

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **KINGSMEAD COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Wiveliscombe

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123884

Headteacher: Mr G Tinker

Reporting inspector: Mr R Hancock  
2715

Dates of inspection: 7–10 October 2002

Inspection number: 249239

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wiveliscombe  
Somerset

Postcode: TA4 2NE

Telephone number: 01984 623483

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Allan Sutton

Date of previous inspection: 2 December 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2715	Richard Hancock	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9115	Terry Clarke	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English	
			English as an additional language	
30553	Richard Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Science	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
			Design and technology	
17522	Nigel Stiles	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	History	
10392	Donaleen Ratcliff	Team inspector	Geography	
18912	Catherine Large	Team inspector	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31821	Brian McCann	Team inspector	Physical education	
18846	Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music	
30695	Geraldine Dinan	Team inspector	Art and design	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Kingsmead Community School is a mixed comprehensive school catering for the 11–16 age range. Oversubscribed in all years, the school has 733 students on roll, considerably more than at the time of the last inspection although the school is still smaller than most secondary schools. Situated in the small town of Wiveliscombe, some 16 miles from Taunton, the school serves families with varied social backgrounds living in villages and isolated communities from a very wide rural area. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is 6 per cent which is well below the national average. There are very few students from an ethnic minority background and none learning English as an additional language. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is 12 per cent which is below the national average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational need is 2.9 per cent, just below the national average. Although the attainment of students on entry fluctuates, it is normally above the national average. The school was awarded special Language College status in 2000. It was also awarded Beacon status in 1999 and was re-designated a Beacon school from September of this year. The school is a member of a Virtual Education Action Zone (VEAZ). The school has established a centre for the support of students who find school life difficult, together with a learning support unit for students with moderate learning difficulties.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Kingsmead School is a good school with some very good features. The attitudes of students are positive and the vast majority behave well at all times. The overall standard of their work is well above average by the end of Year 9 and is above average by the end of Year 11. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and is often very good. The headteacher provides good leadership and the school is effectively managed. The school is very well supported by its governing body and is giving good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good
- The personal development of students is very good and relationships are harmonious
- Students have positive attitudes, take initiative well and act very responsibly
- Students are very well cared for and receive strong support
- The headteacher, staff and governing body work very well together to seek further improvement
- Students receive a good education in the arts and enjoy a very wide range of extra-curricular activities

#### **What could be improved**

- The overall standards of students' work by the time they leave the school
- The tracking and recording of students' progress throughout the school
- The assessment of students' work so that they know what they have to do to improve
- The overall management of special educational needs
- Accommodation in a number of subjects to help raise standards 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 1996. It has made good progress since that time. The key issues identified in the last inspection report have been well addressed and the quality of teaching has significantly improved. The overall standards of students' work have been broadly maintained. The successful application for Language College status has considerably enhanced provision. The school is much better resourced for information and communication technology [ICT] than it was at the time of the last inspection and students are now making good use of computers to assist their learning.

## 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				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In 2001, the results of National Curriculum tests in Year 9 showed that attainment in English, mathematics and science was well above the national average, which represents good achievement. Performance in English, mathematics and science has been steadily improving. These results were also above average when compared with those of similar schools. Test results in 2002 were not as good as those for 2001. The standard of current work is well above average in English and is above average in science and mathematics. By the end of Year 9, standards are either above or well above average in virtually all subjects and the overall achievement of students is good.

In the 2001 GCSE examinations, standards were well above average in English, were above average in mathematics and were average in science. The proportion of students obtaining 5 or more GCSE passes or GNVQ equivalent at grades A\* - C was well above the national average. Results were also above average in comparison with similar schools. This represents good achievement. However, the proportion of students obtaining 5 or more A\* - G grades or GNVQ equivalent was below the national average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. The trend of overall improvement is below the national trend. The school did not meet its target for the proportion of students reaching 5 or more grades at A\* - C in 2001 or in 2002 but has set an ambitious, but not unrealistic, target for 2003. Students' overall achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory but needs to be better.

Sometimes good, especially for the physically disabled, the achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Higher attainers could do better in some subjects such as mathematics. On the whole, boys' achievement is still lagging behind that of girls. Standards of literacy are good, apart from the written work of the less able students, which needs to be more accurate. Standards of numeracy are good. There is some outstanding achievement, especially in art and drama.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of students are enthusiastic about school, concentrate well in class and take a full part in the wider life of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Courteous and aware of the impact of what they do on others, the majority of students behave well at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Harmonious relationships lie at the heart of the school community. The growth in students' independence, confidence and sense of responsibility is one of the major strengths of the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

The students' keenness to learn, especially in Years 7 - 9, helps to promote high standards. In a few lessons, a minority of students are unmotivated and indifferent and this restricts achievement. The politeness shown by students helps to create a happy and positive environment. A few students behave badly in some lessons but no misbehaviour was seen out of classrooms. The majority of students are confident and work well on their own or with others. Throughout the school, there is a sense of staff and students working for a common end. During last year the attendance level rose by over one percentage point. Students are punctual.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In nearly half of all lessons, the quality of teaching is very good or excellent. It is very good in English, satisfactory in mathematics and good in science. The strengths of the teaching lie in teachers' knowledge of their subject, the quality of planning, the use of questioning and the use of very good presentational skills. Teaching is especially good in art and drama lessons. The weakest feature is the limited use of assessment to help students know what they have to do to improve and, in the very few unsatisfactory lessons, weak management in the classroom which does not check the misbehaviour of students. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall but is not adequately addressing weaknesses in the written work of lower attainers. The teaching of numeracy is also satisfactory although some opportunities are lost to reinforce numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. Students with physical disabilities are well taught and the overall teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. In some lessons, higher attainers would benefit from more challenging work. The overall quality of students' learning is good because they are keen to build on what they already know, like to acquire and try out new skills, and can apply their knowledge. It is especially challenging in English although much more routine in mathematics. Students show independence.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum has breadth. As well as the National Curriculum, all students study drama in Years 7 to 9, a PSHCE programme in all years and some follow vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Most subjects are taught for appropriate amounts of time but geography is short of time in Years 7 to 9.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall, but good for students with physical disabilities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils currently for whom English is an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The spiritual aspect is reflected in assemblies and in lessons in religious education but is limited elsewhere. Students are given good scope to consider the moral aspects of life. They have many good opportunities to mix and to work with one another. Arts provision is good. The cultural diversity of contemporary society is not fully explored.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school effectively monitors the personal development of students.

The school works well in partnership with parents. The major strengths of the curriculum are the opportunities for students to study two languages, the provision of drama and the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. A strong pastoral care system supports the students well throughout the school. The school does not fully meet the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides good leadership. The school has a clear sense of direction and morale is high. Senior managers are experienced and committed and have good levels of expertise. Departments are well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors carry out their main responsibilities very well. They are well organised and very alert to the needs of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school regularly reviews its overall performance rigorously but greater use needs to be made of data in the classroom to raise attainment.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Most departments are well resourced and the school has built up strong ICT provision but there are still shortages in some subjects.

The main strengths of the leadership and management lie in the strong sense of purpose in the school and the way in which all staff work together to secure improvement. The main weakness is the lack of an effective procedure to monitor all students' progress closely. Apart from ICT, the school is well staffed. Teachers are well qualified and support staff are enthusiastic and committed. Accommodation has been greatly improved in science and modern foreign languages but still restricts learning in geography, design and technology, religious education, music and mathematics. There are no acute shortages of books or materials but resources in history, music, and religious education need expanding and the library book stock needs updating. The school applies the principles of best value effectively.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress made by students</li> <li>• That students are expected to work hard and to give of their best</li> <li>• That the school is approachable</li> <li>• That the school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent and consistency of homework</li> <li>• The behavior of some students</li> <li>• The working relationship between school and parents</li> <li>• Their knowledge of how students are getting on.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents that students are expected to work hard and to give of their best, that the school is approachable and that it is well led and managed. Inspectors also found that the progress made by students is especially good from Years 7 to 9 but that it could be improved from Years 10 to 11.

The inspection team found that, for the most part, homework makes a positive contribution to raising standards, although it needs to play a larger part in mathematics, that the vast majority of students behave very well and that the working relationship between school and parents is good. It also believes that the school provides good information to parents about students' progress.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Attainment in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in 2001 was well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. As students' attainment on entry to the school is above average, this represents good achievement. Results in these subjects taken as a whole have been getting steadily better since 1998 and the overall trend of improvement is above average. The results were well above average in comparison with those of similar schools. Although the test results in 2002 were not as good as those for 2001, the standard of current work is well above average in English and is above average in science and mathematics.
2. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average in art, drama and physical education. Elsewhere they are above average, apart from design and technology where they are average. The overall achievement of students in the majority of subjects is good. The more able students and those of moderate ability are doing well. The overall achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory although it is good in some subjects. It is good for those with physical difficulties.
3. In 2001, the proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE examination grades at A\* - C was well above the national average in comparison with all schools and in comparison with similar schools. This represents good achievement. However, the proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE examination grades at A\* - G was below the national average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. There is scope for the school to achieve more in some subjects, especially in mathematics, science, and French. More boys need to reach the highest grades in German. The school did not meet its target for the proportion of students reaching 5 or more grades at A\* - C in either 2001 or 2002 but current standards in subjects as a whole in Year 11 augur well and justify the school's ambitious targets for 2003.
4. In 2001, the students' rate of progress from Key Stage 3 to the end of Key Stage 4 was above average for students achieving 5 or more A\* - C grades but for 5 or more grades at A\* - G progress was below average and for average points score it was well below average. At grades A\* - C the results of girls were better than those of boys. Boys did less well than girls in French and German. Good results were obtained in art and design, combined science, English and English literature, history and physical education. Results were weaker in design and technology and geography.
5. In 2002, overall GCSE examination results were less good but they improved in terms of 5 or more grades at A\* - G which 98 per cent of students reached. Given the attainment of students on entry, it is clear that they could achieve more by the time they leave school. This is especially the case for the most able students and those who learn more slowly. The achievement of students with special educational needs is the same as for Years 7 to 9. The school has set a very ambitious target for 69 per cent of students to achieve 5 or more grades at A - C in 2003, but the quality of much current work indicates that the boldness of this target is justified. Overall standards are similar to those described at the time of the last inspection. Higher attainers and those who are talented and gifted are

given good scope in art, music, ICT and physical education but they could achieve more in some subjects.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

