10 and 11 because students are more mature and concentrate and work harder. Throughout the school, students are passive in their learning, they follow instructions carefully, show an increasing pride in their work, but the majority do not demonstrate a thirst for knowledge. Generally, students' behaviour is managed well. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed when students failed to make sufficient progress. This was because younger students' behaviour was not well managed by individual teachers, individuals teaching outside the

subject for which they initially trained were insecure in their knowledge or the teaching strategy chosen either provided too little challenge for the higher-attaining students or too great a challenge for the lower-attaining students. Over time, teaching is unsatisfactory in music because it has not covered the requirements of the National Curriculum nor has it provided a continuity of experience.

Skills of literacy and numeracy are generally well taught within English and mathematics. The development of literacy skills is more consistent across other subjects than the development of numeracy.

Overall, the school meets the learning needs of all students well. This is achieved by teaching students who are grouped by ability, the developing curriculum in Years 10 and 11, the good in-class support for students with special educational needs and the effective teaching of those withdrawn for focused support. This is supported by an extra-curricular programme for identified talented and gifted students and additional support for students approaching examinations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11 with the new subject choices available. The taught curriculum is enhanced by a good provision of extra-curricular activities. Careers education is good. The provision for students' personal, social and health education is being developed and is satisfactory. Neither the provision for music nor the newly introduced citizenship meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good, particularly when specialist staff work with identified students, for example in the small groups withdrawn for reading support. It is variable within subjects. Most teachers plan and prepare appropriate materials for all students. A range of external services is effectively co-ordinated to support students.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	There are few students who are identified with English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of learning English. Their progress is monitored along with all other students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Students have appropriate opportunities for reflection and for thinking about others, particularly through well-planned assemblies. They learn about moral issues and choices. They have good opportunities to work together in lessons and many students take on responsibilities. Students learn about their own and other cultures in art, religious education and some other subjects, but opportunities are missed for developing appreciation of music.
How well the school cares for its students	Well, with very good child protection procedures. The school has good systems to monitor and support students' welfare. Students get strong support from tutors and year team leaders. Good support structures for behaviour management are not consistently used by all staff. Gathering assessment data and using it to promote students' progress both within and across subjects is improved. It is satisfactory but with inconsistencies between subjects.

The school works very well to involve parents and has developed a good range of ways to provide information and links with the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school benefits from the very good leadership of the headteacher, who works in close and effective partnership with the other members of the leadership team to provide very clear direction in a school where there is a shared commitment to school improvement. Students are taking a growing pride in their school. The school is well managed. Teaching and learning is monitored effectively and most staff with management responsibilities do a good job.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive and committed to the school and do a good job. They visit regularly and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and of those areas that could be improved.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Analysis, evaluation, consultation and comparison over what the school does and how it might be improved, have been important factors in the recent improvements in standards. In this way, the school makes good use of the principles of best value.
The strategic use of resources	Spending is properly linked to a comprehensive strategic plan. Because the plan is broken down into manageable sections, it forms a useful tool in setting and managing school priorities. Grant funds are used effectively and for the proper purpose.

The school has had difficulty in recruiting sufficient qualified and experienced staff. Overall, specialist staffing is adequate with strengths in art, history and physical education but some remaining weakness in mathematics, science and design and technology. Resources for teaching the curriculum are satisfactory. with strengths in history and mathematics but some gaps in design and technology, and library book stock levels are low. Accommodation is adequate. The school has made many improvements in recent years and subjects are taught in suites of rooms. The large number of demountable buildings do not provide a conducive learning environment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations that students will work hard and achieve their best • Friendly approachable school and staff • Their children make good progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' behaviour • Homework • Information about students' progress • Closer involvement of parents

A minority of parents returned the questionnaire or attended the meeting, so the views above may not be representative of the total parent body. Parents at the meeting were generally more positive and felt more involved in the school. The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views but considers that the school is now working very closely with parents and that good information is provided about students' progress. Students' behaviour has improved, and the amount of homework set is satisfactory, although in both these areas there is room for further improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

- 1 The attainment of students when they come to the school is below national average, judged by national tests taken at the end of Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 9 were similar to those at the last inspection, but at GCSE they have risen. In 1996, 29 per cent of students gained five or more passes at grades A* to C while in 2002 the figure was 46 per cent. Similar marked improvements have taken place in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes, and at least one GCSE pass. The school has received two achievement awards for the improvement in these standards
- 2 Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were below average overall. This was a decline from the previous year. Whilst students reached the national average in mathematics, they were below it in science and well below in English. The 2002 results were in line with those gained by students in similar schools¹. They were well below those gained in schools with similar students². These results show that students did not make enough progress and that achievement in Years 7 to 9 was, overall, unsatisfactory. This is confirmed by the recently-introduced value-added measure. The overall trend of improvement has matched the national trend, but there have been notable fluctuations in the performance of girls.
- 3 The 2002 GCSE results were the best ever achieved by the school and matched the challenging targets which had been set. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C passes, and their overall points score, have improved markedly since the last inspection. They are now at the national average and above both those for similar schools and for schools with students who had similar end of Year 9 results. When comparing the proportion of students who passed five or more subjects at GCSE, the school was well above the national average, the average for similar schools and the average for schools with similar Year 9 results. The proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE pass was above the national average and well above the other schools' averages. The achievement for this year group of students was good. Girls did better than boys, as had been the case in the previous two years. Results are improving at a greater rate than they are nationally.
- 4 Compared to the national picture, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was average in both English and mathematics and below average in science. When compared with schools, nationally, which had similar Year 9 test results in 2000, English results were well above average, mathematics above average, and science in line with the average. Students, overall, made comparatively greater progress in English language, mathematics and statistics, and less in science, German, geography, physical education, sociology and design and technology.
- 5 Overall, the standards of the current students are at nationally expected levels at the end of Year 9. They are below expected levels in English, design and technology, French, German, citizenship and music. In terms of students' starting points in different subjects, overall achievement is satisfactory. It tends to improve as students move towards the end of Year 9 national tests. Students are achieving well in mathematics, science, art, geography, history, information and communication technology, and physical education. They are underachieving in music. Where there is good achievement it is because classes are well managed by teachers who motivate students and stimulate their interest. Such

¹ Schools in which the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is between 13 and 21 per cent.

² Schools with students who gained average points of at least 26 but less than 27 in their Year 6 tests.

teachers clearly communicate the standards required for success, and then teach students how to develop and demonstrate the relevant skills. Mathematics lessons have a strong focus on examination requirements. In physical education good relationships are apparent in the many extracurricular activities offered and taken up, and in the expectation of, and response to, smart kit requirements. In subjects where there is unsatisfactory achievement teachers have lower expectations of what students are capable of. In music, teaching over time is unsatisfactory and what students are taught bears no relationship to national curriculum requirements. In modern foreign languages, students' speaking skills are weaker than their listening and reading skills.

- 6 Overall, standards of the present Year 11 students are close to nationally expected levels and a little better than previous results show. This is due in no small measure to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, in each of which standards match the expected levels. Standards in history, where teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified, are above expected levels. Students' overall achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. It is satisfactory in geography, design and technology and religious education and unsatisfactory in music, French and German. There is a history of underachievement in modern languages partly as a result of the number of boys who are demotivated. Students who are gifted and talented are taught in the top sets and make the similar good overall progress as their peers.
- 7 Students have satisfactory basic reading skills, though too few spontaneously use reading for pleasure or to find information. Limited writing skills, in terms of the structure, range, accuracy and appropriateness of extended writing, hold down the standards which students achieve in some subjects. This is most noticeable in the case of average-attaining students, especially boys. Most students have sound conversational English, but the skills of many in class discussion are under-developed.
- 8 Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. As a result of training and guidance, teachers in subjects beyond mathematics are aware of the importance of numeracy, although both the development and use of these skills are less well advanced than literacy. For example, in design and technology and in science, students make less use of numeracy skills than is normally found, although in geography some good use of graphs was evident. The ability of students to explore and apply mathematics is a relative weakness in the subject.
- 9 Students with special educational needs learn, for the most part, in mainstream lessons. There, overall, they make similar progress to other students. Progress was unsatisfactory, in modern foreign languages and music, where teachers' planning did not always take account of students' identified needs. Occasionally teachers missed opportunities to adapt their materials for the wider range of student attainment in the class. In the small teaching groups, withdrawn for reading and taught by specialist teachers for special needs, students make good progress overall.
- 10 The school has very few students identified with English as an additional language. None is at an early stage of language acquisition. All are readily accommodated within mainstream classes and make progress in line with their peers.
- 11 Students information and communication technology (ICT) skills are broadly as expected for their age. They use their skills effectively to support their learning in many subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 12 Students' attitudes are satisfactory, overall. A significant minority of students join North Walsham High School with a negative attitude to learning, and this adversely affects the progress they make initially. Attitudes are improving, however, and most students are beginning to take a growing pride in

their school. Attitudes, overall, are notably better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, with the older students generally showing better motivation. Even in the Year 10 and 11 classes, however, students are rather passive learners. They readily comply with instructions from teachers but they show little enthusiasm for learning and most students do not develop strong independent learning skills.

- 13 The behaviour of students is satisfactory. Around the school, including at break and during the short lunch period, behaviour is good. Inspectors found no evidence of aggressive or oppressive behaviour. In lessons, however, students' behaviour is sometimes less than satisfactory. Where students are not well managed either by the teacher or by support staff, a small but significant minority can be disruptive, distracting others and interrupting their learning, for example by taking equipment from other students during science experiments or by sullenly ignoring the teachers' instructions. There have been 23 fixed-term exclusions over the past school year and two permanent exclusions. This is a relatively low number for the size of school. The sanction of exclusion has been used appropriately and there is evidence that it has been effective as only two of the students excluded last year were excluded more than once. The frequency of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour in some lessons is similar to the position reported in the last inspection.
- 14 Relationships throughout the school are good. Students get on well with one another and with the teachers and other adults in the school. When given the opportunity in lessons, students generally collaborate well together, sharing tasks fairly, although mostly they choose to do so in single gender groups. Many students benefit from the opportunities available to them. Older students are able to take on responsibilities as prefects, for example, and students in each year group are able to join the Student Council or take part in overseeing welfare issues through membership of the school's junior health and safety committee. Reports given by the head boy, head girl and chair of the school council are now a regular feature of a governors' committee. Although these opportunities enable students to develop and mature, and contribute to their understanding of their rights and responsibilities as young citizens, students' personal development, overall, is only satisfactory as too many students take little part in such activities.
- 15 Attendance is broadly similar to the level reported in the last inspection. It is a little below average and this is unsatisfactory. There is a particularly high proportion of parentally-condoned absence, with a number of students taking days off, for example for birthdays and shopping trips. Punctuality could be improved. Too many students amble into school, with no sense of urgency, well after the time they should be in their year group assemblies or class registrations. In the main, however, students move to lessons quickly and without fuss, particularly in the mornings. Some lessons have a late start not because students are tardy in getting from one lesson to another but because, with no 'bell' system to signal the end of each lesson, some teachers allow lessons to overrun the allocated time.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 16 Overall, the observed teaching was sound. More than half the lessons observed were good or better. Nearly one lesson in five was very good or excellent. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and from the situation that existed when the current headteacher took up post nearly four years ago. Teaching was better in Years 10 and 11 than it was in Years 7 to 9. Overall, about one lesson in fourteen was less than satisfactory. Most of these lessons were in Years 7 to 9.
- 17 Teaching over time is better than this as it leads, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to students achieving well. Senior staff operate an on-call system. Monitoring records show that it may be used, on average, about five times a day. During the first two days of the inspection the system was used more than three times the weekly average. The majority of the unsatisfactory teaching occurred on these two days and the inspection evidence shows that the unsatisfactory behaviour of groups of students,

particularly in the first three years, led to some of the unsatisfactory lessons and reduced the learning in others. The first two days were not typical and the second two days were much calmer.