6. Students' attitudes are good and the vast majority behave well. Their personal development is very good. Relationships are also very good. The high standards found at the last inspection have been maintained. Attendance is satisfactory.
7. Students are enthusiastic and want to become involved in lessons and the wider life of the school. Most of them enjoy attending, arrive punctually and waste no time in settling down to the tasks in hand. They are justly proud of their school, speak highly of their teachers and enjoy taking part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, particularly in sport. Very occasionally, the attitudes of a very small minority of students are unsatisfactory, particularly when the pace of the lesson falls away and the teacher's management of behaviour is weak. Also, in a few lessons, the attitudes of a very small minority are disappointing when they do not see the need to try their best.
8. The vast majority of students are polite and courteous, including the more disaffected students working on individual programmes who enjoy explaining their achievements. The absence of oppressive behaviour is very good and no bullying was seen during the inspection week. Students say that it rarely happens and is effectively dealt with if it does. The school has clear policies for dealing with bullying and these are proving effective.
9. The number of fixed-term exclusions has increased compared to the previous inspection. However, the new headteacher has the support of the governing body in not tolerating students swearing at teachers or violence between students, the reasons for most exclusions last year. The number is now getting less and this year there have been none. The headteacher has set the boundaries for acceptable behaviour and students are responding well.
10. Personal development and relationships are very good. Students have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and show respect for one another's feelings, values and beliefs. For example, they support disabled students, helping them to move around the school and ensuring that they are not without companionship. The initiative they show and the personal responsibility they take are both excellent. This increases as they grow up through the school. The student council is impressive and effective, meetings are very well conducted, and in all years representatives report back comprehensively to their tutor groups. A particularly successful initiative taken by the student council was its involvement in deciding on the successful bid for the new catering contract, when students visited other schools to sample the quality of the tenders.
11. Relationships between students and between adults and students are very good. Students are very supportive of each other. For example, students in Year 11 support students in Year 7 from the time they first start at the school and some of the present Year 10 students are about to start training as peer counsellors. The more senior students act as a further support to the very good pastoral care provided by the school. Some students in Year 8 are learning sign language to assist them in relating to students who find verbal communication difficult.

12. In the last reporting year, attendance was in line with the national average and the level of unauthorised absence was half that of the national average. During last year the attendance level rose by over one percentage point. Students usually arrive at school promptly unless the buses are delayed, and are punctual to lessons.

## **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

13. The overall quality of teaching is good and in four out of ten lessons it is very good or excellent. The quality of teaching is very good in English, satisfactory in mathematics and good in science. The standard of teaching has improved very significantly since the last inspection and there is now only a little which is unsatisfactory. There are no very marked differences between years or key stages and this makes for a very consistent picture. The school has undertaken extensive work on the development of teaching and learning since the previous OFSTED inspection and this has clearly paid off.
14. Teaching has many strengths. First and foremost is the command that teachers have of their subject. This knowledge gives them great confidence when imparting to students accurate information and helps them to question students effectively to develop clearer understanding. Extensive and effective use is made of up-to-date technology for class presentations. In many lessons, teachers have the highest expectations of students, requiring them to concentrate well and grapple with difficult concepts.
15. The teaching and learning of higher-attaining students and those who are gifted and talented presents a mixed picture as it varies in quality from subject to subject and in some departments from lesson to lesson. One good illustration of its effectiveness was the scope given to a Year 11 student, who, already having taken his GCSE examination early, undertook a presentation in German for a Year 9 German class on the school's Zambian exchange. On the whole, these more able students are responding well to high levels of challenge in art, drama, music, ICT and often in physical education and science, but need further stimulus in some lessons in physical education, in geography and design and technology generally, and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
16. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs is also uneven. They benefit in mathematics lessons from the support of teaching assistants but do not make the same progress in Years 7 and 8 when such support is not forthcoming. They learn well in art because of the clear step-by-step guidance provided for them. They sometimes do not make the progress in literacy they should because their weaknesses in spelling and punctuation are not always systematically addressed, either in English lessons or in the wider curriculum. They are well served in geography and history lessons because teachers adapt work to match their needs. The teaching of students with physical difficulties is especially good because teaching assistants have a very good knowledge of their wide range of needs and how to meet them.
17. In a few lessons, some students misbehave and teachers find it difficult to manage the class. These lessons are unsatisfactory because little learning takes place. In teaching as a whole, not enough use is made of assessment to help students to understand what they know, understand and can do, although there are good examples of its effective use in art, geography, and religious education. Marking does not always provide clear feedback to students as to how they can best improve the standard of their work.

18. Helped by their positive attitudes, the majority of students concentrate hard and learn well. They show a very good degree of responsibility when undertaking research or investigations. They learn the skills of working with one another. Many have developed a good degree of independence. Learning in mathematics is more a matter of routine and often lacks interest. Most students undertake homework diligently and this often helps to reinforce what they have learned and sometimes to prepare them for new ideas. They show independence and can take initiative. They are making especially good use of ICT to develop their learning.
19. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The extent of good teaching has increased, the degree of very good teaching is much higher and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has declined. The excellent work that the school has undertaken on the nature of learning is now fully reflected in many classrooms.

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

20. The curriculum has good breadth and balance at both key stages. Statutory requirements are met and there are some very noteworthy, distinctive features of the school's provision. The Language College status of the school is one such feature. There are also some anomalies and new challenges to be met in the curriculum which make its current review timely. A good start has been made in identifying how citizenship will be taught through lessons in English, history, geography and religious education and plans now need to be developed for the monitoring of teaching and learning of this new area of the curriculum.
21. The school has a strong commitment to providing appropriate, relevant challenges and opportunities for all its students. For example, it has enabled some students to follow a number of work-related courses in Years 10 and 11. It has also established centres for students with moderate learning difficulties or problems adjusting to school life and the Goleman and Enrichment centres both provide very good support for such students. Support for physically disabled students is excellent, both in the physical provision and in the way such students are cared for in the wider school community.
22. As the curriculum has evolved, it has had to take account of national initiatives and requirements such as ICT. These demands, and those of the Language College, have led to some inconsistencies in provision in other areas of the curriculum. The increase in student numbers is also having a major impact on the curriculum because of the increase in class sizes. The school has responded to these issues in a variety of ways, for example by planning smaller classes in practical subjects. However, the demands placed upon the curriculum, now and in the future, have led the school to undertake a major review with the object of establishing a clear and coherent rationale for the learning opportunities provided for the full range of students, whilst taking account of the school's distinctive status as a Language College.
23. One of the strengths of the curriculum is the provision of drama for all students in Years 7 to 9. This plays a major part in the all-round development of students' self-confidence and social skills. This subject enables students to explore and reflect on a wide range of spiritual and moral issues, thus deepening their understanding of their own and others' culture and beliefs. When provision for drama is considered alongside the school's provision for art, music and dance, it is clear that students are being provided with opportunities for an effective education in the arts.

24. Extra-curricular activities are also a strength of the school. There are above average levels of participation in musical activity. Sport is a strong, very popular and successful feature of school life. These, together with the school annual drama productions and theatre trips, foreign exchanges, field study trips and successful participation in public speaking competitions are examples of very good provision. There is excellent planning, provision and participation in the thriving Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Students in the 'Quest' club enjoy the opportunities they have to meet with local clergy and to share in a range of in and out-of-school activities in a Christian context. Many departments offer study support classes at lunchtime and after school. Students themselves are active in organising and managing fund-raising activities for charities and show a concern for others beyond their rural environment.
25. The link with two schools in Zambia is an excellent example of the way the school enables its students to become aware of different cultures and circumstances on an international basis. For those who participate in the exchange, both students and staff, it is an extremely broadening experience and, for all students, the exchange opens their eyes to the needs of the wider world. Together with the strong modern language provision, the exchange provides the students with a very good introduction to the international dimension of the curriculum but there is less opportunity for students to become aware of the cultural diversity of contemporary Britain.
26. The good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is taught by form tutors weekly to all students, except those in Year 8. This exception is one of the timetabling anomalies necessitating a curriculum review. Students in Year 8 have five mornings annually of provision but this does not maintain or build up the learning and reflection in these key areas of personal development. There is a sex education policy and an effective programme is in place with good resources and personnel, including the school nurse, involved. Senior staff support form tutors where requested. Drugs education takes place in a number of contexts - in PHSCE, drama, science, English and religious education. There are also a number of external speakers who participate in the programme. Whilst the content of these programmes is good, there is no clear overview of what, when and how the different contributions are made.
27. Careers education is part of the PHSCE programme. It is well organised throughout the school with a basic introduction to the world of work and earning a living taking place in Years 7 and 8. There is a good range of vocational and work-related courses on offer both in school and linked with local colleges and organisations. Work experience opportunities are diverse and the students are well prepared for these in the overall PHSCE programme. The school makes satisfactory use of the national strategies for students in Year 7 whose literacy and numeracy skills are weak. As students move through the school, they benefit from good support in preparing their record of achievement and their application forms for the world of college and work. Students are very well informed about the full range of opportunities on offer to them when they leave the school. There are good links with *Connexions* in relation to career opportunities and some limited involvement of the business community in mentoring students.
28. There are some weaker aspects of the curriculum. The time allocated to the teaching of geography in Years 7 to 9 is less than for history and results in some scant coverage of the curriculum. Because of shortages of personnel, there is currently no specific ICT programme in Year 9. PSHCE in Year 8 is limited. As students move into Years 10 and

11, their options to follow courses in drama, art and sport are restricted. Students who wish to study a GCSE examination course in ICT cannot currently do so unless they are in two specific English classes. Sometimes large class sizes present teaching and learning difficulties as students and staff cope with the restrictions of space. Most subjects include specific work on the development of literacy but such attention is uneven in the school. The written work of some lower attainers contains spelling errors and weaknesses of expression but there is no concerted attempt to address this issue in the curriculum as a whole. The school has still to implement a policy for numeracy.

29. The school does not fully comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Strong moral and social messages are given both in form groups and in assemblies, but generally speaking students are not given sufficient time to think about them. Although spiritual development is not at the forefront of teachers' planning and opportunities arising in lessons are missed, overall provision is satisfactory. The ethos of the school is centred on the value of the individual and all students are expected to be respectful of themselves and to show respect for others. The school's exchange with Zambia provides an unusually powerful context for students to consider what they value in their lives. In art, drama and literature in particular, students are expected to think in depth and are encouraged to question the nature of experience. In geography, students have opportunities to show respect for the forces of nature when studying volcanic eruptions and the process of erosion. In mathematics they are encouraged to relate their learning to a wider frame of reference by asking such questions as *'How?'* and *'Why?'*
30. Provision for moral development is good. The school's code of behaviour provides a clear moral message about responsible behaviour and this is promoted consistently in all areas of school life. Students are reminded in assemblies, in tutor groups and lessons of their impact on their actions on others. They are given extensive scope to develop team-working. Teachers' make use of examples of issues such as slavery so that students are made aware of the consequences of inequality. They also refer to topical issues such as pollution of the environment and the need for sustainable development to raise awareness of self-control and conservation. Debates and discussions in religious education, history, geography and English enable students to listen to the opinions of others and make reasoned personal decisions about homelessness, enforced population controls, war and pacifism.
31. The provision for social development is very good. This is a community school with links to the local and wider community. One of the principal aims of the school is to encourage active involvement with these communities. This is evident from fund-raising activities in support of local and national charities and the involvement of local people in aspects of school life, including learning. The school is fully inclusive, providing a range of experience in relating to other people's skills, qualities and also disabilities. This provides scope for the development of good relationships. Assemblies provide opportunities for a positive corporate experience, as do concerts, clubs and other extra-curricular activities. There are frequent opportunities in lessons for social interaction such as paired and group work. Subjects, such as physical education, music and whole-group project work in art, enable students to develop the skills needed for team work. Out-of-school sports and music events and competitions enable students to interact with other young people and adults, so extending their experience. The student council provides opportunities not only for citizenship education but also a platform on which to resolve tensions between students' aspirations and those of other sections of the community. It also provides an experience of corporate decision-making and self-management.

32. Provision for cultural development is good. The school provides opportunities for students to participate in drama, art, music and other cultural events both in school and out of school. The curriculum itself is rich in culture, with students being able to learn about people and places within their own country and elsewhere, both past and present. This is extended in the arts and religious education where visits to the theatre, art galleries and place of worship both close to home and far afield are regular occurrences. The school promotes knowledge and understanding of France and Germany by visits to both countries. Mindful that the multicultural experience of students is limited, the school has established a strong link with a rural school in Zambia which involves not only an exchange of information but also an exchange of students and teachers. Students themselves raise funds to meet the costs of Zambian students and learn much from their visits. Teachers are required to give prominence to such experiences and ensure that they are presented in a way that promotes respect for differences and prepares student for life in the multicultural societies beyond their home region, but this is a less well-developed area of the curriculum.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

33. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare are very good and the educational and personal support and guidance for students are also good. The school provides a very supportive and caring environment which makes a positive contribution to students' learning. The high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.
34. A very effective system of pastoral care is the foundation for the strong support provided for students and is a strength of the school. Based on the work of the assistant headteacher and dedicated and experienced heads of year, the pastoral system is very well supported by form tutors. All of these follow students through the school from Year 7 to Year 11 and consequently get to know all the students in their charge and are well placed to identify any problems which arise during a student's time at the school. A comprehensive induction programme ensures that students become familiar with the school early on, as well as giving the pastoral team the opportunity to get to know them. As a result, personal development is monitored and supported very well. Counsellors are available to support students where necessary and provide a particularly useful service for the small number who find it difficult to cope with life at school.
35. The school has appropriate child protection procedures in place, including a designated member of staff with key responsibilities. Information on child protection is included in the staff induction programme and all staff are kept up to date on any changes to procedures. The governing body is kept informed of any issues. There is a common knowledge of designated personnel and an understanding of all necessary procedures.
36. All health and safety procedures are very good and regular reports are made to the governing body. The school has a proper system of priorities and carries out risk assessments where appropriate. Two excellent aspects of the school's health and safety procedures are the detailed risk assessment carried out for students taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the manual handling training for staff who support students with physical disabilities. If students are sick or injured they are very well looked after. The school's procedures for storing and administering medicines are good.

37. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good because attendance levels in all individual year groups are monitored on a weekly basis and the analysis enables the school to focus on any year groups causing concern. Registers are marked correctly and promptly and absences are immediately followed up. The school makes good use of the education welfare service. As a result of the introduction of the current recording procedures, attendance improved by over one percentage point last year. The school has clear yearly targets for attendance. At the last inspection, concern was expressed that the registers were kept in the school corridor but this has now been addressed as registers are returned to reception.
38. The school monitors and promotes good behaviour well. Its behaviour policy is clear and effective and is understood by staff and students. It includes appropriate rewards and sanctions, the sanctions ranging from detention and a staged 'on report' process, with the governors' student services and pastoral sub-committee becoming involved well before exclusion is being considered. This is proving effective. The pastoral team keeps the school's rewards policy under regular review. Procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good as is evident by the absence of bullying.
39. The school's arrangements for managing assessment at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 meet statutory requirements and are satisfactory. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are also satisfactory. Whilst the school has extensive data relating to the performance of students which is shared with teachers, only limited use is made of it in the classroom to raise attainment or in the school as a whole to track the progress of individual groups of students. The school needs to make more use of this and other data to monitor the progress of students so that it knows more precisely where they are succeeding and where they need to achieve more. Minimum target grades are set for students to aim at, but only in Years 10 and 11 are these followed up by records of achievement. However, the school is in the process of developing a progressive record of achievement from Year 7 through to Year 11.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

40. The parents' views of the school, the effectiveness of the school's links with parents and the impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school are all good. Their contribution to students' learning compares well with that found at the last inspection.
41. An indication of the popularity of the school with parents is that it is oversubscribed. The vast majority of parents believe that their children are making good progress. However, a significant number were concerned about the behaviour of some students. Some concerns were also expressed about the amount of homework students receive and some parents believe that they are not given enough information about how their children are progressing.
42. The school has effective links with its parents. It provides good information for the parents through an attractive prospectus, a detailed annual report from the governing body, which contains all the relevant statutory information, as well as through regular newsletters. The school is always prepared to see concerned parents and, if parents are not able to come to the school, a member of the pastoral team will visit the parents at home to discuss an issue. This is a particular strength. Regular parents' evenings are held for the discussion of students' progress, although some parents of Year 7 students would prefer that this was held earlier in the summer term. The quality of students' annual reports is good and at the

end of Year 9 give the National Curriculum levels students have achieved. The school makes a positive effort to obtain parents' views of the school by sending out questionnaires from time to time.

43. Parents' involvement on the work of the school makes a positive impact. An active School Association gives the school good support through arranging fund-raising and social activities. The money raised for the school make a positive impact on students' learning by providing extra resources. The School Association also acts as a sounding board for the school and arranges information evenings for parents on such issues as parenting skills, smoking and drugs. The information from these evenings can help parents to contribute to students' learning at home.
44. Many parents are prepared to come into school to contribute to students' learning and are especially active in assisting with the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Parents are involved in students' education at home by supporting them with their homework and ensuring that it is completed. Overall, the contribution of parents to students' learning at school and at home has a positive impact on their attainment and progress.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

45. The headteacher provides good leadership. Respected by staff and students, he is giving the school a clear sense of direction. He has a good knowledge of what is happening in the school day by day and shows a firm grasp of the main issues facing the school in the future. Working as a team, other senior leaders also provide good leadership and their work has had a direct impact on major developments in the school, particularly in the areas of pastoral care, staff development and the quality of learning. Important characteristics of the school, such as its Language College status, Beacon school designation and participation in the Virtual Education Action Zone (VEAZ), have all been consolidated.
46. The school is managed well. All staff are aware of their distinct but inter-related roles and responsibilities and this makes for a consistency of approach in the school. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities and shows evidence of strategic thinking. To assist in the smooth running of the school, a comprehensive staff handbook has been prepared which clearly sets out a wide range of well thought out policies, produced through an effective process of consultation. This provides helpful guidance to all who work in the school. Departments are well run. A performance management process has been effectively introduced. The attractive school brochure provides parents with all relevant information.
47. There is extensive monitoring, especially of teaching and learning as well as students' personal development and attendance. There is also a biennial survey of parents' views to ensure that the school is abreast of their thinking. Parents' views on proposed major developments are also sought through the School Association. The student council provides a forum at which students can express their views and play a part in the running of the school.
48. The governing body provides very good support for the school. It has a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has a clear view of the future direction of the school. Members are committed, responsible and well trained. The governing body has been especially successful in helping the school to make a number of effective appointments to key positions. It is consulted at an early stage if the school is

contemplating any form of exclusion and responds well. It has been effective in ensuring that the school is a healthy and safe place, that its work fulfils virtually all statutory requirements and that all expenditure is justified and carefully monitored. The chairman's annual report to parents is detailed and complete.