- 18 In most subjects teaching was satisfactory overall. It was good throughout the school in history, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). It was good in Years 10 and 11 in English, art and design and technology. It was unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 in modern foreign languages. Teaching in music is unsatisfactory because it does not cover the requirements of the National Curriculum and, because of staffing problems, students have not had a consistent experience or made nearly enough progress.
- 19 Teachers generally have a good knowledge of their subject and understand well the requirements of examinations. The exception to this is where, because of recruiting difficulties, one or two teachers are teaching subjects for which they were not primarily trained. Teachers put their knowledge to good effect in providing clear explanations and, in Years 10 and 11, providing work which is designed to help students gain the highest grade they can in examinations. Planning is a strength. The three-part lesson recommended by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is used fairly consistently. Nearly all lessons begin with teachers sharing with students what they expect them to learn or to be able do by the end of the lesson. This introduction to the lesson is also used to remind students of their previous learning so that new work develops and builds on what they can already do. Following the main learning activities in the lesson, a final short period of time is used effectively to draw together what has been learnt and to relate it to the planned outcomes. This structure supports students' learning well and its regular use helps them get into a routine.
- 20 The strength in planning leads to lessons which make good use of the time available. Learning resources have been developed and are well used. When learning support assistants are available they work well in support of the students and the teaching. The lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs are therefore well supported in their learning and generally make good progress or, at least, similar progress to their peers. The particular support provided for identified talented and gifted students is currently outside the taught curriculum. Students are grouped in sets according to their ability in most subjects and this helps teachers to match work and activities more closely to students' needs. In most subjects, students in all sets make similar progress. The higher-attaining students generally make good progress with the work in the top sets in English and the additional course in statistics being particularly challenging. In modern languages, higher-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 do not make enough progress when teaching does not provide sufficient challenge. Lower-attaining students also make insufficient progress because the work is too challenging and not well-matched to their needs.
- 21 Students' learning is sound. They work steadily as they gain new knowledge and understanding. Generally, they learn better in Years 10 and 11 because they are more mature, their attitudes to learning are better and they have greater independence in their work. They show an increasing pride in their work as they grow older. On his arrival, the new headteacher determined to improve students' attainment and focused on the GCSE examination success rate. The effect of this focus, and the professional development which accompanied it, shows in the higher expectation that teachers have of what students in Years 10 and 11 can and should be able to do. It has led to the overall improvement in teaching, the better teaching in these years and the greater learning and achievement of these students. Students are compliant in their response to teaching rather than showing a great desire and interest in learning. The school is working hard to change this response.
- 22 There is still variation in teaching across and within subjects. Students' work is marked but teachers do not always follow the school policy. In the best marking, students are very clear about the National Curriculum level or GCSE grade at which they are working and annotations on their work give clear

guidance as to how this might be improved. In poorer marking, either or both of these strengths may be missing. Students, therefore, are not always sure of how well they are doing or how they can improve. Homework which usefully extends or supports the work being done in class helps students to learn.

- 23 Students with special educational needs have most of their learning experiences in mainstream classes, in line with the school's policy of inclusion. Overall, teachers provide appropriately planned materials and activities to meet the students' range of need and, as a result, they often learn well. Learning support assistants work in supporting students on the special educational needs register with the emphasis on the core subjects of mathematics, English and science.
- 24 An experienced team of teachers works with small groups of students, withdrawn from their normal lessons, to improve their reading ages. These groups have their needs precisely identified, and strategies are entirely appropriate and effective. When observed during the inspection, students were seen to make good progress in these sessions as a result of teachers' planning and expertise.
- 25 In addition to these planned learning activities, the learning centre (TLC) works with students whose behaviour is challenging or who need a respite from the pressures of mainstream classes. On these occasions, teachers and learning support assistants provide appropriate learning materials to ensure that students continue to make progress.
- 26 The very few students with English as an additional language learn as well as other students in their mainstream classes. None of these students is at an early stage of language acquisition.

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

- 27 The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, the curriculum provides students with a suitable range of courses. Areas of weakness have been addressed and as a result the curriculum is now considerably improved. This is helping the school to raise standards. Since the last inspection, there is a greater focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and the new ICT strategy is being fully supported with specialist lessons. In Years 10 and 11, almost all students follow a dual award science course, a significant improvement since the last inspection, and higher-attaining students are achieving notable successes in statistics. Almost all students now take a short course in GCSE religious studies. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has recently been enhanced by more vocational opportunities in addition to the traditional subjects at GCSE. Students may choose to follow an intermediate GNVQ (general national vocational qualification) art course, a themed theatre course involving design and technology, drama and media studies, or an engineering course. A carefully selected group of students follows an alternative, work-related programme. The two new curriculum routes were designed to increase motivation and provide a better match to the aptitudes of students. Early indications are that students are responding very positively to these new courses and the school's aims are being successfully met.
- 28 In music, the planned teaching has not ensured that the requirements of the National Curriculum have been met. Difficulties in staffing have meant that students' musical experience has been inconsistent. Students choosing music as an option in Years 10 and 11 have not had the teaching programme that they need to be successful. Citizenship has been recently introduced but, as yet, the coverage of the required content is not secure and the contribution made by the teaching in other subjects has yet to be identified.
- 29 The time allowed for teaching the different subjects broadly follows national guidelines. The organisation for teaching two modern foreign languages in Year 9 has improved since the last

inspection, but at the loss of physical education time for these students. A single 50 minute period, which includes changing time, is insufficient to meet the subject requirements for these students or for those in Years 10 and 11 who do not choose the examination option. A similar time allocation for art and religious education makes it very difficult to teach all requirements in these subjects.

- 30 The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. A very broad span of activities, grouped under the heading of 'study support', is increasingly being linked to the drive to raise standards. For example, booster clubs to sharpen revision skills. Breakfast clubs to improve literacy and numeracy skills are due for significant expansion in September 2003 as a result of substantial new funding. School drama productions, which support the school's bid for specialist status, are effective in motivating students and providing opportunity for them to display their many talents. Each year group benefits from a separate activities week. Year 7 and 8 students travel to battlefield sites across the Channel, while the school link with its German exchange partner is being renewed in June 2003. The energetic physical education department enables students to participate fully in a variety of sports, with several students achieving exceptional standards. Parents appreciate the school providing additional transport to allow more students to benefit from these activities.
- 31 Overall, careers education is good. Although there is a certain lack of clarity in its management and organisation through the life skills programme, actual delivery is better. The programme of careers education is started in Year 9 as part of the options selection process, continues in Year 10 as part of a highly effective work experience programme and in Year 11, students get good careers advice from school staff and the local careers service. The work is supported by the Connexions service. A careers officer provides weekly opportunities, through drop-in sessions or scheduled interviews, for students to discuss issues of concern or guidance. The library contains a good range of up-to-date booklets, guides and magazines which are freely available to students.
- 32 The provision for students' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. It is taught as part of the life skills programme, in combination with citizenship and careers education. Assemblies and tutor periods offer many effective opportunities for PSHE. Drugs and sex education are included in the programme, where they are dealt with effectively and sensitively, appropriate to the age and maturity of the students. Some areas of the PSHE programme are less effective mainly because the school has not yet fully revised the life skills programme.
- 33 The school works closely with its partner schools in the primary sector. Parents speak highly of the effective and easy way in which their children transferred to the school. Three-quarters of students continue in education at the age of 16. In Years 10 and 11, the increased emphasis on courses with a vocational emphasis has helped the school strengthen its relationships with Paston Sixth Form and Community College and the local community. The college contributes funding, training and accreditation for the work-related courses. The school has close links with local employers who not only provide an effective range of work experience placements in Year 10, but also the opportunity for Year 11 students to have an industry day and benefit from mentoring. A physical education project, jointly organised with the college, is assisting a group of potentially disaffected students to improve their social skills, gain a practical qualification and coach students in a linked primary school.
- 34 The 'Widening Horizons' programme effectively provides additional challenge and experiences for identified gifted and talented students in Years 9 and 10. Such students, moving into Year 11, may continue to be involved if they wish. The scheme is already having success in raising students' aspirations and in involving parents in the broader aspects of the education of their children. A successful summer school for gifted and talented Year 6 students was run in 2002 and is to be repeated this summer. The school is planning to extend its work with these students by developing classroom practice and additional teaching strategies.

- 35 For the most part, curricular opportunities for students with special educational needs occur within timetabled lessons and so their opportunities are similar to their peers. For some students withdrawn from lessons, for example those with reading ages significantly below expectations, the specialist teachers provide good, well-planned activities, using tried and tested reading schemes. In mainstream lessons, most teachers ensure appropriate planned activities for students that enable them to make progress along with their peers. However, there is still insufficient direct planning for groups which have a number of students identified on the special needs register, for example in music and modern foreign languages.
- 36 The school makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and this represents good improvement since the last inspection when provision overall was unsatisfactory, with elements that were poor. This provision for students' personal development contributes to their generally satisfactory attitudes and behaviour.
- 37 The school has tackled well the weaknesses identified in the last inspection in the organisation of assemblies and in the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Legal requirements for this are now fully met for all students. For every year group there is a daily assembly, either at the start or the end of the day. Apart from dealing with announcements and celebrating students' achievements, these all include a prayer or moment of reflection and offer a calming start or finish to the day. In a notable example, in an assembly which featured a talented student performing a Britney Spears song, students were encouraged to reflect upon the thought expressed in a line from the song. This helped give an uplifting start to the day.
- 38 Although teachers are encouraged to identify opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their planning of lessons, this does not come through as a particularly strong feature of teaching or of students' experience of learning. There are appropriate opportunities to empathise with others when, in English, geography and history amongst others, writing from the viewpoint of another person, and art provides good opportunities for spiritual development, where students explore the evocation of mood through their own and other artists' work.
- 39 Moral issues are explored satisfactorily both through themes in assemblies, such as 'helping others', and through lessons. For example, students examine environmental considerations in geography, and their discussion of issues arising from Third World poverty has resulted in students getting involved in charity fundraising for relevant causes. The school's own rules and moral codes are clear, as are expectations of behaviour, although there is some inconsistency between teachers in the way in which the school's policies and procedures are implemented. Although students value the rewards system, which involves them collecting gold stars as merits, they view as unfair the fact that some teachers are rather more generous than others in recognising good behaviour, effort and attainment.
- 40 Students have a good range of opportunities to take on responsibilities within the school. For older students this includes work as prefects, and for students in all year groups, there is a chance to get involved in working together with others on the Student Council. Membership is also open to students to join a junior health and safety committee overseeing welfare issues within the school. These and other opportunities help the social development of a number of students, raise their confidence and contribute to the good relationships found throughout the school. Provision overall for students' social development is only satisfactory because not enough is done actively to ensure that all students take advantage of the opportunities on offer. Steps have been taken to reduce the impediments to students, who live in relatively remote rural locations, taking part in after-school activities through the introduction of a late coach once a week. Nevertheless, too many students fail to take advantage of the school's provision for their social and personal development.

- 41 The school is conscious of the need to introduce students to a broader range of cultures to ensure that they are prepared for life in multi-cultural Britain. Subjects such as religious education offer good opportunities for students to learn about their own and other cultures through learning about each of the major world religions. In art, students study aborigine art as well as work by well-known western artists. The weakness in the school's provision for music means that this subject makes little contribution to students' cultural development. Although music is used well in some assemblies, students do not currently have enough opportunities to listen to and appreciate music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- 42 Procedures for ensuring the health, safety and protection of students are good. The school has very good health and safety procedures which leave very little to chance. Premises are checked regularly and identified faults are dealt with quickly and effectively. Risk assessments are regularly carried out and off-site activities are thoroughly assessed before permission is given for the activity to go ahead. Overall, the school is a very safe environment with an appropriate number of staff trained in first-aid. Students are aware of health and safety issues through the junior health and safety committee. This is a highly effective group who take a real interest in the care and maintenance of the building and school environment. The school takes positive action as a result of the recommendations of these students. A recent development is the creation of the 'waste warriors', a group of Year 8 students who are actively participating in schemes to improve the school environment through recycling.
- 43 Child protection procedures are very good. The school has a well-established procedure applied by an effective child protection officer who has undergone all necessary training. The systems are well known to all teaching and non-teaching staff. All have undergone appropriate training and an induction programme ensures that all new staff are fully aware of the procedures.
- 44 The tutoring system is a powerful and supportive aid to student development and improvement. Form tutors and year team leaders move through the school with the students, so they know their students well and provide a positive support for their welfare and development. They are the main link with parents and provide detailed progress information during the routine academic review days. They keep records of progress and play an important role in target setting and counselling students to improve.
- 45 The school has good procedures in place to monitor attendance. Attendance has remained fairly static for three years and the school's best efforts have had little impact in improving it. If students are absent without the school receiving an explanation on the day of the absence, a parent is immediately phoned. The EWO (educational welfare officer) and senior staff work well together. They meet regularly and arrange for suitable support to be provided for students whose attendance is poor. The EWO has considerable knowledge of families in the local area and the local education authority (LEA) will often prosecute the parents of persistent non-attenders. Registers taken during the assembly periods are prone to error and this reduces the effectiveness of an otherwise potentially very good system. The school is aware of these problems and is planning to upgrade the system to ensure a higher degree of accuracy in the initial completion of attendance information.
- 46 Procedures to support positive behaviour and to deal with the occasional incidents of poor behaviour are good. Younger students generally welcome the reward system for positive behaviour, including good work, although they say that it is not used consistently by all teachers. The effective 'on call' system, which has the potential to remove a particularly difficult student, is generally seen by staff as being very supportive and provides a powerful incentive to positive behaviour from the class. The system is not yet being used consistently, in that some teachers will use it too early in the disciplinary process and others will not use it soon enough.