49. There is some very good use of accommodation. The curtained studio dedicated to drama enhances the quality of students' work because it helps them to concentrate and produce work of high quality. The spacious and well decorated rooms of the Goleman centre and the Enrichment centre help staff to work in conditions which raise the self-esteem of all who work there. Atlantis is playing a key role in ensuring quality of physical care for some students. The installation of air conditioning in some of the temporary classrooms helps to keep everyone alert for learning. Some accommodation is unsatisfactory and has an adverse effect on the quality of students' learning, particularly in mathematics, art and design, music, ICT and geography. The library is unprepossessing and is not making a significant contribution to the literacy development of students.
50. The school has some good resources but they now need expanding in a number of subjects. The influx of computers has been very beneficial, and effective use is often made of interactive whiteboards and other technology. The library stock is out of date and unappealing. The very well managed print shop is a great asset. Support staff in all capacities, educational and administrative, are very well motivated and committed and make a major contribution to the effective running of the school.
51. The school has extensive data on students' performance and monitors test and examination results so that it broadly knows if students' realise their potential, but data is not being systematically used to track the progress of all students on a detailed basis. This is a weakness in current practice. Furthermore, there is only limited use in the classroom of such data with the aim of raising standards and this is also a further area for development. The lack of a special educational needs profile to show the overall progress of the wide range of students who need extra support is also a weakness as the school is not able to show the degree of effectiveness of the considerable resource it devotes to this area of its work.
52. The school's financial systems are very good. Good use is made of new technology to ensure that records are complete and up to date and can track the expenditure of a wide range of specific grants. The school goes to considerable trouble to ensure that it gets best value for money when purchasing books and equipment. There is a very good understanding of the principles of best value which drives the school's own internal reviews of expenditure. Auditors' reports are positive and often complimentary about the school's financial procedures. Their recommendations are always followed up with alacrity. Because it has been so successful in attracting funds, the school is able to spend much more than most secondary schools on its students. Although the school can do more to ensure that the overall achievement of the student is improved by the time they leave the school, the quality of the teaching and learning in lessons, the very good support for students and the high level of financial management are just three of the many indications that the school is giving good value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

53. In order to improve standards still further the school and its governing body now need to:

- (1) Ensure that the overall attainment of students is raised and maintained by the end of Year 11;  
(Paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 70, 77, 80, 92, and 94)
- (2) Introduce a system of close monitoring so that everyone is aware of the progress made by all groups of students throughout the school;  
(Paragraphs 51, 57, 74, and 83)
- (3) Implement fully the school's assessment policy and ensure that the current best practice is shared with all departments;  
(Paragraphs 17, 72 and 136)
- (4) Improve the overall management of special educational needs so that it is clear that all resources are used to best advantage and the outcomes are made evident by a regular review;  
(Paragraphs 57 and 71)
- (5) Improve accommodation to assist learning in art and design, design and technology, mathematics, geography, physical education and ICT.  
(Paragraphs 49, 74, 91, 96, 131, and 140)

### **The following, less significant issues, also need to be addressed:**

- the weaknesses in the writing of lower-attaining students;  
(Paragraphs 16, 62 and 67)
- aspects of the curriculum so that it addresses literacy, retains balance and extends breadth;  
(Paragraphs 28, 68, 75 and 101)
- improvements to library provision so that it plays a greater part in students' learning;  
(Paragraphs 49 and 67)
- the further development of numeracy;  
(Paragraph 75)
- limitations in the spiritual aspect of the curriculum and in the implementation of the requirements to hold a daily act of collective worship.  
(Paragraph 29)

## THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

54. This unit, known in the school as the Enrichment Centre, services the major part of the school's work in the area of special educational needs. Its current function is to provide a calm secure environment in which students with a wide range of needs can be taught and which can also act as an administrative and resource base for the 17 teaching assistants. The centre itself is well located, close by the main school and adjacent to the Goleman Centre. This means that a minimum amount of time is lost by staff and students moving between buildings. Good attention has been given to the security of the building and yet there is ease of access for physically disabled students. The centre has a bright, warm and welcoming ethos. Its one larger central area and two smaller rooms are made good use of for work with individual students and groups. The centre is well equipped with computers, which are put to good use.
55. The centre is effective. It serves many purposes well. A strength is the flexible way it works with other resources such as the Goleman Centre with which it frequently overlaps. It provides the large space needed by teaching assistants when they work with physically disabled students, requiring scope to ensure that all their communication skills can be brought into play to make contact with the students and to carry out activities such as physical exercises and the pouring and mixing of paint. Computer programs are well used to help students reinforce their knowledge of basic spelling patterns. The centre acts as a base several times each week when mentors from Year 11 assist students with learning difficulties, especially in relation to literacy. It also acts as base for extra-curricular activities such as the understanding of sign language by students in Year 8.
56. The quality of support provided by teaching assistants is good. They are highly motivated and take a great interest in their work. They have undergone training and a number already have plans for further training in the future. They relate very well to the students and have a good understanding of their needs. They show great flexibility and are ready to undertake a wide range of tasks. Their morale is high and they feel valued. They were pleased that they could state their personal preferences when the school decided to allocate teaching assistants to departments. They are already aware that this will have training implications for them as their subjects make new demands on their knowledge and skills.
57. At present, the work of the learning centre is not held together by a close working knowledge of all its achievements. Although the school has been working on monitoring the responses of individual students, it has no means of systematically tracking their progress over time, and consequently it is not possible to see what the achievements of the centre amount to as there is no summary of students' progress. This also means it is difficult for the school to determine the value for money it is getting from the centre. This is an overall weakness in the school's work in the area of special educational needs and necessarily applies to the work of the centre.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### **Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection**

Number of lessons observed	126
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	46	46	24	3	0	0
Percentage	6	36.5	36.5	19	2	0	0

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

### **Information about the school's pupils**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	733
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	43

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	89

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	69	70	139

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	52	54
	Girls	57	56	59
	Total	102	108	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 [65]	78 [71]	81 [79]
	National	64 [63]	66 [65]	66 [59]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 [23]	51 [48]	55 [46]
	National	31 [28]	43 [42]	34 [30]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	53	47
	Girls	55	56	46
	Total	100	109	93
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 [65]	77 [69]	65 [83]
	National	65 [64]	68 [66]	64 [62]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 [37]	57 [44]	30 [33]
	National	31 [31]	42 [39]	33 [29]

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	67	135

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	41	55	65
	Girls	43	62	67
	Total	84	117	132
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 [53]	87 [94]	98 [98]
	National	48 [47]	91 [91]	96 [96]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.1
	National	39

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

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

**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	679	37	1
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	14		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African	2		
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group	2		
No ethnic group recorded			

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	654

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	23

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	2,2318.93
Total expenditure	2,217.152
Expenditure per pupil	3,158
Balance brought forward from previous year	160,054
Balance carried forward to next year	161,815

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15.2

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	733
Number of questionnaires returned	109

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	53	11	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	40	50	6	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	55	20	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	44	20	9	4
The teaching is good.	27	60	7	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	54	14	6	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	39	6	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	43	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	51	12	10	4
The school is well led and managed.	33	51	6	6	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	40	11	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	41	8	3	17

## 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 **very good**.

#### Strengths

- well above average attainment
- very good teaching
- high quality speaking and listening

#### Areas for improvement

- advice to students on how to improve their work
- teaching of sentence structure, spelling and punctuation to lower attainers

58. In 2001, standards in the Year 9 tests were well above average, following several years when they were average. They were also well above average in comparison to similar schools. A notable feature was the increase in the proportion of students gaining higher levels. Girls did better than boys, but boys' results are improving. Overall, this was a considerable improvement upon the standards reported in the last inspection although the test results for 2002 are not as good.
59. In 2001, the proportion of students achieving grades A\* - C in the GCSE examination was well above the national average. Overall results were in line with the national average. English Literature results have remained consistently well above national levels for the past three years. The results for 2002 are not as good.
60. The standards of work in Year 9 are well above average. In their first three years in school, students achieve well and standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are all high. They take part sensibly in discussions and speak and listen to each other with respect and think about what they say. This was well illustrated by lower-attaining students studying the needs of homeless people. The students staged a well-ordered debate, assuming the parts of local citizens to reflect a mixture of support and reservation for proposals to open a hostel in their area. They undertook their roles with mature deliberation, diligence and insight. By the end of their first three years in school, students read poetry, fiction, and non-fiction with understanding and enjoyment, write well about what they have read and are taught to understand the technical terms needed to help them analyse and identify the key structures found in different types of literature.
61. Standards of writing in Year 7 are above average and improve further by the end of Year 9. Teachers ensure that students produce a good range of writing to consolidate their vocabulary and to capitalise on their interest and above-average reading skills. Higher and middle-attaining students produce well-presented work in clear handwriting or by computer. Their spelling and punctuation are consistent and logical. Girls write better than boys.
62. The work of lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs shows that common words are often misspelled and that control over sentence structure is uncertain;

a problem which persists as students move on through the school. Many tend to write words as they say them, rather than according to convention, failing to use full stops where they are necessary for good communication.