- 47 The school has good procedures for responding to identified incidents of oppressive behaviour, including harassment and bullying. Students are generally confident that tutors will support them and they confirm that the school takes firm and effective action to counter this behaviour. The use of a peer counselling system, where older students provide support to younger ones, is a positive factor in promoting a safe and secure environment for all students.
- 48 Provision for students with statements of special educational needs is good. The annual review process is fully in place, and records of these are readily available. The special educational needs department ensures that students, parents and outside agencies are all fully involved in decisions. Considerable efforts are made to ensure parental involvement for all students. Individual education plans are detailed, helpful for staff, regularly reviewed, and stored electronically.
- 49 The special educational needs team provides support for students who become upset through the school day. For students who have known emotional and other difficulties, the team seeks and receives support from a number of outside agencies, in addition to the opportunities they provide in school. Members of the Leapfrog and Rural Advice Project teams work with individual students and are available, at set times, for students who feel in need of additional support.
- 50 The school's use of assessment is satisfactory overall. It contains a number of strengths, but is not yet consistent across all departments. The previous inspection was highly critical of the school's assessment system and the school has made a big effort to improve it. Information systems have been put in place and data on prior attainment, national test results (including nationally standardised testing), predictions of future performance and information on added value, are available to all departments. These allow careful monitoring of students' achievement and effective target setting, by those departments that thoroughly understand the system and make use of its potential. The improvements in the system are good at the level of policy, information and potential.
- 51 The core subjects of mathematics and science make best use of this data. They have the advantage of nationally validated data from Years 6 and 9. Some departments, such as science, supplement the targets by setting individual targets for GCSE module tests. This aspect of the system is good, but effective target setting needs to be extended across all departments and clearly related to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades as appropriate.
- 52 Departmental assessment is satisfactory overall. However, there are both strengths and weaknesses in this. The aim is to communicate to students the steps that they need to take in order to improve their performance. These formative targets are a more effective contribution to learning than simple numbers or grades. Currently, there are inconsistencies between and within departments. Assessment procedures are good in English, art, physical education and history, and are improving in ICT, design and technology and geography. Other departments make less effective use. Assessment is poor in music, unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and has not yet been tackled in citizenship. Some departments assess well but do not use National Curriculum levels, as anticipated in the school's policy or students do not understand what is required for each level; these include art, ICT and design and technology. The school plans to focus on the most effective indicators of future attainment to make it easier for the system to be fully implemented. Departmental assessment is stronger when there are clear criteria, which means that in general the assessment system for GCSE works better, because of the structure of module tests and coursework and the relative clarity of examination board specifications.
- 53 The school makes satisfactory use of its data to guide planning. Assessment is used to group students into teaching sets, from the beginning of Year 7. This process will be refined in future years when the

school will have access to Year 6 test percentages, which convey more information than a simple level judgement of 3,4 or 5. However, the division of each year group into two bands does not result in an equal ability spread, so that the sets contain a very wide range. In some departments, such as mathematics and science, assessment information is well used to target extra support for students who need it, through after school clubs, booster classes and summer sessions for the higher-attaining students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 54 The views expressed by the parents who completed questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting indicate they feel the school provides their children with a satisfactory education. At the meeting, they were more positive than in the questionnaire responses. In particular, parents appreciate the high expectations teachers have, the approachability of the staff and the progress their children make. They would like to see students' behaviour and homework improved, better information about their children's progress and closer involvement of parents. The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views and found that the school is now working very closely with parents and that good information is provided about students' progress. Students' behaviour has improved, and the amount of homework set is satisfactory, although in both these areas there is room for further improvement.
- 55 The school has developed effective links with parents that have a very good effect on its work. The parents' forum is an active body that meets regularly and enables parents to contribute their views on developments in the school. For example, it influenced the choice of focus for the proposed specialist school status, and through this body, parents' views have influenced the timing of reports and student access to the school site. Parent working groups are developing an information booklet for parents, and creating a school website. The school provides a range of subject information evenings, for example a mathematics evening for Year 7 parents. Parents are involved more directly in school life and make a very good contribution to students' learning by providing help at such events as school productions, discos, sponsored events, sports fixtures, Widening Horizons visits, foreign exchange visits, and school trips.
- 56 Much information is made available to all teachers to assist in report writing. This information is well communicated to parents and students, using a system that has been developed in consultation with parents and is responsive to their opinions. Interim reports give clear guidance on progress and form tutors explain this to parents. Summative reports and the associated parents' evening allow subject teachers to explain performance and set targets for the subsequent year. Detailed information about attendance is also sent to parents. Reports are less consistent in the nature and quality of information about what students need to do next to improve. Parents are given the opportunity to attend an academic review day with their child's form tutor. Taken together, these events inform parents about their children's progress on a very regular basis.
- 57 Other communications to parents, such as the prospectus, are of a good quality and provides them with useful information. Two regular newsletters, the Flyer and The High Flyer, provide a very good source of information. Parental contact is seen as very important in the school and is undertaken for both positive and negative information. In science, parents are contacted swiftly when students' work or attitudes give cause for concern. Every half term, letters are sent to the parents of the two highest-attaining and the two most improved students in each mathematics class, detailing their achievements. The school contacts parents well when there are incidents that are a cause for concern, for example bullying, and ensures that telephone calls are made within a day. Homework diaries are regularly monitored and signed by parents and form tutors, but often they show that homework has not been set in several subjects.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 58 The school benefits from the very good leadership of the headteacher, who works in close and effective partnership with the other members of the school leadership team to provide very clear direction in a school where there is a shared commitment to school improvement. The headteacher, school leadership team and governors have a shared vision for what they want to achieve, both in terms of students' improved academic success and in students' confidence and attitudes to learning.

The headteacher and leadership team have focused well on identifying what needs to be done to raise standards and achievement further. Although school improvement has been rapid over the last three years, particularly in Years 10 and 11, the headteacher, leadership team and governors readily acknowledge that more needs to be done in order to improve teaching and learning, students' attitudes and motivation, and to raise standards further.

- 59 There has been some initial success in improving the climate for learning within the school. Students and their parents speak of a growing pride in the school, with initiatives such as the change in school uniform, with its sensitively phased introduction, making a contribution to changing some of the negative perceptions of the school that parents reported as having been evident in the local community. The school's recent decision to apply for specialist status as a performing arts centre was a bold move, identifying as a specialism not the strongest area in the school but one where headteacher and leadership team expect specialist status will help to raise standards. The school's bid, for which parents and the local community raised more than £60,000, is linked to ambitious plans to better motivate students and to help them develop, through performance, in confidence and self-esteem.
- 60 Within the school leadership team, the headteacher, deputies and assistant headteachers each have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and they carry them out effectively. Almost all heads of department carry out their responsibilities well. Along with senior managers, they are involved in evaluating the effectiveness of their departments through the school's rigorous *Quality Counts* initiative, which has established a programme for reviewing, in turn, the work of each department. Teaching and learning has been rigorously monitored, with action taken to support teachers where weaknesses in teaching have been identified. Where staff have left, particular care has been taken in recruitment. Together, these measures have contributed to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, although the school acknowledges that more improvement is needed to ensure greater consistency between teachers and to further raise standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- 61 Governors are very supportive and committed to the school, and do a good job. They have a clear understanding of both the strengths of the school and those areas that need to be improved. They have, for example, an accurate picture of the subjects in which students do best and those where performance is weak. Their committee structure enables them to carry out their responsibilities effectively so that, for example they probe the headteacher and staff appropriately on what needs to be done to tackle any underachievement. Governors are fully involved in setting the school's priorities and in setting and monitoring financial and other targets. This represents significant improvement since the last inspection, when governors were judged to be insufficiently informed or involved. Statutory requirements for collective worship are now met, as are all of the requirements of the National Curriculum with the exception of music in Years 7 to 9, where provision has suffered as a result of a long bout of staff sickness, and citizenship, which has not yet been effectively incorporated into the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- 62 The school improvement plan, agreed each year by governors following input from staff, is much better than the plan that was in place at the time of the last inspection, which was criticised because it was not detailed enough and did not reflect departmental priorities. The current plan follows the strategic direction set by governors. Its priorities are appropriate and it is a useful management tool because the priorities it lays out are broken down into clearly-defined manageable tasks, each of which has mostly measurable success criteria. The school clearly uses its available resources to support its planning. The school's budget has been placed under pressure following the discovery, three years ago, of a historic overspend that had not previously been apparent. This deficit has been carried forward each year, but the headteacher and governors have now agreed a four-year recovery plan, with the LEA, over which time the school is expected to return to a balanced budget. Grant funds,

including those for students with special educational needs, are used effectively and for the proper purpose. Good use is also made of ICT in the school, both for management and administration, and in supporting learning in most of the subjects of the National Curriculum. Budgetary constraints have prevented the school from introducing an electronic registration system for recording attendance in lessons, but the school has plans to adapt its existing computer network to fulfil this function in response to shortcomings identified in the current systems.

- 63 The school makes good use of the principles of best value to compare how well it is doing. In addition to the departmental reviews, the school uses local authority and national comparative data well to compare its performance with that of other schools. Students are consulted through the student council and parents' views are actively sought through the parents' forum. Appropriate measures are in place to ensure value for money is obtained on major purchases through use of comparative quotations.
- 64 There has been very good improvement in leadership and management since the last inspection. Weaknesses identified in that inspection are now among the strengths of the school. Because the school is very effectively led, there is a shared staff commitment to, and very good capacity for, further improvement.
- 65 The well-qualified team of teachers and learning assistants making up the special educational needs department is well managed by the coordinator for special needs. An experienced member of the team has recently been appointed as lead learning support assistant (LSA). Records are detailed and well maintained.
- 66 The school focus on the continuous professional development of staff is an important aspect of its efforts to improve standards. Overall, provision is good with some very good features. The school has gained the Investor in People award and is well regarded by the University of East Anglia and the LEA for its work in training and developing students, newly qualified and unqualified teachers. It has an extensive internal training programme that relates closely to the needs of staff identified through individual annual performance reviews and departmental needs. A range of good training and accreditation opportunities is also extended to non-teaching staff. Even so, a small number of qualified teachers have yet to fully develop an effective range of class management skills highlighting the need for a continued emphasis on this area.
- 67 The school has experienced some problems in ensuring all subject areas are fully staffed with specialist teachers. There has been considerable change in staff in its efforts to improve teaching and learning and there has been some reliance on non-specialist staff in design and technology and mathematics. Most subjects have sufficient specialist staff with strengths in physical education, history and art. Technical and support staff provide effective support and overall staffing provision is satisfactory.
- 68 Accommodation is satisfactory overall reflecting considerable improvement in recent years from a previously poor provision. A good range of accommodation in physical education includes use of communal facilities. Refurbished classrooms and the creation of good teaching suites in modern foreign languages, mathematics and English have helped teaching and learning in those subjects. There has also been a successful effort to create a safer and more attractive environment through separate pedestrian access to school, an open and more receptive foyer entrance, refurbished toilets, re-decoration and better display areas throughout the school. The use of dated, though adequate, accommodation as well as ageing, demountable classrooms detracts from learning specifically in design and technology, science and history. Physically disabled students have no access to the first floor accommodation. The school is actively engaged in discussing its accessibility plan with the local authority.

69 Resources are now just about satisfactory, after considerable improvement. Most subjects have sufficient learning materials and equipment, while the range of resources is good in mathematics and history. The most significant area of development has been in ICT where provision was previously poor. Currently, one computer for every seven students is close to the national average for secondary schools. ICT resources are further improving and the school is making increasing and effective use of wireless notebook computers that enable much greater and more flexible access to the school network and the Internet. Library facilities are adequate with access to computers, though the number and variety of books and resources are unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70 The school has planned to continue development within those areas that have led to improvement. These plans should continue to be implemented. In addition, to improve standards and the quality of education further, the governors and the school should:

- (1) meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for music and for citizenship. This will require schemes of work which cover the prescribed areas in a consistent manner, and which enable students' progress to be checked
(*paras:5,18,28,41,61,111,112,114,115,158,160,162,163*)
- (2) raise the standards which students reach by the end of Year 9, particularly in English, by monitoring how effectively students are learning the skills needed to succeed in the subjects, and how aware they are of the requirements of any assessments they face
(*paras:2,22,51,52,56,72,75,79,106,107,123,128,156*)
- (3) improve the motivation, and therefore the attitudes and behaviour, of some students, principally in Years 7 to 9
(*paras:6,12,15,17,59,76,97,107*)
- (4) improve the consistency of teaching by addressing:
 - non-specialist teaching which conveys incorrect knowledge
 - inconsistent and sometimes weak management of students in the classroom, which allows too much inattention and misbehaviour
 - marking which does not follow school policy so that students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are unclear about exactly what they do well in their written work, and precisely how they can improve it further
(*paras:13,17,22,46,51,52,66,67,75,81,85,88,96,98,103,113,121,126,179,178*)

In addition, the governors and school should consider including the following less important, but significant, issues in their action plan

- The quality of teaching in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 (*paras:20,147,149*)
- The teaching time given to art, religious education, and some physical education
(*paras:29,105,172,179*)
- The co-ordination of students' cross-curricular use of ICT (*paras:139,140,142,143*)
- The co-ordination of the life skills programme (*para 32*)
- Development of students' use of numeracy skills(*paras:8,91,96*)
- Improving the library stock (*paras:69,79*)

- The better matching of some work to the identified special educational needs of students
(*paras:9,35,148*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	145
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	25	51	56	9	1	0
Percentage	2	17	35	39	6	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	925
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	112

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	111

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	90.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

National comparative data	91.0
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National comparative data	1.2
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	101	104	205

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	71	68
	Girls	66	62	63
	Total	113	133	131
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	55 (62)	66 (66)	64 (65)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (20)	44 (39)	24 (24)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	73	76
	Girls	75	75	67
	Total	132	151	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (68)	75 (73)	70 (63)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (30)	43 (39)	27 (14)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	86	94	180

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	27	79	85
	Girls	55	93	93
	Total	82	172	178
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (41)	96 (89)	99 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38.2 (37.3)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	37	89
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	916	23	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	357

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	22.0.