63. By Year 11, students achieve well and standards of work are above average. Girls' achievement is greater than that of boys. As a result of stimulating teaching, the written work of higher and middle-attaining students is fluent and makes use of a wide, good vocabulary, and well-structured arguments. Lower-attaining students express themselves in writing with some command of vocabulary, but lack sufficient control over the conventions of sentence structure to communicate their ideas clearly. Students at all levels make very good use of computers to locate information and to communicate.
64. Students respond well to a wide selection of literature, and deal confidently with a variety of historical and social settings, ideas and characters. They hold sensible discussions, listen well to each other and put their ideas over convincingly. Following a lively lesson in which students learned to recognise and experiment with a variety of techniques to encourage and persuade, a group studying Martin Luther King's '*I have a dream*' speech were able to identify effectively its awareness of audience and distinctive use of rhythm.
65. The quality of teaching is very good. Its strengths are good planning and the effective use of questioning and prompting of students based on very good subject knowledge. Teachers work well with teaching assistants to ensure that students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The checking of written work is sensitive and encouraging and useful comments are made on its strengths but do not offer enough guidance on how work can be improved.
66. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good and the pride they take in the presentation of work adds greatly to its quality. Leadership and management are good. A recently appointed head of department has done much to help the team of specialist teachers identify priorities for improvement and improve teaching. As a result, lessons are livelier in delivery and more varied in content. In consequence, students' attention is held well. Standards have improved and good progress has been made since the last inspection.
67. Standards of literacy in the school as a whole are good. Students discuss ideas well, make presentations in class with assurance, read fluently and express themselves coherently in writing. They make good use of paragraphing and punctuation but lower-attaining students often fail to spell both common and technical words accurately. This is because teachers have not emphasised or checked written work sufficiently to help them tackle the problems successfully. Students read fiction readily for pleasure but the library does not do enough to promote this further or to support other initiatives to develop literacy.
68. The school has taken good steps to train staff and has a policy to promote literacy, drawing on national initiatives well. A good feature is the emphasis upon a selected aspect of literacy each month in all lessons so that all students learn specific reading or writing skills on a systematic basis. Nevertheless, the application of the literacy policy is inconsistent because some teachers lack expertise and an understanding of their responsibilities in this respect. Although key technical terms are displayed in most subjects, not enough reference is made to them in the learning process. Generally,

students do not receive enough help to maintain and improve further their standards of writing. Staff responsible for literacy development in the school have evaluated its strengths and weaknesses and have accurately identified the next steps to take.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- good teaching at Key Stage 3
- students are well equipped with a mathematical vocabulary
- good relationships make for purposeful learning

### **Areas for improvement**

- more challenge for higher attainers so that they achieve higher examination grades
- more constructive marking so that students know what they have to do improve
- more variety in teaching and learning
- extent and use of homework to further understanding and raise standards

69. In 2001, standards in the Year 9 tests were well above average and the proportion of students attaining higher levels was also above average. Results were much better than those of similar schools and have been rising in line with national trends. The results for 2002 show a further significant increase in the proportion of students achieving Level 6 and above. When they join the school, students have generally attained above average standards and they make good progress during Key Stage 3 and achieve well. The standard of current work is well above average.
70. Standards in the 2001 GCSE examinations were above average although students did less well in mathematics than they did in their other subjects overall. They made satisfactory progress. Just over half of the students achieved grades A\* - C, which was higher than the national average, but none achieved the highest grade and the proportion of A grades was below average. Their overall performance improved in 2002 but the proportion achieving grades A\* - C fell to half. Students are currently working in line with the standards of previous years. Those with special educational needs in Year 11 are enjoying mathematics and are on target for success in GCSE examinations. Higher-attaining students, however, lack experience in tackling a wide range of challenging examples, necessary preparation if they are to achieve the highest grades.
71. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although it is sometimes very good and in one lesson it was excellent. It is better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. Learning is good or better in half of the lessons. Teachers have good relationships with their students, who are co-operative and responsive to questions. They learn well because they are engaged in the topic being studied. Throughout lessons, teachers emphasise the correct use of mathematical terminology and vocabulary, which in turn helps students express themselves with confidence. In the best lessons, aims are clearly outlined and teachers interact well with students, which helps them to develop rapidly their understanding of concepts. This enables them to work independently on challenging tasks. Students with special educational needs learn particularly well when they are helped by the knowledgeable teaching assistants but there is inadequate provision for the large classes in Years 7 and 8.

72. Students could learn more rapidly in some lessons if teachers took opportunities to relate topics to everyday life. Calculation of the mean duration of marriages with a class of fifteen-year-olds had the potential to lead to discussion and statistical analysis of historical or cultural comparisons, but the teacher did not follow this approach. Time is often not used well; in a Year 7 lesson, for instance, nearly half of the time was used for a multiplication table test without the development of any further learning. Teaching is over-reliant on textbooks so students do not experience a wide variety of learning opportunities: group work, using computers and interesting homework, is infrequently used to stimulate students. Their work is often uncorrected and when marked insufficient guidance is given on how to improve.
73. Capable students can follow a statistics course in after-lessons classes in Year 10. This is a popular provision, helping them achieve useful skills as well as GCSE certification. Good links have been forged with primary schools to maintain continuity of experience for students and 'bridging' units and 'springboard' sessions are used well to raise their confidence.
74. Since the last inspection, all the good features of the provision have been maintained. Teaching is now at least satisfactory and there are examples of dynamic pace in lessons, although only some students benefit from this. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Priority should now be given to tracking and monitoring students' attainment relative to national expectations and to adjusting teaching styles to ensure improvement. Homework time needs to be used to more advantage to improve attainment in the GCSE examination. There are drawbacks to the present accommodation and some class sizes are too high. There needs to be better access to computers and opportunities to display work.
75. Students have good standards of numeracy when they join the school. These skills are developed well in mathematics lessons but rarely applied in these lessons to the context of other areas of the curriculum. The school does not yet have a policy for numeracy and there is no coherent provision although all teachers have been introduced to the principles of numeracy across the curriculum and further training is planned. The responsibility for teaching numeracy lies with the mathematics department but there is no definition of the contributions to be made by other curriculum areas. Teaching in most subjects lacks strategic planning for numeracy but students generally have a repertoire of techniques that they can rely on. In art, they use concepts of linear perspective effectively and in modern languages numeracy skills are reinforced through counting, references to dates and telephone numbers. In science, a range of applications are referred to, including wavelengths. Formulae manipulation and substitution including conversion of units are competently carried out and prepare students for further education in science. Spreadsheet skills and compilation of questionnaires are used well in design and technology. Although students make some careless mistakes, they apply many numeracy skills in geography, including scale, angles of elevation and calculation of distances using co-ordinates for map work. Overall, their standards of numeracy are good.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- very high attainment by the end of Year 9
- the quality of teaching
- the use of computers to develop learning

### Areas for improvement

- standards in the GCSE examination
- the assessment of students' work in Years 10 and 11
- the evaluation of experiments in Years 10 and 11

76. In 2001, the results of national tests taken in Year 9 were well above average and the 2002 results were much the same. Science results are rising faster than the national trend and students are achieving very well.
77. The 2001 GCSE dual award examination results were above average. The results for the small number of students sitting the single award GCSE were well below average. When the results for the two groups are combined, the results overall are average and students did not do as well in science as they did on average in their other subjects. The results for students attaining A\* - C grade fell in 2002, as did the overall figure for the school. Boys outperform girls. The overall performance in the GCSE examination needs to be better.
78. The standard of current work in Years 7 - 9 is high. Students have a very confident grasp of scientific topics and principles, well illustrated by a Year 8 class who showed very good understanding of conduction, convection and radiation after using a wide range of books and the internet to research the subject. Students in Year 7 showed detailed knowledge of cells and their functions. Good progress in this lesson was being helped by work specially designed for each student's ability. Students safely undertake practical work and accurately record results. Figures from experiments are often expressed as graphs that are drawn to a high level of accuracy. However, many pupils have difficulty in describing what the graph shows. Whilst students express their ideas very well, many have difficulty spelling scientific words correctly.
79. Standards, in Year 11 are good and improving because of effective teaching, improved accommodation, good use of resources to accelerate learning and the positive attitudes of students. Most students have a good knowledge and understanding of topics they have studied recently. Higher-attaining students are achieving well. For example, students in Year 11 demonstrated good understanding of the impact of man on the environment and made accurate use of specialist terms when describing their ideas. Students' skills in investigative work generally match their attainment in other aspects of science but evaluation of experiments is of a lower standard.
80. Students' overall achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. Achievement at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory for the good majority of students taking the dual award qualification. When GCSE examination results of the minority of students who sit the single award science are taken into account achievement for the whole year group is not as high as it

should be, given the very good results at the end of Year 9. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students and all students make good progress in developing their ICT skills to measure, research, compile notes and for presentations. Some of the students' literacy skills are fostered well, for example through research requiring students to read effectively to get the gist of a passage or to focus on a key idea.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are always satisfactory and in two thirds of lessons are good, very good or excellent. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good overall but there is a wide variation from very good to unsatisfactory in the quality of teaching in individual lessons. Teachers are careful to ensure that students know at the outset what new understanding they are expected to gain during the lesson. Students' learning is accelerated by teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of science. Because teachers' plans are very good, students often learn very well from a wide range of relevant activities.
82. When teaching is excellent, the depth and quality of students' learning is outstanding. In a lesson for lower attainers in Year 9, students discussed the social and health implications of smoking in a very mature way. Their ideas were reinforced by a good practical demonstration of a smoking machine. Later, students successfully used a computer to research information on smoking from the internet. Expectation of the quality and quantity of work was outstanding. Students' interest was very high because the teacher made the topic very relevant and students were continually encouraged to improve and to learn more. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the work did not engage the students adequately, many students lost concentration and did not learn enough or behaved badly and constantly had to be reprimanded, disrupting the learning of the whole class.
83. The leadership and management of science are good. The new head of department leads his team well and has established a good sense of commitment and teamwork among teachers, technicians and teaching assistants. He knows what needs to be improved and plans for improvement are relevant and sensible. The department does not yet make enough use of test results to establish how much progress students are making in the various aspects of the GCSE examination courses and across the different teaching groups. The department now has plans to remedy this and can draw on their successful assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9.
84. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Test results remain high. However, the overall attainment and achievement in GCSE examinations still need improving. Teaching remains good and, although there is still a variation in teaching quality, there are now some excellent lessons. Students' attitudes to science have improved and are now good. Teachers make very good use of resources. The deficiencies in accommodation, which were having a negative effect on learning during the last inspection, have been very successfully addressed.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- quality of teaching
- standards are well above average
- excellent relationships based on mutual respect and trust
- the technician/assistant's contribution to students' learning

### Areas for improvement

- accommodation
- space for storage
- the attitudes of a small minority of older students who do not try hard enough.

85. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations and show very good achievement as many students start Year 7 with weak skills, a lack of confidence and a low knowledge base.
86. Standards in GCSE examinations are well above the national average. Results for 2002 show a reduction in those gaining higher grades but by analysing data the school has been able to identify the reasons for this decline and is taking appropriate action to help ensure an improvement next year. The subject is popular and the numbers of students entered for the examination is increasing. More girls gain the higher grades than boys. Fewer boys choose to study art because of the restrictions of the options system.
87. By the end of Year 9, students develop good levels of subject vocabulary in line with the departmental policy for developing literacy in art. They also develop very good practical skills in a wide range of media, including graded pencils, paints, inks and materials for three-dimensional work. They work with confidence, skill and imagination because teachers regularly teach representational drawing skills on a step-by-step basis. This is particularly helpful for students with special educational needs and accounts for the very good standards in drawing throughout the school. Students make good comparisons between their own work and that of other artists and use the colour range, quality of line and style of Leger, Braque and Picasso. They also use African, Chinese and Aboriginal artists as a starting point for some of their own projects. This helps them to be aware of and celebrate the accomplishments of other artists, times and cultures, both European and worldwide.
88. In Years 10 and 11, students build successfully on the rich and varied experiences gained earlier. They make very good progress and achieve very good results. Higher-achieving students develop a more personal style and incorporate moral issues into their work, such as social responsibility and care of the environment. They develop further the skills learned in ICT. The majority sustain concentration, develop ideas and adapt appropriately to the more rigorous ways of working. A small minority fail to capitalise on high quality teaching and are content to work within their capabilities, not challenging themselves sufficiently to meet the requirements for higher grades. Students make very good use of homework projects to practise skills and make preparatory sketches for further work in

lessons. They use a good balance of first hand and secondary source materials, such as books, the internet or visits to galleries.

89. The quality of teaching is very good at both key stages. Teachers are confident, have high levels of practical expertise and extensive subject knowledge. They pace lessons well which keeps students clearly focused. Rich and stimulating displays extend learning experiences. Teachers have high expectations of their students and strike a good balance between individual and group help. Benefiting from recent training in the use of computers, teachers are now able to produce high quality information sheets and effective presentations. They track students' progress informally in lessons and more formally on a weekly basis, giving very good oral feedback to explain marking comments and grades. This ensures that students know what they need to do to improve further.
90. Students enjoy lessons and most respond favourably to the opportunities provided. There is good enrichment through visits to museums and galleries, and students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from working closely with local artists and designers. The department is very well managed. The head of department has very clear ideas for improvement. The organisation of teaching and practical materials is meticulously arranged. Policies and schemes of work are kept up to date, detailed and well documented. Assessment procedures are thorough and well implemented. Excellent relationships between teachers and students, fostered by the subject leader, ensure mutual respect and trust and largely accounts for the very high standard of behaviour in lessons. There is a generous approach to sharing teaching skills and expertise. Monitoring of teaching is well established and is having a beneficial impact on standards.
91. Accommodation is cramped when whole classes are taught together and this restricts opportunities for students to work on large three-dimensional sculptural works. There is insufficient storage space for three-dimensional work in progress to ensure that it is kept safely between lessons. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- the quality of lesson planning, especially in Years 7 - 9
- the management of students, especially in Years 10 and 11
- students' attitudes and behaviour

### **Areas for improvement**

- the progress made by gifted and talented students in Year 7 - 9
- the performance of girls in resistant materials and food technology
- the accommodation and resources for food technology

92. On entry to the school, students' standards are broadly in line with the national average and remain at this level until the end of Year 9. This represents satisfactory achievement for the majority but gifted and talented students are not given sufficient opportunity to develop their skills and their progress is largely unsatisfactory.

93. At the end of Year 11 standards are a little below the national average in resistant materials and food technology with less than one-half of students obtaining A\* - C grades in the GCSE examinations. In 2002, the results were well above average in graphic products. Standards have been fairly constant over the past three years with the exception of those in food technology which were well below average in 2002. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement. Contrary to the national trend, boys perform significantly better than girls. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
94. Overall, standards of learning are good. In Years 7 to 9, lessons are well planned and students learn to design and make a good range of products using wood, plastic, metal and food materials. There are no lessons in textiles. They learn about simple mechanisms, electronics and structures but do not get enough opportunity to learn the principles of control and computer-aided design and manufacture. All students learn the basic principles of safety and hygiene satisfactorily. Students routinely use dimensions and quantities in their work and have good opportunities to use ICT to support their learning. A good start has been made in fostering literacy development by emphasising key words and providing opportunities for students to write at length. Standards of learning in Years 10 and 11 are good and sometimes very good. About nine out of ten students continue to learn well in either resistant materials, food technology or graphic products courses. Course work is firmly based on the design and make cycle. The effectiveness of projects is due to the wide range of tasks and methods they involve. In a very good lesson in Year 10, students were seen accurately marking out wood to make a CD holder and making joints to support the shelves particularly well. In a well prepared homework task, students had effectively researched the Bauhaus arts and crafts movement on the internet and learnt about the properties of wood.
95. The overall quality of teaching is good. All teachers have a good knowledge of their specialised area, plan lessons very thoroughly and introduce topics well. They are ably supported by effective teaching assistants. In a good lesson in Year 8, two-thirds of the enthusiastic students learned to make scones with the help of the teacher whilst her assistant helped the remainder to produce food labels and learn effectively about nutrition on computers in a neighbouring room. A student with a statement of special educational need learned well in this lesson, helped by a further teaching assistant. All teachers are confident, relaxed and have very good relationships with students. They control students well in lessons. As a result, students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are always good and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers provide high quality course materials to support learning. They give good help and advice to all students in practical lessons, especially to students with special educational needs. All students are given the same range of work, which does not enable the gifted and talented students to progress sufficiently. When teaching is less successful it is often due to the use of inappropriate teaching methods.
96. The faculty of art, design and technology is well led by a very experienced art teacher. She is ably supported by the heads of the resistant materials, food technology and graphic products departments and together they provide good leadership. The size of the rooms for food technology is inadequate, resulting in the need to split classes which slows progress. Many teachers have changed in the past few years which has inhibited development and improvement and as a result progress since the last inspection has not been satisfactory. Overall standards and achievement have not improved and many of the

weak features reported at the time of the last inspection still remain, but the department is now well managed and can now look to improvements in key areas of its work.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- the quality of the teaching
- the quality of relationships

### Areas for improvement

- the allocation of time in Years 7-9
- the study of the National Curriculum in more depth in Years 7-9
- accommodation

97. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Students use subject vocabulary well and have a good grasp of concepts such as *hypothesis* and *evaluation*. In Year 8, students draw and label diagrams accurately and use these effectively to describe the formation of waterfalls. Students in Year 7 make satisfactory progress when reading grid references and lower attaining students can successfully use an atlas to identify lines of latitude and longitude. The written work of most students indicates some understanding of processes, for example the effect of weathering and erosion in shaping the landscape. Students in Year 9 also employ their thinking skills well when considering such questions as whether the world is a fair place in which to live.
98. Students use secondary sources of information to compare two economically different countries. Their graph and map work are good but the evaluation of such data is limited. Students' work together well and share their ideas and information. Their overall achievement is satisfactory. The behaviour of students is exemplary and this helps them to make the most of lessons. Few students use their own initiative to use ICT to enhance their work to extend their knowledge through research or to tidy up or complete it. Although higher-attaining students apply their literacy and numerical skills to their written work, that of most students is largely descriptive and lacks explanation.
99. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Although the standard of written work improves, too many students still do not provide in-depth explanations and the work of lower-attaining students, in particular, remains descriptive. This does not provide a good basis for revision. Although the use of ICT is a coursework requirement, not all students use it often enough to extend the range of information or for research. Students' evaluation of their work, especially their coursework, is limited, particularly in respect of careful checking that coursework requirements are met and mistakes corrected. Assignments indicate that students are adept in fieldwork techniques and in collecting and using primary data. Most students demonstrate good use of subject vocabulary and the majority, including lower-attaining students, effectively link contributory factors causing deficiencies, for example in food production in certain countries or giving rise to political policies for example on population control. They can recognise patterns such as the 'cycle of poverty' relating to development. Class discussions and debates show an awareness of the moral and social implications of such issues and provide an opportunity for students to see the 'big picture' of global change. These good thinking skills are not reflected in their

written work. Students work well together and their behaviour is often exemplary. Their achievement is good.

100. The quality of teaching is good. Effective class management and positive relationships promote a happy learning environment. Lessons meet the needs of students with special educational needs but not always those of higher-attaining students. Teachers encourage student self-evaluation and use various strategies to do this, for example a critical evaluation by students of an example of a piece of work assessed by the teacher effectively raised their awareness of their most common errors and omissions. Teachers provide a range of imaginative learning opportunities to stimulate interest. Role play in Year 8 effectively involved students and the teacher acting out the formation of a waterfall, with the students becoming hard and soft rocks and the teacher playing the part of a powerful river. Other creative activities include the use of poetry to express the 'feelings' of headlands being destroyed by waves and cartoons to illustrate weathering. Teachers make good use of ICT to present lessons. The high expectations evident in class are not always applied to written work where comments are supportive but insufficiently constructive and where errors are sometimes missed. There is little pressure put on students to make corrections, finish or make up missed work.
101. Since his appointment one year ago, the head of department has made a positive impact on provision through a range of improvements aimed at raising standards, notably on assessments and fieldwork. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The good practice in teaching is shared and the department is in the forefront of delivering ICT, citizenship and the Key Stage 3 strategies, all of which are evident in classroom teaching. The department is rightly concerned at the lack of time in Years 7 to 9 to deliver an in-depth curriculum. Given depressed standards additional time is essential. The fact that some students do not have the experience of using the specialist room does not ensure equality of opportunity.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- the quality of teaching
- the clear commitment to raising standards
- good support for all students

### Areas for improvement

- opportunities for students to visit places of historical interest
- monitoring the effect of the extra support provided for students on GCSE examination courses

102. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2001, based on assessments made by teachers, was close to the national average. This represents a decline since the previous year. In 2001, the attainment of girls was higher than that of boys. The provisional results of teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicate that attainment has risen. Evidence seen during the course of the inspection indicates that standards are above average. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection.