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	2668443
Total expenditure	2668544
Expenditure per pupil	2821
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 46147
Balance carried forward to next year	- 46248

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	26.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3.4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	925
Number of questionnaires returned	114

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	25	52	13	7	3
My child is making good progress in school.	35	55	8	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	49	25	9	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	49	23	8	1
The teaching is good.	11	66	12	4	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	50	18	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	44	12	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	46	8	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	21	42	25	8	4
The school is well led and managed.	22	43	19	5	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	53	11	4	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	41	21	4	13

The small number of parents who attended the parents' meeting before the inspection were generally more positive in their views than those reflected in the response to the questionnaire.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- In 2002, students achieved very well in GCSE
- Good leadership and management of a department with a strong desire to further improve
- Teachers use strategies such as brisk pair and group discussion, and timed writing, well
- Students have a very good offer at GCSE, with all being allowed to study both English language and literature, and media studies being an option within performing arts

Areas for improvement

- Standards by the end of Year 9, where students underachieved in 2002
- Some classroom management, which is ineffectual in correcting the regular misbehaviour of some younger students, often boys
- Marking which, though regular, does not explain clearly enough to younger students how their marks relate to English skills and what they need to do next
- Extended writing, where younger students do too little, often of a narrow range, because they are not set enough homework

- 71 Over the last three years, results in the national tests in English taken at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated wildly. The trend has been one of decline. In 2002, results were well below national average, and well below those achieved in schools with a similar student intake. Students did worse in English than they did in mathematics and science. Their results show underachievement. The gap between boys' and girls' results was much narrower than that nationally. Teacher assessments were generous.
- 72 The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is below average. This is satisfactory achievement from their standards when they joined the school in Year 7. Higher-attaining students structure essays well and can write with authority and precision. Tasks demanding more complex sentencing sometimes lose control and direction. Literature analysis too often diverts into a detailed account of events, characters, or writers' lives. Average-attaining students show understanding of literature and issues, and a basic awareness of how language creates effects. Boys are weaker, both in terms of technical accuracy and in keeping to a style or train of thought or argument. The work of lower-attaining students shows care and effort. Some details from literature are remembered and a basic viewpoint can be put forward, but the style tends to be rambling and too colloquial. A general weakness is in discussion, especially whole class, where over half the students say little, and very few have understood the importance of listening closely to other people's views.
- 73 GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. In 2002, almost all Year 11 students took examinations in both English language and English literature. When consideration is made for the school having entered an unusually high proportion of students for literature, results in both subjects are broadly in line with the national average. This reflected very good progress from the results, gained by the same students, at the end of Year 9. Both boys and girls made greater progress in English language than in the other subjects they studied; the standards reached by higher-attaining students being particularly good. A relatively high proportion of students took media studies, results matching national averages.

- 74 The evidence of students' work and lessons observed showed that attainment in Year 11 is in line with the national average. This is good achievement. Lower-attaining students write briefly but in sentences. They have reasonable vocabulary but often drift into vague or colloquial expression. They make simple comparisons of texts or ideas which allow them to justify arguments, occasionally with insight. Average-attaining students work consistently and with technical accuracy. They adapt style and explain effects well, but paragraphs and sentences are too unvarying in structure. Higher-attaining students show flair and perception. Complex detail and information are effectively analysed and explained. They use sophisticated vocabulary and show excellent understanding of the background to literature. Students with special educational needs make good progress because teachers have a good awareness of their needs, choose tasks carefully, and give considerable support and praise as appropriate. This allowed students in a Year 10 group to use the intranet to research background information for a study of Wells' 'War of the Worlds', and to show good discrimination about what was most relevant. The very few students with English as an additional language, none of whom is at an early stage, make the same progress as other students.
- 75 Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory. It is notably better to GCSE classes than to classes in Years 7 to 9 because of the focus on examination requirements and a higher expectation of what students can achieve and how they should behave. Students' learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' good knowledge and understanding of their subject is apparent in their clear explanations. All lessons are well planned, leading to clearly structured lessons with effective use of pair and group work, and tightly timed writing tasks. Thus students are learning good study skills and strategies. A Year 9 class made rapid progress when they questioned a well-argued speech about lowering the legal drinking age. Their phrasing of open questions, careful listening to answers, and awareness of the language and conventions of debate were good. Marking is very regular but with a tendency to over-generosity. Whilst students in Years 7 to 9 are given advice about improvement, the language used does not explain how what they have done and need to do relates to their marks. Many are thus unclear about skills' development until they begin to prepare for Year 9 tests. Improvement targets are expressed in too vague a form. Homework is a regular feature but there is too little extended writing and the range of it is too narrow. This encourages limited, generalised writing which does not serve average-attaining students well. Much classroom management is good, but there are occasions where teachers allow themselves to be marginalized by misbehaving students to such an extent that the class makes insufficient progress. This is especially prevalent in class discussion where involvement and attention levels are frequently too low. A Year 9 class, beginning a study of 'The Speckled Band', worked well in pairs but marginalized the teacher during class discussion, when over half chatted, or fidgeted and called out loud and inappropriate answers.
- 76 Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Older students often show a mature approach and a willingness to work which is evident in the quality of much written work. Relationships generally are good. Many students are courteous and cooperative. A significant minority of younger students join the school with poor attitudes to schooling. Their casual, sometimes offensive, language and persistent inattention and minor interruption are wearing, and damaging if not firmly handled and corrected by the teacher. There is no serious defiance, again an improvement from the previous report.
- 77 There has been good improvement since the last inspection. GCSE results have risen, as has the overall quality of teaching. The department is led with drive and energy, and managed efficiently. The standards of students' work and the quality of teaching are regularly checked. All members of the department have a shared concern to raise standards and consequently good potential for further improvement. The curriculum for students at GCSE has been widened so that all can enter both English language and literature examinations, and an additional media studies course has been introduced. Students have good opportunities to use and develop computer skills in lessons, thanks to

improved access to resources. The number and range of books available for classes to use is unsatisfactory.

Literacy

- 78 Students come to the school in Year 7 with literacy levels which are well below average. Strategies for developing these vital skills are good within English and satisfactory across the school. A core group of volunteer teachers, under the leadership of the head of English, has guided the initiative. Across the subjects of the curriculum, staff are now aware and willing, but some still lack confidence about how to integrate the teaching of literacy into their subject work.
- 79 Teachers now realise the importance of the careful explanation of a lesson's purpose, but often forget to check that students have the same understanding. Some jargon is glossed over, and teachers rarely check that students have understood technical vocabulary by asking for definitions and examples. Good work was noted in physical education in relation to the language of fitness and training. Many rooms display 'key words' but these are sometimes word banks which are too small to be read from where students sit, and too infrequently referred to by the teacher. Group discussion is increasingly well used, for instance in history where Year 8 students had to choose the best language for interviewing child factory workers to find out about the conditions in which they worked. In general, teachers are insufficiently aware of the need to provide good models and insist on close listening during class discussion. Similarly, they rightly praise the ideas behind colloquial answers, but do not repeat them in more formal English to encourage greater awareness of the value and importance of spoken Standard English. In subjects such as mathematics, only a few teachers realise the value of open-ended questions to encourage more thoughtful answers.
- 80 Reading is encouraged in form periods and is giving students an improved reading habit, although some short time slots have little value for this. Teachers have a better understanding of how to check that what is read is understood, and most students can now extract the basic meaning within what they read. However, few beyond those in higher-attaining groups are skilled at seeing deeper meaning or inference. Skimming and scanning techniques are beginning to be understood by a wider range of students and internet research, comparison work and guided, timed work are having an impact here. Students use the library at lunchtime, but use at other times is limited. Borrowing rates are low. Stock is reasonable in quality but there are considerably fewer books than in a typical school library of this size.
- 81 Improving writing skills has been one of the keys to improved examination performance. Students write more quickly, accurately and appropriately, although spelling remains a weakness. Presentation of work remains variable, teachers often giving insufficient guidance about layout devices and techniques for minimising error and untidiness. There is little evidence of an agreed strategy for marking and correcting errors across the school, so there is minimal correction in subjects such as geography. Students are adept at taking notes and recording facts, but in subjects such as German and life skills they do too little formal extended writing. In a Year 8 science lesson on smoking, however, students were expected to write lengthy, grammatically correct answers.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The good achievement of students by the ages of 14 and 16
- The above averages standards gained by students in GCSE statistics

- The improving curriculum, which is providing extra opportunities for students
- The strong leadership and management of the department

Areas for improvement

- Consistency and rigour in teaching which are too dependent on the expertise of the staff
- The range of teaching methods which make insufficient use of discussion and various resources
- Insufficient opportunities for students to explore and apply mathematical ideas and skills

- 82 In 2002, the test results at the end of Year 9 were average compared with all schools nationally, and above average compared with similar schools. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Year 9 results have improved over the last three years, and are better than the other core subjects of English and science. Students achieve well, in relation to their attainment on entry, and the standard of work seen during the inspection was at least in line with that expected for students' ages. Students are best at applying routine methods they have been taught, to answer questions in number, algebra, shape work and data handling. They are less strong in the exploration of mathematical ideas or devising and explaining their own methods. In one lesson the higher-attaining Year 9 students were accurate in handling decimals and in written work they used trigonometry techniques to find the sides of given triangles. However, there was little evidence of students investigating ideas and methods, and there were weaknesses, for example in using a calculator to explore percentage increases.
- 83 GCSE results in 2002 were average when compared with all schools nationally. The results were above average taking account of the students' earlier attainment in Year 9 tests, and there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Mathematics results have improved in the last three years, with the proportion of students achieving grade C or above increasing from 37 to 49 per cent. Students in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well and the standards of students' work seen during the inspection reflected the examination results. Students with special educational needs make sound progress as they are generally well supported. The higher-attaining Year 11 students produce neat, methodical solutions to problems, for example in calculating angles in circle diagrams or rearranging formulae. The work of average- and lower-attaining students mainly consists of satisfactory solutions to exercises that practise standard methods. Students of all abilities insufficiently explore or apply the mathematics they learn.
- 84 The results for GCSE statistics have been good, with a higher than average proportion of students achieving grade C or above. Students from the top two sets currently follow this course which is taught within mathematics lessons and some out-of-school sessions. Achievement in statistics is strong because the course is well-organised and it builds on the knowledge and skills the students gain in mathematics. The students are provided with well-structured notes for each unit of work and they work carefully at prepared exercises.
- 85 Students' attitudes and behaviour in mathematics lessons are satisfactory overall, although these vary according to the quality of teaching. In the best lessons, students are attentive and industrious in response to the high expectations for both behaviour and work. In some lessons there is unacceptable chatter and disinterest as a result of weaknesses in preparation or classroom management.
- 86 In the mathematics lessons seen, the quality of teaching overall was satisfactory, but varied between very good and poor, with no significant difference in relation to years or sets. Although not sufficiently consistent, this overall positive picture is an improvement since the last inspection.
- 87 Good features in the teaching include the teachers' planning, which is based on the schemes of work and is suitably matched to students' abilities. The best lessons have clear objectives shared with students, use a three-part structure effectively and involve probing questioning and discussion. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson, students were challenged to invent their own formulae for everyday situations such as "workers' pay." In a very good Year 9 lesson, skilful use was made of

graphical calculators to learn about the algebra behind families of curves; the lesson had variety and pace, making very effective use of discussion, a class set of calculators and an overhead projector. Teaching has a sound focus on literacy within mathematics, evident, at best, in the attention given to key words that are routinely recorded on the board. Good relationships between staff and students contribute to a calm and purposeful mathematics area.

- 88 The main weakness in teaching is the inconsistency in teachers' mathematical expertise, which leads to occasional errors in some solutions on the board or to inadequate explanations. In such cases the quality of questioning and discussion is low and classroom management can be less effective. A general weakness across the department is the narrow range of teaching methods, with a predominant approach of teacher explanation followed by textbook exercise. In the lessons seen, there was very little discussion between students to help them understand ideas and little use made of the available resources. Rooms are very well equipped, as guided by the national strategy, but opportunities were missed, for example when it was appropriate to use practical equipment or to ensure students were all actively involved. The quality of the marking of students' work is also variable, ranging from regular checking with constructive comments to irregular or superficial marking.
- 89 The mathematics curriculum has some major strengths, although satisfactory overall. Helpful schemes of work are based on the national strategy in Years 7 to 9, and the examination syllabus. Successful enrichment includes opportunities for students to improve standards through summer schools, lunchtime and after-school clubs, revision sessions and also to enter national mathematics competitions. Each half term letters are sent to the parents of those achieving well in every mathematics set, and those identified as gifted in mathematics are involved in more-challenging events out of school. The use of ICT to enhance the learning of mathematics is sound and developing, with good access to a computer room for all classes and guidance within the scheme of work. In a good lesson the Year 7 students worked effectively in pairs at computers to improve their angle estimating skills, the session being well structured with timely teacher interventions to ensure skills were built up. In contrast, in a couple of lessons the use made of practice worksheets on computer was not challenging or helpful enough.
- 90 Leadership and management are good and have been the main reason for the good improvements in recent years. Organisation and administration of the department are particularly good, and the enthusiasm and hard work of the leadership have extended students' opportunities and achievements. Actions taken include the introduction of coursework and provision of staff training, links made beyond the school, and the creation of a database of all students' achievements to help teaching.

Numeracy

- 91 Students' numeracy skills are satisfactory and are beginning to be used and developed across the school. Teachers in other subjects are aware of the importance of numeracy, following whole-staff training, although this is having less impact than approaches to literacy. In both design and technology and in science, for example, students make less use of numeracy skills than is normally found, especially in science where use of graphical work is underdeveloped and students are not taught to apply logic skills. However, good use of graphs was seen in geography throughout the school. In most subjects, teachers recognised the occasional opportunity to use numeracy skills, for example with library classification in English, date lines in history, spreadsheet formulae in ICT, everyday situations in modern foreign languages and 3-D models in art. In general, numeracy across the curriculum is at an early stage of development.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Some very good teaching and effective use of ICT to promote learning
- Good recent initiatives in curriculum, the teaching of literacy, the introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the monitoring of achievement
- Very good monitoring and self-evaluation leading to good planning for improvement

Areas for improvement

- The best practice in teaching methods used, raising challenge and behaviour management are not sufficiently consistent, though the department has plans to tackle this
- Too little emphasis on core skills, particularly numeracy

- 92 Results in Year 9 tests in 2002 were below average. The proportion of students reaching Level 5 and their overall point score were in line with the average for similar schools, but were below average at the higher Level 6. They were below the average for schools with similar students, but met the predictions generated by the national cognitive ability tests that the school uses in Year 7. Over the previous five years results had been rising faster than the national trend, although there was a dip in 2002, associated with staffing instability. Over this period, there has been a consistent difference between boys and girls, greater than the national difference.
- 93 Results at GCSE in 2002 were below average. In 2002, they dropped significantly and students did less well in science than in their other subjects. Nevertheless, their performance was not significantly different from that predicted from their prior attainment. Achievement was therefore satisfactory, although it was good in English and mathematics. Girls did significantly better than boys, although their scores, too, were below average. One of the key features, evident in the department's examination analysis, is examination technique, since marks in module tests and in coursework met expectations. The school is well aware of the problem in 2002 and has made a careful self-evaluation of how to improve.
- 94 Standards in class and in exercise books in Year 9 meet national expectations. They include very good examples of the use of homework on an ecology project, where students had used the Internet for information research and had produced well-written and word-processed accounts of their findings. Standards, overall, in Years 7 and 8 are below average, since students enter the school with below average attainment, but there is firm evidence of progress, particularly in the results of the Year 8 module tests. Students are achieving well. The results of departmental effort are visible in the current standards observed, which meet national expectations in Year 11. The evidence for this is robust, since Year 11 students have already sat 10 of their 12 module exams and results are significantly higher than in the previous year. In addition, investigatory coursework is complete and there were examples of careful work on chemical reactions that fully satisfied the requirements, even in the harder analysis and evaluation components, at A grade level. Students in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well
- 95 Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, across the age range. Within the department are a number of role models who teach very well and are engaged in training a number of inexperienced teachers towards a higher quality of teaching. A process that will continue when more experienced teachers join the department in September. Examples of high quality teaching included a Year 7 class where higher-attaining students gained experience of Internet search on the periodic table, a Year 8 class on smoking and a Year 9 class where interest was generated in nutrition. Good teaching was seen in a lower-attaining Year 8 class on sound. Year 10 and 11 work was mostly revision because of

the imminence of module tests, but this was done well, for example on rates of reaction and the electromagnetic spectrum in Year 10, and on electricity and the eye in Year 11.

- 96 Approaches to literacy and ICT aided learning, although numeracy was a less emphasised feature. Comparatively weaker teachers sometimes were less effective in matching work to students' needs and the work was less challenging than it could have been, for example on combustion of hydrocarbons. Sometimes teachers lacked experience of laboratory management, for example in the siting of students so that they could both see and concentrate. Some less experienced teachers had problems with time management. The national strategy puts emphasis on three-part lessons; an introduction, a main activity and a general class conclusion. This format, when rigidly employed, causes problems in a 50-minute lesson. Several examples were seen in which insufficient time was given to the main activity, hampering learning, for example on rates of reaction and on research on the elements. Experienced teachers employ this strategy across two or even three lessons, but less experienced teachers have not developed the confidence to amend the national strategy in this manner.
- 97 Student attitudes to work left something to be desired. Even where behaviour was satisfactory, students sometimes lacked confidence or practical skills or willingness to get stuck in. On occasion, comparatively weaker teachers had problems with behaviour management, and in these cases the unsatisfactory attitudes developed into unsatisfactory behaviour.
- 98 The curriculum has improved over the last two years and is now good. A very effective programme of booster classes, after school and over the holidays, has contributed to the good achievement both at the C/D borderline and amongst higher-attaining students. The departmental assessment system is also good, with very good monitoring of achievement and good communication of knowledge to students about their performance in GCSE module examinations. Not all teachers use the principles of the formative assessment project to keep students up to date on what exactly they have to do to improve their performance.
- 99 Leadership and management are good. A particular strength lies in the schools system of self-evaluation, *Quality Counts*, which has made an accurate assessment of departmental strength and the steps needed to improve. Over the last two years, there has been a great deal of staff instability and indeed staffing remains unsatisfactory, although new experienced staff have been appointed for September. The head of department, well supported by his deputy, has done a great deal to weld a group of inexperienced teachers into an effective team. Commitment is good, as is professional development, support and leadership of the role models, so that the potentiality for further improvement is high. Technicians play a good role in supporting the work of the department and contributing to good health and safety procedures. Accommodation and resource provision are adequate, though ageing, and are well used. The relatively small stock of library books is well used to promote learning in lessons.
- 100 There have been a number of improvements since the previous inspection, most notably in the field of ICT and the provision of text-books. This amounts to satisfactory improvement over a six year period, although the reality is that the department fell into a period of instability in staffing in those six years, such that the improvement over the last two years has been good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge and expertise in the subject
- Students' good achievement over Years 7 to 11
- The strong leadership and the management of the subject that have led to very good improvement since the last inspection
- The good range of planned learning experiences in an improved curriculum

Areas for improvement

- Progress in lessons is too dependent upon the individual teacher
- Younger students have insufficient understanding of the detailed requirements of the National Curriculum and how their work relates to it

- 101 Teacher assessments in 2002 judged attainment, in Year 9, to be in line with that reported nationally. When students enter the school in Year 7, the majority have limited experience of the subject and the range of art and design materials. From this low starting point they make good progress, and a significant proportion make very good progress.
- 102 The work seen in lessons, and in the samples of work provided by the school, suggest standards of current Year 9 students are broadly in line with expected levels. Around three-quarters of all Year 9 students, including some with special learning needs, are working at or above Level 5. This shows good achievement overall. Fewer students are working at the higher levels than is the case nationally but a small proportion, mainly girls, work in greater depth and complete more challenging work. Students' language and literacy skills are developed well within the subject, for example when reading and researching the work of artists and in students' explanations of their decision-making.
- 103 In lessons, students' achievement depended on the skills of the teacher to set a brisk pace and to make best use of the available time. The short, 50-minute lessons limit the opportunities for students to consolidate and practise newly acquired skills. However, in a Year 8 lesson a teacher used the available time well. Students' expectations were raised when they saw examples of good quality work and they were encouraged and motivated by the merit rewards. They carefully recorded the lines and patterns on seashells, and responded thoughtfully to the teacher's probing questions. Students were interested and involved and able to contribute to the discussion because of their heightened observation skills and their knowledge of the local environment. They achieved well as a consequence. In another lesson, where management and organisation of learning were weaker, the teacher talked for too long and provided too few opportunities for students to participate. The slow pace of learning caused students to lose interest and concentration and to absorb only a little of the information they were given.
- 104 The combined results, in the vocational course and GCSE examinations, in 2002 were better than in previous years but remained slightly below the national average. Too few students were entered for public examinations to make reliable comparisons with similar schools. Prior to 2002, results were well below average and the numbers opting for art and design courses were low.
- 105 The standards of current Year 11 students, where most are taking the intermediate vocational course, are higher than in previous years and broadly average. There is clear evidence to show standards are continuing to rise and the subject is gaining in popularity and status. The majority of students are achieving well, relative to their starting points. Approximately a quarter of the year group is predicted to achieve a merit award, the majority a pass grade. In Years 10 and 11, the vocational course is taught

in double blocks of time and this enables students to refine their work to a good standard. Students taking the GCSE course are disadvantaged by having only 50-minute lessons. They are ill-prepared for the day-long examination and the next stage of their education, where longer periods of concentration and more independent work are called for. The curriculum provides a rich and varied range of learning opportunities. Contact with local arts organisations and local artists and galleries, together with information systems, the media and use of computers, all develop students' wider understanding and experience of the arts. In one lesson, students were taught to extend their skills of analysis, criticism and evaluation. This led to very good achievement and fresh insights into both their own and others' work.

- 106 Students' behaviour and attitudes improve as they move through the school. Overall, they are good and in Years 10 and 11 relationships are very good. Older students are mature and show respect for others' work and opinions. However, teachers' expectations of students' efforts and work rate are not consistently applied. For example, not enough is done early on in Year 7 to foster appropriate work habits in using sketchbooks, and ensuring that work is completed to a good standard and that homework deadlines are met.
- 107 The observed quality of teaching and learning was very mixed. Ranging from satisfactory to very good. Overall, teaching and learning are sound in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. The vocational and GCSE courses are well planned, students know what is required and they progressively acquire skills and manage their work and learning very well. Overall, teaching in these courses is effective and enables good learning. The strengths of the teaching are teachers' very good specialist knowledge and their skills in the subject. These give students access to a good range of activities that interest and motivate them. Students' literacy skills, in particular the development of a subject specific vocabulary and their critical and analytical skills, were very well developed in some lessons. In another, question and answer, students' formal presentations and their written and oral evaluations were very skilfully managed. Teachers build well on students' prior experiences of computers, both to support research tasks and to manipulate images and text. Management of behaviour is good. In some classes, students' skills for independent learning are under-developed. The newly developed scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is providing a good foundation for achievement and enabling teachers to plan work that meets students' individual learning needs. The links between learning and assessment are unclear; in planning, when talking to students about their progress and when marking their work. Currently, although students know the National Curriculum level they are working at, they do not know the detail of what has been achieved or what they can do to improve it. This limits their achievement. The majority of younger students, therefore, do not have the necessary information to set personal goals and to become more actively involved in, and knowledgeable of, their learning. In Years 10 and 11, students have a very good understanding of the examination marking criteria and use it well to monitor their achievement.
- 108 Leadership and management are very good. A lot has been achieved in the short time since the head of department was appointed. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. There is a very clear understanding of the strengths within the department and what needs to be done to tackle the weaknesses. A recent departmental review highlighted inconsistencies, similar to those observed during the inspection, and steps to tackle them have begun. Monitoring of standards is very rigorous and supports very high expectations, both of teaching and students' achievement.
- 109 The department makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. By working closely with local arts organisations, students' personal horizons and their knowledge and experience of the arts have been widened.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- A strong teaching team with well experienced and committed senior staff
- The potential and experience of the team to organise an effective life skills curriculum integrating citizenship, PHSE and careers

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of students' progress has yet to begin
- The planned teaching is not secure either in the coverage of the national requirements or in the equality of access of all students
- The co-ordination of students' experiences across the whole curriculum

- 110 The school has introduced a life skills programme which incorporates citizenship, PHSE and careers education. In Years 7, 8 and 10, students have a weekly lesson. Students in Years 9 and 11 have a series of special day and half day 'conferences'. Overall, the time allowance is sufficient to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum and the PHSE programme including careers education. Other subjects, together with the assembly and tutor programme, provide a range of additional opportunities to cover the citizenship requirements. The day conferences are a particularly imaginative way of dealing with the new curriculum content.
- 111 Standards, overall, in Years 7 to 10 are unsatisfactory. No evidence of standards was available for Year 11. In Year 8, higher-attaining students working on drugs education had produced some satisfactory work, balancing the arguments for and against the use of soft drugs. In Year 10, similar students were completing some good work on health and safety issues relating to their work experience placements. The work of lower-attaining students was very poor in comparison. Written work was poor, inaccurate and had not been assessed by the teachers. In Years 9 and 11, students produce folders of work from the conference sessions. Only the work of Year 9 students was available. Although the students had all experienced the same programme, which was clearly well run and organised and covered suitable content of the citizenship curriculum, the recorded work was very variable and had not been subject to any form of assessment for quality and standard. Overall, the level of attainment was below average in all year groups.
- 112 Teaching is satisfactory. The strong team of staff are well prepared and are using relevant, good quality resources. In one lesson, the effective use of good resources was followed by a range of teaching strategies. A class presentation by the teacher was followed by a role play activity and a presentation by the students. Whilst the role play was not particularly effective, skilful adaptation of the approach by the teacher resulted in the students making satisfactory progress. However, the work of staff is not coordinated, resulting in considerable difference in the amount of work covered and the approach being used.
- 113 Assessment is very poor and the work seen had not been marked. There is currently no attempt to assess the quality of work being produced or the standards being attained. Some files contained students' self-assessment sheets of the effectiveness of the day conferences, but these do not adequately meet the National Curriculum requirements.
- 114 Schemes of work have been prepared for Years 7, 8 and 10, and provide evidence that the school's approach to citizenship, linking the subject to PHSE and careers education, is achievable. The special days in Years 9 and 11 do not follow a specific scheme. The contribution to the citizenship curriculum

from teaching in other subjects, or other school experiences, has yet to be planned or co-ordinated. In Years 8 and 10, the coverage in the lessons varied considerably and some of the lower-attaining groups had not covered the same topics as other groups. Some students, therefore, have missed aspects of the citizenship curriculum.