103. Attainment at the end of Year 11 in the GCSE examination in 2001 was well above the national average, in terms of both the percentage of students achieving grades A\*- C and those achieving grades A\* and A. Provisional results for 2002 indicate a fall in the percentage of pupils attaining grades A\*- C. There was a sharp fall in the attainment of boys. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average. This shows an improvement since the previous inspection.
104. Students enter the school with a wide variety of experience but their achievement by the end of Year 9 is good and they make particularly strong progress during Year 7 in acquiring and developing a full range of the key skills on which their later progress depends. In particular, they make progress in beginning to use the internet and in interpreting source material. This good progress continues through to the end of Year 9.
105. Students embark on their GCSE examination course at the start of Year 10 with a wide range of prior attainment in history and their achievement in obtaining results which are consistently above the national average is good. They make particularly good progress in organising and recording a wide range of historical knowledge and understanding, in writing notes which form a useful basis for revision, in planning and structuring extended essays and in using a range of demanding historical sources, including the interpretation of contemporary political cartoons.
106. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are planned very well and teachers have clear objectives for what they expect students to learn. Very good use is made of a range of teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of all students and those with special educational needs and higher-attaining students make good progress. The wide range of activities and tasks which are offered to students means that they sustain concentration throughout lessons. Teachers make very effective use of questioning and discussion in order to assess students' knowledge and understanding and to probe and extend their thinking. Students respond to this very well by thinking hard in order to meet their teachers' high expectations of them. The marking of work is regular, supportive and generally offers good advice on what students need to do in order to raise their attainment. In Years 10 and 11 teachers offer regular information and advice on examination requirements, how to meet them and in particular what students need to do to attain a higher grade. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
107. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear commitment to raising the attainment of all students. The teachers work well together as a team with the teaching assistants. There are good procedures for the regular assessment of students' work, which are consistently applied, and there are good arrangements to ensure that marking is consistent between teachers. There are clear procedures for identifying those students who are in danger of under-performing in their GCSE examination. The reason for the under-performance of some students in their examination in 2002 have been carefully analysed and additional support was offered to these individuals on a regular basis. It is unfortunate that not all pupils involved chose to take advantage of this.
108. The department is well resourced with a good range of books and a wealth of historical source material. There is a very limited stock of artefacts. Good use is made of ICT to enhance learning but insufficient use is made of the rich variety of opportunities available in the locality to take students on visits to places of historical interest. There has been no progress since this was commented on in the previous inspection report. Overall, progress since the last report is satisfactory.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

### Strengths

- the effectiveness of teachers' planning and good use of well prepared instruction sheets
- effective introductions and demonstrations in lessons
- teachers' expectations
- students' attitudes and behaviour and their enthusiasm for computers

### Areas for improvement

- access to the GCSE examination course
- provision in Year 9
- accommodation

109. When students enter the school their standards are average but by the time they reach the end of Year 9 their standards are above average and in 2002 nearly eight out of ten reached the expected standard. The proportion reaching this standard has increased over the past three years and this is good achievement. Overall, standards at the end of Year 11 remain above the national average. In 2002, one-half of the students took the GCSE examinations and three-quarters of them obtained A\*- C grade passes, a result which was well above the national average and a considerable improvement on the 2001 result. About one-half of the remainder of the students passed one or more of the International Curriculum and Assessment Agency (ICAA) competence tests in 2002, achieving standards which were below the national expectation. However, students are learning to use ICT well by applying it in a wide range of subjects, such as art, design and technology, English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education. Consequently, their achievement in Years 10 and 11 is broadly satisfactory. Students with special educational needs are integrated well in lessons and progress satisfactorily. Gifted and talents students are able to progress satisfactorily as a result of their independent work on projects.

110. The quality of learning is good. In Years 7 and 8, students learn to use word processing, graphics, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases and the internet. In a good Year 7 lesson, students published text and images relating to the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines and learned about its impact on the local population. Much of the text and many of the images were obtained by resourceful use of the internet. In Year 8, students produced an effective document on physical exercises which included text and images they had created themselves. Students on the GCSE examination course in Year 10 published effective leaflets on skiing holidays after researching European skiing locations, hotels and costs using the internet as a part of their work. In a Year 10 science lesson, students prepared slides well on the electromagnetic spectrum for a presentation by computer. In Year 11, students on the ICAA course produced a clear instruction sheet for students in Year 7 showing them how to use a word-processing program. Word processing and the internet are used extensively in other subjects. By the end of Year 11, most students are proficient and independent users of ICT but there are weaknesses in current provision such as the lack of lessons in Year 9 and the limited access to the GCSE examination course.

111. The overall quality of teaching is good and very good in Years 10 and 11. The specialist teacher is ably supported by teachers from other departments and teaching assistants. Because the main computer rooms are often too small for the number of students in lessons, small groups of students are taught in the main by teaching assistants in adjoining rooms; although this arrangement is undesirable it works adequately. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, plan lessons very thoroughly and introduce topics well. The demonstrations given by teachers are clear and effective, work sheets are excellently prepared and students benefit from good help and guidance. Consequently, students are keen to learn and they progress well. Teachers have high expectations and as a result the standard of the course-work is good. Students' work is assessed, recorded and reported to parents well. The assessment of students' work at the end of Year 9 is appropriately based on applications of computing in art, design and technology, English and mathematics lessons.

112. The department is well led and managed. Because the school has had difficulty in recruiting a further specialist teacher there are no lessons in Year 9, but since the last inspection the school has greatly improved its overall computing facilities and extended the application of computing in other subjects. Teaching and attainment have improved and students' positive attitudes maintained. Progress has been good.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

### **Strengths**

- the quality of teaching
- the range of accommodation
- the use of resources, including ICT

### **Areas for improvement**

- degree of challenge for the more able students
- French results in the GCSE examination
- Boys' attainment at the higher levels in German

113. In Years 7 to 9, standards in French and German have improved steadily over the last four years and are now well above average. The achievement of girls is greater than that of boys but boys' attainment is still well above average. Students achieve very well by the end of Year 9. The analysis of students' work reveals that standards are high.

114. In Years 10 and 11, standards in French are below national averages. A significantly smaller proportion of students entered for the GCSE examination achieves the higher grades than nationally. On average, the students' attainment is half a grade lower in French than in the other subjects they take. Boys' attainment is lower than that of girls. In 2001, the proportion of boys achieving grades A\* - C was two-thirds the national figure. These standards are not high enough and do not represent sufficient progress from the levels currently achieved in Year 9.

115. Standards in German in Years 10 and 11 are above national averages. A greater proportion of students achieves GCSE examination grades A\* - C than nationally but the proportion attaining the highest grades is well below average. Boys' attainment is half a

grade lower in German than in other subjects they take at the end of Year 11 but their achievement in German is good.

116. The overall quality of teaching is good. Very good teaching was also seen in a significant proportion of lessons and in only one lesson was teaching unsatisfactory. The best teaching makes use of a very good range of resources and a wide variety of teaching techniques to address a common learning point in a lesson and, where necessary, employs good behaviour management skills to cope with those students who present challenging attitudes. Use of a data projector and an interactive white board ensured good pace to several lessons in both French and German and also meant that the teacher did not have to turn her back on the students which helped the management of behaviour. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 10 lesson where students were preparing 'lost property' vocabulary and linguistic constructions for GCSE examination practice.
117. When a teacher supplemented the excellent use of modern technology with authentic listening material on a cassette and a revision session using an overhead projector, the variety of methods captivated students' interest and maintained their attention. Most teachers optimise the use of the foreign language for classroom instructions, using English appropriately for grammatical explanations or to avoid misunderstandings. Areas for improvement in teaching include more assertive management of the poor behaviour of some students and marking a greater proportion of students' written work. This would help to improve language accuracy and raise attainment of the more able students.
118. Learning is good in French and German. Students generally concentrate well and learn new concepts or consolidate previous knowledge effectively. Good relationships with the teacher and with other students make for a very pleasant atmosphere and contribute to effective learning through a readiness to practise by working in pairs and being willing to use the foreign language aloud in class. Students assimilate new work readily. Selective use of video extracts appealed to a Year 9 lower-ability class: their learning to answer personal questions and understand personal descriptions was enhanced by significant use of the foreign language and a good range of activities. There was a quiet working atmosphere which enabled good concentration and students worked well together. In some classes, the attention of some boys wavers at times and this leads to less secure learning. Homework is regularly given as a task which supports work done in class or as preparation for GCSE coursework. What is set is well within students' capabilities and this gives students a sense of positive achievement. Teaching and learning in Spanish are unsatisfactory because students present challenging attitudes and disruptive behaviour which are not appropriately managed. Students with special educational needs learn well, especially when they are helped by additional adult support in the classroom. Teachers are sensitive to these students' needs.
119. The leadership and management of the department are good. The work done to achieve Language College status is bringing very good dividends. The department's accommodation and provision of resources are excellent. The vast ICT resources are well used by teachers but students were not seen using the department's computer suite or any ICT resource during the inspection. The department ensures that the vast majority of students study two languages to GCSE examination level. The very committed teachers enter a significant number of pupils for GCSE examinations in one language at the end of Year 10. The department has a well thought out and appropriate development plan which involves upgrading Spanish to equality with French and German. Links with primary schools in which Kingsmead teachers teach French and German beginners in alternate

years work well. They create good liaison opportunities and help to increase students' exposure to the foreign language. The development plan could be improved by the addition of a target to increase the proportion of GCSE grades A\* and A, as this would be a pre-requisite for ensuring adequate preparation for students to progress to appropriate AS and A-level work. The department has the potential to succeed in these areas.

120. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Although overall GCSE examination results in 2001 have fallen in relative terms since the previous inspection, a greater number of students are studying two languages. The school attributes the decline in students' attainment, especially in French, to staffing difficulties which have now been rectified. The use of ICT has significantly improved since the last inspection and there are now sufficient dictionaries. Accommodation has also been greatly improved and the building now housing the department has undergone extensive refurbishment to provide five attractive and well-equipped language classrooms, together with a fine 16-station modern language computer suite.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- improving GCSE examination results
- good aspects of the teaching

### Areas for improvement

- the assessment of students' attainment and progress
- resources and accommodation

121. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Most students are able to perform chord sequences on keyboards or guitars, mainly in time, to accompany a tune. The most able can add more complex parts on other instruments. Arrangements of folk tunes and compositions for advertising are achieved with varying degrees of imagination, but most are performed fluently. Nearly all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 sing readily and listen keenly when required. Pitching of voices and preparation for using notation is very good through the use of hand-signs and keyboards. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Some girls in Year 9 show insufficient self-discipline to make good use of practical time. Students do little written work and this restricts their achievement in both music and literacy development.