- 115 Students' experiences, outside the life skills sessions, provide good contributions to their education in citizenship. For example, the junior health and safety committee which meets regularly and has a major impact on the routine work of repair and maintenance in the school. This provides its members with valuable experience of committee work, and students are enthusiastic about their role and influence. The tutor and assembly programme have many opportunities for citizenship activities, but there has been no attempt, so far, to audit these activities and link them to the citizenship programme. Teaching in other subjects also covers some of the necessary content. For example, when studying pollution in science, teachers have broadened the work to include an effective consideration of the social implications of pollution.
- 116 The school has the potential to deliver a very effective programme combining the elements which are currently included in life skills. The current timetable organisation prevents flexible organisation of teaching groups. The management of the programme is unsatisfactory since it does not reflect the cross-curricular element of the approach and hence leads to the inadequacies in provision.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving, particularly in Year 10
- Some very good teaching by the stronger, developing team
- New GCSE courses are better meeting students' interests
- Subject leadership is supportive and has improved provision

Areas for improvement

- Learning schemes in earlier years are insufficiently varied for different student needs
- Assessment practice is variable and does not fully support student progress
- While ICT is sufficient and used well, many of the facilities, including those for computer-aided design and manufacture, are limited and outdated

- 117 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were almost in line with those reported nationally. However, staff changes adversely affected assessment procedures and those assessments tended to overestimate the attainment levels that students reached. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is below national expectations.
- 118 Students show stronger knowledge and skills in those lessons where they benefit from good specialist teaching. Higher-attaining students, often girls, have a more secure understanding of material properties and processes. This was evident in a bridge building project where they appreciated the different forces involved in designing structures. Most students can work through a design process, albeit at a superficial level, and this reflects both the limited challenge in the curriculum for the higher-attaining students and the need to use some non-specialist teachers. Practical skills are sound in most curriculum areas, including food, textiles, electronics and graphics, although the use of non-specialists limits access to some practical work with wood and plastics.

- 119 The GCSE results in 2002 were below national average resulting from staffing problems at that time. The GNVQ results were better and taken together, 43 per cent gained grades A*-C or the GNVQ equivalent, compared with half of students nationally. The evidence of current students' work and the lessons observed show that standards at the end of Year 11 have improved a little, though remain below national average. Students are strongest in their practical skills in food, textiles, systems and control, and resistant materials. This was most evident in systems and control, where higher-attaining students combined electronic, mechanical and pneumatic systems effectively. Background research and design development are less strong, resulting in more modest outcomes in most areas. ICT is well used by students, particularly by girls, to present their ideas and planning.
- 120 The improvements in design and technology provision have yet to fully impact on standards, though they have been sufficient to ensure that students make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriately in relation to their weak knowledge and skills at the start of Year 7. This sound progress has been helped by the recently introduced graphics course in Years 7 to 9, where students develop an understanding of colour and perspective and use CAD (computer-aided design) with growing confidence. Students with special educational needs are able to participate fully in the practical activities and do as well as students generally. The marked improvement in GCSE teaching has helped Year 11 students make better progress, particularly in resistant materials. Consequently, most students in that year are achieving standards in line with expectations. Year 10 students are doing even better, and are making good progress as a result of the more challenging specialist teaching, particularly in graphics and textiles. Students on the new courses work with greater interest and commitment, evident in the applied GCSE in engineering where they develop greater CAD skills as well as accuracy in measuring and machining materials. All of this is enabling students to achieve well and is reflected in the improving standards in Year 10.
- 121 Teaching is satisfactory, overall, though is good in the GCSE courses. Teaching and learning have improved recently because of the continued development of the existing specialist teachers, as well as the increased teaching contribution of senior managers. Teaching is less strong, though always satisfactory, in Years 7 to 9 where there is a need to use non-specialists and where a few staff are still developing effective ways to teach more challenging students with special educational needs. Teaching was very good in a quarter of lessons seen. These were characterised by clear learning outcomes, varied activities and high expectations about students' work and behaviour. Consequently, students behaved very well, worked at pace and were developing their knowledge and skills well. Other good teaching practice, particularly in Year 10, made use of relevant and interesting projects, for example in a resistant materials lesson that involved stage design for students following a theatre-related course. All teachers plan their lessons well and ensure students make effective progress. However, in teaching of groups set by ability in Years 7 to 9, there are missed opportunities to vary the challenge and approach in lessons in ways that meet the needs of all students, particularly the higher-attaining. Teachers are conscientious in setting and marking work but there is a lack of detailed guidance that would help all students improve their work in terms of National Curriculum and GCSE standards.
- 122 Subject leadership is good in the way it has supported colleagues and shown a determination to improve what had become a poor design and technology provision. Those efforts have ensured that the subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, despite serious staffing and management problems in recent years. Substantial efforts have been made to improve the facilities and appearance of an area that has inadequate equipment and dated accommodation. There has also been considerable progress in developing the use of ICT, including computer-aided design and manufacture, within the limited funding available. The curriculum has been improved to strengthen graphical skills and presentation work in earlier years, as well as introducing more relevant and interesting programmes in engineering, graphics and theatre-related resistant materials. The development of a

stable and specialist team provides an opportunity to bring about the necessary improvement in curriculum and assessment systems.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good, as recent developments, such as the subject scheme of work and the records of student assessment begin to take effect
- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding in the subject and are able to make connections between themes, places and map work, which enable students to understand more effectively

Areas for improvement

- Some teaching is weaker because lesson planning does not convey a clear purpose to the lesson, students are not provided with an opportunity to learn from one another, and some students are not managed well enough
- The development of the subject does not have sufficiently clear direction because assessment and monitoring do not yet identify students' strengths and weaknesses

123 The results in the 2002 teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9, were in line with those reported nationally. The attainment of the current Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Students are achieving well in relation to their low level of attainment when they came to the school. Students have a sound knowledge of environmental issues and differing economies around the world. They are gaining a firm understanding of world and local distributions, through the study of distant places, such as Ghana, and their local area. They have learned about coastal erosion and are able to reach conclusions and express opinions based on evidence. The majority of their recorded work is answering questions set by the teacher, and there are few pieces of extended writing which students have thought about and developed for themselves. They have had few opportunities to develop their skills of questioning in geography, nor the chance to select and use a variety of information from a range of sources. Their skills in investigating and researching themes and places are underdeveloped. In one Year 9 class, when students were continuing their work on weathering, unused to thinking for themselves, they coloured a map of the school according to the use of rooms, rather than to show the location of different types of weathering, until intervention by the teacher showed them exactly how to do this.

124 GCSE results, in 2002, were well below national averages and students' performance in geography was significantly below their performance in the other subjects they studied. GCSE results have deteriorated over recent years and the numbers choosing the subject have decreased. The standards of work of the current Year 11 are below national averages but are an improvement on last years' results. This represents satisfactory achievement from the standards in Year 9. The standards in the current Year 10 indicate a further improvement. The improvement in standards is the result of recent improvements in the organisation of the subject, and in particular, the schemes of work that have been put in place. There have also been improvements in teaching, although these are variable and not consistent between teachers. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 are able to express a personal opinion about their local coastal environment. They analyse information and interpret diagrams and evidence. They have a sound understanding of climatic types and weather systems, of physical and human processes, and how they affect the environment. During their local fieldwork they have constructed beach profiles well. In a Year 11 class, studying the tropical rainforest environment, students had difficulty in expressing their opinions and discussing different views unless prompted by the teacher. Their independent thinking skills, and their confidence in their own ideas, are very limited. Higher-attaining students have not developed their abilities for independent thought sufficiently to give them easy access to the higher GCSE grades.

- 125 The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, all the teaching observed was satisfactory or better, and some teaching was very good. Teachers use good question and answer techniques to encourage students to participate and think. They link themes, such as glaciation or population growth, geographical skills, such as the use of maps, asking geographical questions and researching, and places, well. As a result, students are beginning to learn more effectively as the aspects they learn about, begin to fit together. In a Year 7 lesson, the teacher had prepared students well, so they were familiar with earthquakes and how they are caused. A series of maps, with simple step-by-step tasks, helped the students to learn very well about the distribution of earthquakes in San Francisco, so they are able to identify the high-risk locations and consider the human response, such as adaptation of buildings. They were able to use their knowledge and apply it to a distant location.
- 126 The quality of teaching and learning varies between teachers because they have varying approaches to planning and structuring lessons. They are more effective when the purpose of the lesson is clear to the students, and there are opportunities to learn from each other. In some lessons, the teacher's management of students is insufficiently effective, so that some students waste time, and others become distracted. In a Year 9 lesson where a small number of students were talking or wasting time, the ineffective response from the teacher resulted in their behaviour being a distraction to others and the pace of the lesson and work slowed.
- 127 Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to developing students literacy, numeracy, and ICT skills. Students' attitudes and behaviour in geography are, overall, satisfactory. Although students are generally compliant and undertake the tasks set, at times their pace of work is slow. Where teaching is better, there is a sense of interest and enjoyment.
- 128 Assessment of the subject is satisfactory, but again there is variation between teachers. Students are clear about how well they are doing and they know which National Curriculum level or GCSE grade they are achieving. However, in some classes, they are less clear about what they need to do to improve and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Assessment is used well at an individual student level, but it is not yet used to monitor the attainment and progress of groups of students. While assessment is beginning to impact on learning, through improving students' motivation as they see their own progress, it is not yet used to monitor and review teaching and provision in the subject.
- 129 The geography curriculum is satisfactory, but with some weaknesses that are being tackled. Throughout the school there are insufficient opportunities for students to learn geographical skills and develop their ability to learn independently. This limits the achievement and motivation of students. There is a sound programme of fieldwork built into the curriculum for Years 10 and 11, but as yet, there are insufficient opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9.
- 130 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department has begun to improve the progress that students make and standards are beginning to rise. Changes in staff have contributed to the fluctuation in standards. However, the new organisation and planning, introduced over the last year, have already made a difference to students' learning and the new scheme of work particularly helps to provide continuity in the subject. The monitoring and development of the subject is insufficiently focused on the attainment and progress of students, and therefore there is a lack of information about strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The current improvement plan is unclear about priorities for development within teaching and learning and how they might be achieved. Although there have been fluctuations since the last inspection, in recent times there has been satisfactory improvement.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well
- Rising standards of attainment at GCSE
- Good teaching by a team of specialist teachers
- A range of strategies and activities effectively supports students' learning

Areas for improvement

- Further develop the assessment process to include students' better understanding of how well they are doing, and how they can improve

- 131 The results of teacher assessment in Year 9, in 2002, were above those reported nationally. However, the assessment of students' work seen during the inspection indicates that teachers may have been over generous in applying the national curriculum criteria. The standards of work, of students currently in Year 9, are in line with national expectations. Students are achieving well in relation to their below average standards at the start of Year 7. All students in a top Year 9 set commented articulately on the images presented to them of Nazi Germany's representations of Jewish people. Higher-attaining students in this group worked at a brisk pace to draw on specific features they had observed, and suggested how this propaganda was intended to work on German opinion. Students' work employed a variety of forms of writing, including letters, reports, and formal essays. In these, higher-attaining students demonstrated a sound ability to construct a historical narrative from personal research, presented through the use of Power Point.
- 132 GCSE results in 2002 were in line with the national average and were an improvement on the previous year. Boys' results were slightly higher than girls'. Students did well. Students in Year 11 are working above national expectations and are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course. In their study of Coalbrookdale, most students used the evidence they had been given to demonstrate a good understanding of the significance of the changes they were studying. The higher-attaining students used historical sources well, evaluating and drawing out information to be presented. All students showed a sound grasp of Coalbrook's work and place in history. Students in Year 10, in a lesson on the use of propaganda in Nazi Germany, clearly understood the strategies being employed, and could comment perceptively on the strengths they observed in posters presented to them by the teacher.
- 133 Overall, the observed teaching and learning were good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and of examination requirements. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher's presentation focused clearly on anticipated key words and ideas that the students would be likely to encounter in their examination. Drawing on their previous learning, by the end of the lesson all the students could give accounts of how Hitler promoted his image in Nazi Germany using visual imagery. Higher-attaining students were able to explain these in the context of Hitler's rise to power and ambition. In a Year 10 group, students' reached high standards because they were able to apply knowledge and understanding previously gained to a new situation. The teacher made very clear what outcomes were being sought.
- 134 In Years 7 to 9, students are grouped by ability, but within the sets there remains a range of attainment. Teachers have sought opportunities to provide a variety of materials and activities. For example, in a good Year 7 lesson, the plague mask that the teacher provided gave students an interesting way into considering the range of symptoms the plague produced. They were able to build

on these gory details, and speculate on how effective the plague doctors' methods and materials might be. Students benefit from the clear and detailed planning of activities and materials for the different classes. This, for the most part, results in appropriate and engaging activities for learning. For example, in a Year 8 class, the teacher adapted the writing frames she had produced, so that the different pairs in the class were all able to work on their interviews with factory children, drawing on what had gone on before.

- 135 Students' learning is effectively supported by a range of assessment strategies. Work is marked with clear comments on how to improve. Learning outcomes are made clear in lessons. Teachers discuss these with students and provide effective support in helping them meet expected outcomes. Students with special educational needs, those from ethnic minority backgrounds, and those with English as an additional language, make good progress along with their peers. Teachers often plan opportunities in class for higher-attaining students to make further progress. However, on a few occasions, students' tasks could have been further refined, to allow students opportunity to demonstrate higher levels of historical method and perception. Teachers provide a good range of additional opportunities to support learning outside of the classroom, for example visits to France. Teachers make good use of information technology to support students' learning.
- 136 Improvement since the last inspection has been good with a steady improvement in examination results over recent years. Members of the department are enthusiastic, able, and very well led. There are clear priorities for moving forward, for example in developing the strategies for teaching and learning. Teachers provide stimulating and accessible additional materials, including attractively produced booklets with a range of visual and text resources. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, but in one of the mobiles is unsatisfactory. It is shabby, and allows little flexibility for the teacher to re-arrange the seating for different groups and different activities. The departmental handbook, schemes of work, and lesson plans, make clear how history contributes to cross-curricular requirements, such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well because teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic in their teaching
- Leadership is good resulting in good progress since the last inspection
- Students enjoy the opportunities to use modern computers with up-to-date software

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring the quality of provision for ICT within other subjects
- Students who do not follow an ICT course in Years 10 and 11 make insufficient progress
- The use of ICT in modern languages is unsatisfactory and poor in music

- 137 The results of teacher assessments, in 2002, at the end of Year 9 were broadly in line with those reported nationally. There were no significant variations between boys and girls or students from different ethnic groups. ICT was not offered to examination level in 2002. The school is confident that, with the improved access to equipment and the introduction of discrete lessons, standards will further improve over the next few years.
- 138 By the end of Year 9, all students attain average standards in the basic ICT skills of desktop publishing, and of using the Internet, simple spreadsheets and databases. Achievement is good when

compared to the wide variation in computer skills students have when they join the school in Year 7. Students access software confidently and move information from one application to another effectively. Higher-attaining students can input computer code accurately and explain variables using precise syntax. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, a boy and girl, following complex written instructions, worked cooperatively and accurately to program a character in a simple 'arcade style' game. They identified errors in the coding and modified it so that their character could jump over obstacles and complete the game. Lower-attaining students have limited keyboard technique and struggle to input information accurately because, with poor literacy skills, they make many spelling mistakes. In lessons, students with statements of special educational needs make good progress because they enjoy using the computers and their tasks are modified by the teachers to ensure they understand. Skills connected with measuring and recording events are less well-developed but are covered within other subjects.

- 139 ICT is not taught as a separate subject in Year 11. Approximately 70 Year 10 students study a business and communication systems GCSE course which has a high ICT content. Standards in Year 10 are average and this represents a good level of achievement. Students are familiar with a wide variety of applications, all of which they can access and use in a series of business-related projects. They are becoming good independent learners. Coursework folders contain evidence of a range of ICT skills such as the use of databases, spreadsheets and desktop publishing, to process and present data. These skills were also evident in lessons. In a Year 10 lesson, students worked very quickly to design a brochure to address health and safety issues in using a visual display unit (VDU). They imported text, graphics and images into a desktop publishing document and manipulated them until they were happy that the end product was suitable for the intended audience. They added detailed text and printed out their very professional booklets within 30 minutes. Higher-attaining students use more advanced program functions or include more complex procedures in their projects. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the Internet. Several are members of the school webmaster team and design and maintain the school website. They are confident users of HTML and other programming software. Lower-attaining students have poorer than expected keyboard techniques with many only able to type in information using one finger. They have a limited understanding of some basic skills because they did not have ICT lessons in Year 9. Students in Years 10 and 11 that do not study the GCSE course make insufficient progress because they have to rely solely on experience in other subjects to develop their ICT skills.
- 140 Teachers throughout the school are generally confident users of ICT and nearly all have undergone training. Many subjects successfully build the use of ICT into their work, so students get lots of opportunities to use computers in their other subjects. A real strength is the availability of several sets of portable wireless-networked laptop computers. These are used well by most subjects. Other equipment is also available and used well. In science, students use data-logging equipment and have a departmental website. In physical education, students use a digital camcorder to record and analyse performance. In art, students use computers far more than at the time of the last inspection. However, in modern languages there is unsatisfactory use of ICT because teachers neither plan for its use or monitor any use that students make of it.
- 141 Students learn well because the teaching is generally good and on occasions very good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Well-designed worksheets and slide shows help students to focus on mastering the various functions of the software, as well as achieving the main sections of the topic. Explanations are clearly given using digital projectors to demonstrate procedures and to take students through them step-by-step. Teachers generally use a three-part lesson structure, and are careful to ensure that students know at the outset what new understanding they are expected to gain during the lesson. Most lessons have valuable starter activities so that students are immediately required to think and to learn. However, teachers are often less successful in using the end of the lesson to check students' understanding and give them the satisfaction of knowing that the aims of the

lesson have been met. Teachers circulate the class well, assessing students' progress and offering them good support and guidance. Homework is planned as an integral part of each unit of work and this provides very good opportunities for all students, including the gifted and talented, to extend their learning. Work is marked frequently and teachers' full and supportive comments guide students as to how they might improve their work. Relationships are very good and students respond to the enthusiastic teaching by working hard. Teachers have suitably high expectations of students' behaviour; they manage students well and so learning is good. Students really enjoy the opportunities to use modern computers with up-to-date software.

- 142 Leadership is good while management is satisfactory. The head of department is committed to improving standards. Improvement needs have been identified and sensible and relevant plans have been developed. Detailed schemes of work relate well to new initiatives. They enable students to consider the effects of the use of computers in society, but these and other elements of citizenship are not a sufficiently planned part of programmes of work. At present, there is not sufficient monitoring and support for the use of computers across the curriculum to ensure that students develop their ICT skills through their experience in other subjects.
- 143 There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. ICT lessons for all students in Years 7 to 9 have been introduced and the new business communications systems GCSE course is very popular. The school has made funding available to significantly improve the computer facilities and the ratio of students to computers is now in line with that found nationally with nearly all computers replaced since the previous inspection. There are still problems in ensuring all aspects of ICT are delivered in Years 10 and 11.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- An improved curriculum structure in Years 7 to 9 which has reduced underachievement
- Recent measures taken to improve the quality of provision

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is of inconsistent quality and is resulting in underachievement in Years 10 and 11
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has not been adapted to meet the needs of all students
- Marking and assessment do not provide sufficient support and guidance for students
- ICT has only recently begun to be used to support learning in modern foreign languages

- 144 Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were below those reported nationally. They were markedly below those reported in the two preceding years, but were much more realistic as examination outcomes indicate that previous assessments were over-optimistic. Girls' results were higher than boys' and by a greater margin than nationally.
- 145 Standards of work seen in the current Year 9 are below the nationally expected level. There is little difference in performance between the two languages. Higher-attaining students generally make appropriate progress, especially in listening. Students make less progress in German in writing as they have limited opportunities to write at length. Students in both languages do not do enough creative oral work to develop their speaking skills. Average-attaining students make satisfactory progress on the whole. Sometimes they could be pushed harder in class. The progress of lower-attaining students is erratic and is very dependent on the quality of the teaching. The presentation of work by some middle- and many lower-attaining students is poor and untidy. This detracts from the quality of the content,

which is often better. Overall, students make progress and in relation to their below average attainment at the start of the course, their achievement is satisfactory.

- 146 GCSE results in French and German have been well below the national averages since 2000, with the single exception of 2001 when results in German were above. In 2002, students made significantly less progress in German than in the other subjects they studied. In both languages, girls outperform boys by more than the national difference.
- 147 The standards of work seen in Year 11 are well below average. Higher-attaining students in French have made better progress than those in German, partly due to greater stability of staffing. In both languages, opportunities to challenge the more able students are not fully taken. This holds back their achievement. There is significant underachievement in the work of middle- and lower-attaining students as teaching in these groups is weaker and students' poorer behaviour disrupts learning. Lower-attaining students are demotivated by a syllabus which is beyond them. Overall, students in Year 11 make insufficient progress and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- 148 In all years, students with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress as teachers' planning takes little account of their needs. A start has recently been made on developing students' skills in ICT to raise standards. At present, this is insufficient to meet their entitlement and its use is not adequately monitored.
- 149 Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory but in Years 10 and 11 it is unsatisfactory. The difference is because, in the earlier years, there is a more equal deployment of teachers across the differing ability groups. This is particularly beneficial for the lower-attaining students. Average-attaining students, in a Year 8 French lesson, made very good progress as the teacher set high expectations, set a brisk tempo to the lesson and ensured that students' skills in producing new language were built up in logical steps. Students responded with enthusiasm and were interested in their learning. In Years 10 and 11, it is the more effective teachers who teach the higher-attaining students. Weaknesses in teaching methods are more exposed in the GCSE courses. There are some strengths in the teaching of higher-attaining students as teachers have good knowledge of examination requirements and the techniques students need to acquire. There is close attention to the teaching of numeracy and listening skills to students of all attainments. Not all teachers consistently use the foreign language in their teaching with the result that students are not required to maintain their concentration. Not enough attention is paid to the development of independent oral work. As a result, students' pronunciation and fluency are often weak, with many students unable to use sentences. Teachers often do not provide sufficient or effective practice in new structures. Consequently, students make too many mistakes when required to consolidate their learning in writing activities. On occasions when lessons are teacher dominated, students remain passive and uninvolved. Marking is not always sufficiently accurate and does not provide sufficient guidance to help students improve. It does not always conform to the school or department marking policy.
- 150 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department, in post only nine months, brings managerial competence, conscientiousness and stability to the work of the department. There is a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and the improvements that need to be made. Best practice in teaching is not yet effectively shared to the benefit of all colleagues.
- 151 Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory, overall. Recently, there have been some advances - in leadership, a slightly improved quality of teaching and better curricular arrangements in Years 7 to 9. However, major issues have not been tackled effectively. Too much weaker teaching, in combination with a curriculum unsuitable for many students in Years 10 and 11,

results in low standards. Too little recognition is taken of the different needs of students, beyond setting arrangements, and speaking skills remain under-developed.

PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, which results in very good progress
- A much improved curriculum which gives students a broader drama experience
- The increasing opportunities for students to practise and perform beyond the classroom

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 and 8 which is too variable
- The behaviour of a number of students in Years 7 and 8 whose lack of self-discipline is not consistently challenged

152 Drama has been taught as a separate subject in Years 7 and 8 since September. It has been offered as a GCSE option for some years. Results declined and became low relative to the national average, students doing less well in drama than in their other GCSE examinations. In 2002, too few students took GCSE for secure national comparisons to be made. Larger numbers are now involved in Year 11. The increase in the number of Year 10 students is partly down to the introduction of a themed theatre course. This allows the study of aspects of theatre through media studies, resistant materials (for costume and set design and production) and drama: three GCSEs in all.

153 On entry to the school, drama skills are well below those expected nationally in terms of group skills, confidence when performing, and understanding conventions. Achievement is satisfactory. Students learn to work together in groups, to take turns and to listen to each other's ideas. They become willing, if self-conscious, performers but have little ability to be convincing or to sustain character or atmosphere. Space is used sensibly and well and students move furniture carefully to change room and stage layouts. Too many, mainly boys, are immature about how they use chairs when they are in groups and misbehaviour can result. The standards of the current Year 11 group are at national average in terms of their ability to plan, rehearse and give realistic performance, and to evaluate their own and others' performance. Their progress is very good and they become confident and show the ability to work independently.

154 Teaching is satisfactory overall, but too variable in quality. The best teaching is to GCSE classes, who benefit from teachers' knowledge both of subject and examination requirements. Students learn to analyse tasks and what is required, to share and negotiate ideas in groups, and to support one another. Lessons are well planned and good use is made of students' skills and interests. As a result, relationships are very good and students work hard. Year 11 students show considerable respect and support for each other. Working on their GCSE pieces, one class had been taught to focus and to work independently and at speed. They concentrated for long periods, and made very good use of the teacher's knowledge and probing questioning to justify or develop their ideas. As a result, students learn well.

155 Teaching in Year 7 and 8 classes is less secure and sometimes unsatisfactory. Planning remains a strength and teachers are committed to the subject. Students learn to work in a variety of situations and to change efficiently from one style of work to another. Year 7 students began to learn how to respond to rhythm and music because the teacher used both lights and music to set the mood and pace for group movement. Students make quicker progress in social skills than in drama skills because teaching does not always clearly identify, discuss and expect the disciplined use of the latter. As a

result, fairly basic routines of silence, freeze and mime are not consistently demonstrated. The attention spans of some students are short, and teachers sometimes allow too much tomfoolery and noise, leading to learning which is barely satisfactory. Almost half the students, in another Year 7 class, made insufficient progress in performing because the teacher did not lay down and maintain clear requirements for time use, behaviour and noise level.

- 156 The introduction of weekly lessons in Years 7 and 8 has boosted both the subject and the school. The curriculum is considerably improved and continues to develop. The themed theatre GCSE course is stimulating interest in public performance, both in the school and the community, and a growing awareness of the skills and technology in successful drama production. A recent highly successful production of Grease involved over a hundred students, a large number of staff, and a car which had to be cut down to get it in the hall and on to the stage before being further modified and reassembled! Three productions in eighteen months, performance opportunities in assemblies, and after school club and rehearsal activities are giving drama a high profile. Leadership and management are good in terms of vision, raising the subject profile, and getting things on a stable footing quickly. Central to its further success as a subject will be the development of a more rigorous, disciplined and demanding, but no less imaginative, philosophy in the teaching of younger students.

Music

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

Strengths

- GCSE students enjoy performing music and are keen to learn
- Teachers are knowledgeable musicians

Areas for improvement

- Students underachieve because the teaching has been unsatisfactory
- Students with special educational needs, and those with above average musical talent, do not make enough progress because teachers do not modify work for them
- The poor quality of leadership and management of music has resulted in poor improvement
- Planned teaching does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to support their learning

- 157 Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were not available. There were too few candidates entered for GCSE in 2002 to allow valid statistical comparisons with other schools.
- 158 Standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are below average. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement because students are not making sufficient progress, even though their musical attainment on entry to the school is below average. Students who study musical instruments with the visiting teachers, or at the Saturday morning music school, achieve satisfactory standards of performance; but they do not cover the full requirements of the National Curriculum for music within lessons.
- 159 Many students cannot maintain a sense of rhythm when playing their own part within a group performance. They lack confidence when creating music because they have had very little opportunity to do so. Higher-attaining students can play simple patterns on the keyboards and understand how to incorporate elements, such as dynamics and texture, into their pieces; some can play instruments other than keyboards. Lower-attaining students are achieving standards below those of most primary school children because they have not made any gains in musical skills since coming to the school. Students do not use the technical language of the subject and tend to answer teachers' questions with short

responses or blank expressions. Students do not have enough access to computers with music software to create, modify or develop their pieces.

- 160 At the moment, music is not taught in Year 11. There is an option group in Year 10. Standards of work in Year 10 are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement for these students in relation to their musical experience on starting the course. Nearly all students are good performers with many having achieved success in national performance examinations. They are not making sufficient progress because they have had a variety of teachers in a short space of time, and their learning has suffered. Even when taught by the specialist teacher, they are not covering the requirements of the GCSE course. This has resulted in patchy coverage of the course requirements and large gaps in students' knowledge.
- 161 Students do not do as well in the theoretical and musical history sections of the GCSE course as they do in the practical aspects. They want to learn music and have taken advantage of the opportunities to perform outside the school day. They work collaboratively when composing and performing in small groups. Higher-attaining students can develop and modify given melodies by combining variations in harmony and rhythm. In one lesson, a boy and girl worked together to produce a variation to the melody of the song 'three blind mice'. They combined quaver and semiquaver passages over a sustained pedal point. However, the more musically talented students are not sufficiently challenged because the work set is often too easy for them. Lower-attaining students generally struggle to read traditional notation and this is restricting their progress in lessons because the teacher does not modify the work for them to make progress.
- 162 Students do not learn as well as they should because the teaching they receive is unsatisfactory overall. There has been much disruption to students' musical education since entering the school and they have made very little progress. Students have not gained enough specialist knowledge owing to the inconsistency in teaching. Teaching observed during the inspection week was generally satisfactory, but students did not learn enough in lessons because the tasks were not modified for the different groups of learners. The work is not planned well enough to cater for the needs of all the students, even in the GCSE lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson for lower-attaining students, the task set was so difficult that none of the students understood it and spent their time playing with the pre-recorded sounds on the keyboards. Lack of clarity in the planning of work leads to major aspects of the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus not being covered. Examination of students' course work shows a large amount of copying out being omitted. Worksheet based activities result in very little coverage of the course requirements. Temporary teachers have not been able to deliver specialist lessons because the documentation for the subject is unhelpful to them. Despite the massive disruption to their musical education, all students studying GCSE music are eager to learn and enjoy the practical opportunities. Students throughout the school thirst to take part in musical activities and enjoyable lessons. They create opportunities to perform in ensembles and other groups and freely give their time for these activities.
- 163 The leadership and management of music are poor and have resulted in poor improvement since the last inspection. The head of department is a knowledgeable musician but has been absent for many months due to illness. Within staffing constraints, senior management has been unable to resolve the situation in order to provide a satisfactory education in music. Approximately 100 students have subsidised instrumental lessons provided by the County music service teachers. The school runs a Saturday music school and evening rock bands. The recent production of Grease was very successful. However, the day-to-day management is poor. Schemes of work do not relate to the National Curriculum and the documentation for the department is virtually nonexistent. There have been no regular departmental extra-curricular activities for many months, although other musical activities do

happen throughout the school and are well supported by teachers from other departments. The generous provision of extra-curricular activities reported in the last inspection no longer exists.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, leading to good learning and progress
- The physical education team is well managed and led
- Students' behaviour and attitudes towards physical education are good
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities available to all students
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good

Areas for improvement

- Some students in Years 9 to 11 have too little time to meet the requirements of the course
- The pace in getting lessons underway is often too slow

164 The results of teacher assessment, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were in line with those reported nationally. The attainment of boys was above the national average, whilst that of girls was below average. School records of the skills and fitness of these students, when they entered the school in Year 7, show that the attainment of boys was broadly average, whilst that of girls was well below expectations for their age. Boys and girls have achieved well in relation to their differing starting standards. The standards of students currently in Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectation. The attainment of boys in Year 9 is above expectation and that of girls close to average. These standards indicate that both girls and boys are achieving well.

165 GCSE results in 2002 were significantly below national average. A comparison of their standards on entry to the course and the standards achieved in the GCSE examination show satisfactory achievement by the majority of students, but underachievement by a significant minority. External moderation of GCSE coursework shows that the standards, of present Year 11 students, are in line with national expectations. They have achieved well, given their attainment at entry to the course. The majority of non-GCSE students in Year 11 have skill levels in line with expectation, but some girls' basic skills are very poor. A significant factor in this is the limited time available for the non-GCSE programme.

166 Relationships between students and teachers are very good. As a consequence, students' behaviour and attitudes towards physical education are good. Very good examples of this were seen in a Year 7 tennis lesson and in a Year 9 athletics lesson. In both, students responded well and clearly enjoyed their work. As a consequence, they gave a 100 per cent effort, no matter what their level of performance. Students are supportive of one another and work well in groups. Students reflect well upon their own work and that of others. The majority show a very strong sense of care for their classmates. This is particularly the case in groups where lower-attaining students work alongside higher-attaining ones.

167 Teaching and learning are good; a marked improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally very good. Teachers give clear instructions, good demonstrations and have very high expectations of their students. Tasks are usually well planned and challenge students at their own level of skill. This is very good improvement in lesson planning since the last inspection. Instructions and coaching points are given at a good pace. In a cricket lesson, where many Year 9 students have special educational needs, good planning and teaching ensured good progress by all. The good support given by all teachers was shown at its best in a Year 10 theory lesson where a student with disability made sound progress resulting from sensitive teaching and the very capable work of the learning support assistant.

- 168 Teachers encourage students in Years 10 and 11 to become more independent in their learning, providing opportunity for them to choose activities and to work collaboratively. Highly imaginative teaching of circuit-training allowed students to devise a programme of training for well-known individuals such as Billy Elliott and Victoria Beckham. Students are encouraged to use the Internet for their own research for GCSE theory lessons.
- 169 Termly assessments, and students' self-assessment at the end of each module, lead to students being very clear about their attainment levels. This does not yet lead to clear targets being set for all students. The slow pace, at the start of some lessons, reduces the time available for students to develop their skills and to review their work at the end of the session.
- 170 Good opportunities for students to develop socially are provided in all lessons through co-operative activity in pairs, groups and teams. There is a strong commitment to develop students' literacy skills, so that they are better able to describe good and poor aspects of performance. This is planned in most lessons with good use made of key-word cards and well-presented diagrams to support students' learning. Very good use was made of these in the teaching of triple jumping to Year 7 students. There are few opportunities for students to use their number skills in lessons. No activities are planned to involve the, infrequent, non-performing students in the lesson that they are missing.
- 171 The physical education department is well managed and led. The teamwork and high commitment of the teachers are very evident. A broad and balanced programme is planned for all students. This offers students a wide range of challenging activities and meets National Curriculum requirements in full. This is very much improved since the situation reported in the last inspection. Monitoring of teaching and learning has helped the team to share their good practice, with great benefit for the students.
- 172 A very strong aspect of the department's work is the extra-curricular programme. This is open to all and uptake is very good. Inter-school and district sports fixtures are flourishing. A high number of students have gained honours at district and county level, in cricket, football and cross-country in particular. Outside bodies, such as North Walsham Rugby and Bradfield Cricket clubs, provide good coaching for the talented, as well as working with other students. There are very good trips to Twickenham, Lord's and Wimbledon and a popular annual ski trip. Very good links have been developed with Paston Sixth Form College. Some students, in Years 9 to 11, who only have a single period of physical education have insufficient time to fully cover the requirements of the course.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the department is good
- Teaching is satisfactory
- Curriculum planning, the development of schemes of work and detailed lesson plans are good
- Contribution towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to deal with poorly motivated students need development
- Monitoring of marking is not yet rigorous
- The pace at start of most lessons is too slow
- Time allocated to the subject, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is insufficient

- 173 Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are being developed. There were no assessments in 2002. Standards in Year 9 are a little below the levels expected in the Agreed Syllabus. Students' achievement is generally satisfactory in relation to their below average standards as they entered Year 7. The standard of attainment is adversely influenced by the limited amount of time available within the one lesson per week. A lower-attaining group of students, in Year 9, were able to explain difficult concepts such as 'interdependence' and 'impermanence', in a lesson on Buddhism. This shows an above average grasp of ideas for their ability.
- 174 Results in the GCSE short course, in 2002, were below the national average, a slight fall from previous years. Girls' results were average while those of boys were below average. These results represent satisfactory achievement from students' level of attainment at the beginning of the course and the limited time that students have.
- 175 In Year 11, students taking the short course GCSE are attaining at a level close to national expectations. They are achieving satisfactorily, given their knowledge and understanding at the start of the course and the limited amount of time available in lessons. Students show sound understanding of the importance of taking a moral stand on marriage and divorce. This enables them to explore their own attitudes and opinions satisfactorily. They are able to provide useful links with the Christian view and the views of various thinkers. This gives students good opportunity to reflect on how they can apply religious principles to their own lives. They do this satisfactorily in project work on social harmony, comparing their own views with those of two different faith groups. There are no significant differences in the standards seen in the work of boys and girls in the present Year 11. Students with special educational needs progress as well as their peers. The department has not as yet identified gifted or talented students.
- 176 Overall, students' attitudes to learning are good. They behave well and are fairly well motivated. Younger students work together satisfactorily and older students collaborate well. The relationship between teachers and students is sound. Teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Where behaviour is very good, students' achievement and progress are also very good. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 9 class of lower-attaining students. They achieved very well because they were fully engaged and well motivated by very good teaching. There are, however, students whose attitudes are poor. When these students are not well involved in the lesson, they can be disruptive and hinder the learning of others. Teachers do not share good practice sufficiently to ensure that such disruptions are tackled with consistency.
- 177 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers make sound use of questioning to consolidate their students' current learning and to review their previous work. They are beginning to develop a range of styles that enable students to explore their own views. Students learned well when they were challenged to think for themselves and to reflect on the views of others. This strategy is not used sufficiently by all teachers. Homework is used in an appropriate way. Work on the Torah and the life of the Buddha is well developed by challenging activities that consolidate what students have studied in the lesson. Teachers generally have good expectations of students. Classroom display of a high quality provides a very inviting learning environment, which captures students' interest in the subject.
- 178 The head of department is developing sound assessment procedures, identifying not only what students know about religion, but also what they have learned from religious beliefs and practices. This has made students much more aware of what they can do, and what they need to do to improve their levels of attainment. These procedures are beginning to be used to help in planning of new work. In Years 10 and 11, targets for the final examination are now being set, also resulting in students being more aware of where they are and what they need to do to improve. However, marking overall,

despite a very good policy, is inconsistent. Students' recorded work includes too many pieces of unmarked work.

- 179 The leadership by the recently appointed head of department is good. He has clear ideas for developing the department and is already implementing changes successfully. The lack of other specialist teachers in the subject is a significant limit to more rapid progress. The departmental development plan is well designed to address the key issues. Schemes of work are well planned and very detailed and generally meet the Agreed Syllabus requirements. A single period a week, in all years, makes it difficult to cover the requirements of the subject.
- 180 Good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are included in the programmes for all students. Curriculum resources are generally satisfactory but with a limited range of artefacts. Library resources provide Internet access and appropriate resources for some research activities but the general book stock is a little out-of-date.
- 181 Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection. GCSE attainment has risen and some students are achieving well. This has had a good impact on student attitudes to religious education. Standards have improved significantly. Significant progress has been made in planning, assessment and the development of teaching styles.