122. An increasing number of students, especially boys, choose to study music for the GCSE examination. While results have been below the national average, those for 2002 and the work seen of current students, shows standards now above this level. Achievement is good. Since many receive extra tuition on instruments or voice, performance is a strength and has a good effect on composition and listening. Some whose learning comes from class lessons alone also achieve good grades. Students in Year 11 work well together and become responsible for their progress, some using computer programs for composition. Commentaries on compositions are of a high standard. Students in Year 10, which include a few with special educational needs, show less maturity but are clearly

committed to music in their lives. Most can readily identify tunes from graphic representations of the pitch, but a few are at an early stage in using notation.

123. The overall quality of teaching is good. It has some very good features and some limitations. Subject knowledge and musical skills are very good. Learning tasks are stimulating, challenging and musical. Teaching provides precise instructions for individual GCSE students before practical sessions to enable an efficient start. Students are encouraged to use the instruments they are studying in class, which extends their learning and also broadens all students' experience of music. Much extra time and energy is spent in fostering exceptional talent, for example boys in Year 9 who sing and play jazz piano, and in providing resources at lunchtime for younger pupils to start the guitar or for keen folk musicians to rehearse together. Teaching initiates and organises frequent public performances in and beyond school, developing students' confidence. However, the on-going assessment of students' progress should be recorded more systematically so that it is clear what progress they are making. Younger students do not know the criteria for the National Curriculum levels and do not have targets for progress. Learning through practical activity in lessons is not supported by enough written work, marked and valued by students in all years for reinforcement and revision. Teaching should have even higher expectations of students' behaviour to maximise learning opportunities for all and help to develop mature attitudes.
124. Music is led and managed satisfactorily. The head of department, the only fulltime teacher, provides a stimulating environment. Current resources are generally well organised. One fifth of students are taught by visiting instrumentalists, managed and monitored well. A recent bid secured extra funds for resources. Senior managers support music in a variety of ways. There is insufficient provision in time and resources for non-European music and for computer-aided music. Accommodation has been outgrown by the numbers using it, which is restricting learning.
125. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are rising. Singing and instrumental skills are no longer weak but a strength because of good teaching. Instrumental tuition remains very good and has a good impact on work in class and on numbers of students and their success in GCSE examinations. There is good potential for improving standards still further. This will be helped if the teacher interacts more with music teachers elsewhere and with other arts teachers in school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- very good GCSE examination results
- good quality teaching
- positive attitudes of students leading to good commitment
- very good extra-curricular provision

### Areas for improvement

- more challenge for higher-attaining students
- increase opportunities for students to comment on their own work and that of others
- provide a permanent base for teaching the theoretical aspects of the course

126. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above average according to assessments made by teachers. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment by the majority of students in Years 7 to 9 is above average and remains similar to the picture described at the time of the previous inspection. Over three-quarters of the students entered for the GCSE examination in 2001 gained the higher A\* to C grades and all students achieved A\* to G grades. These figures are well above the national average and represent a good improvement over the previous year, which was the first time that students had been entered for the examination. The very good results achieved in 2001 were repeated in 2002 when a similar percentage of students obtained the higher grades.
127. Lesson observations and the analysis of written work indicate that students in Year 11 are maintaining the previous high standards. Their practical skills in hockey and rugby are good. Most have a good understanding of the theoretical aspects of the course. The current setting arrangement is proving of benefit to the small number of students who require additional support with their theory work. The attainment of students in Year 10, who are in the early stages of the GCSE examination course, is also above average. Overall, the attainment of non-examination students, who have only one period of physical education each week, is average. A number of individual pupils of all ages have represented the county in football, rugby, hockey, cricket, athletics or volleyball.
128. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is good. The majority of students in Year 7 are adjusting well to the demands being made on them. They are making excellent progress in dance. In Year 8, students are achieving particularly well in hockey, dance and gymnastics. Students, with special educational needs, who are integrated fully into all lessons, progress as well as others. In lessons where they receive additional support from a teaching assistant, they make very good progress. This was particularly apparent in a Year 8 lesson where two girls, previously lacking in self-confidence, were later able to demonstrate their gymnastic work in front of the class. Students following the GCSE examination course in Years 10 and 11 are very committed and mature in their approach to both practical and theory work. As a result they make very good progress.
129. The quality of teaching is consistently good and is often very good. Lessons are carefully planned and well organised. Teaching and learning are particularly good in those lessons where different challenges are set for students of different abilities, although the approach to recognising and challenging the higher-attaining students is not consistent in all lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and encourage learning. Students respond very positively to the teaching they receive. They show a ready willingness to work constructively with their teachers and with each other. This has a very positive impact on their learning. Occasionally, opportunities to involve the students in evaluating their work and that of others, as a means of improving performance, are missed. The level of student participation is high throughout the school. Students are enthusiastic about physical education. They are always correctly dressed for physical activity and behaviour is consistently of a high standard.
130. The departmental staff, supported by several other colleagues, offer a very good range of extra-curricular activities for students of all ages throughout the week, both at lunchtimes and after school, including hockey, rugby, trampolining, dance, volleyball, gymnastics and badminton. The activities offered are very well supported by the students. The inter-house competitions are particularly popular and attract large numbers of students each year. The school competes against other schools in a range of different sports. Earlier

this year, the Year 10 volleyball team won the Under-15 Boys' National Championship. Teams have also enjoyed recent successes in hockey and athletics as well as competing regularly in football, rugby and netball with teams across the whole age range.

131. The leadership and management of the department are good. The teachers work extremely well together. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The most significant development has been the successful introduction of the GCSE examination course. Examination results in physical education are among the highest in the school. A dancer in residence is currently employed with funding obtained through VEAZ. She is making a notable contribution towards raising the profile of dance and to improving standards. A qualified coach is having a good impact on the development of rugby in the school. The Junior Sports Leaders Award has been successfully introduced as an option for students in Year 11. Additional resources, including a second trampoline, a video recorder and digital camera, have been purchased, all of which are being used to help raise standards. The school has previously achieved the Sportsmark Award and will be re-submitting its application at the end of the year. There is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the GCSE course. Such a facility would make it possible for teachers and students to access books, magazines, videos, posters and other items more easily. It would also enable teachers to promote the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT more effectively.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- very good teaching
- very good attitudes of the students

### Areas for improvement

- assessment procedures
- accommodation and resources

132. Standards in the full GCSE examination course have been below national averages over the last three years. In the first year of entry for the GCSE examination short course, results were just below national averages. However, there have been major changes in the department very recently which have led to an improvement in the standards of work in Years 10 and 11. The current attainment of students overall is above average. Strengths in the attainment are the ability of many students to apply their learning to new situations, well illustrated by the skill with which they scripted an interview between a vicar and a young couple wishing to marry in church about the meaning of Christian marriage. In Year 11, attainment is best where students have not experienced disruption in the staffing. Strategies to remedy the situation are proving effective.

133. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above average. Students in Year 9 show high levels of understanding about war and pacifism. They are able to evaluate different perspectives on the issue and to express personal views. In Years 7 and 8, students are able to understand religious concepts such as symbolism. In their study of pilgrimage, they can distinguish between sacred and secular journeys. Throughout Years 7 to 9, students show an above average ability to work independently, for example in research using ICT.

134. Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. The more able are challenged with extension tasks and students with special educational needs are very effectively supported in their learning by the teacher assistant who works closely with the department. As they move through Years 7 to 9, students of all abilities develop their literacy and ICT skills well because the nature of the tasks often require a presentation to the class, sometimes using new technology, or the production of a leaflet.
135. Overall achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. Higher-attaining students, both boys and girls, develop their evaluative skills particularly well. This is evident in some very high quality coursework based on topics studied in class. They have also developed a very good capacity for debate, expressing their point of view confidently in the context of their learning about religious responses to moral issues such as abortion. Progress from Year 10 to 11 is now becoming more consistent for all abilities. One exception to this progress relates to a very small group of boys whose involvement in a school initiative has resulted in them missing their weekly religious education lesson.
136. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use effectively in the oral work of the class particularly. They are skilful at questioning students, probing the first answer and challenging them to think more deeply or from a different perspective. The relationships with and management of students is excellent and this leads to a positive response to the work. Students are challenged to work in a variety of styles. The planning and pacing of the lessons is a significant factor in the best practice. Students' work is marked regularly. The main area for improvement in teaching is the need to be more specific about targets for improvement, particularly from Years 7 to 9. Where students are given an attainment level, they need to know more precisely what that level means and what they need to do to improve.
137. Students' learning in the great majority of lessons is very good. In particular, they understand religious ideas and can reflect on what they are learning about themselves as well as the feelings and beliefs of others. This was evident in the Year 7 lesson when students responded to a reflection on a candle flame. In Years 10 and 11, students can analyse and evaluate views on moral and social issues with confidence. In some lessons, it was not evident that all students could apply the religious dimension to the issue of abortion.
138. The department is well led and managed. The new head of department has made a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning. There are some excellent new schemes of work based on the principles of the Agreed Syllabus. The work takes account of the learning needs of the ability ranges of students. Assessment tasks are varied and imaginative.
139. Progress since the last inspection is good, with the majority of issues addressed well. There are still more girls, than boys in the GCSE examination group, but the department has now begun to adapt teaching styles and curriculum approaches in Years 10 and 11. Evidence from Year 9 lessons is that boys are responding well to these strategies.
140. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and does affect aspects of learning. In particular, possibilities for creative and expressive activities are restricted and the potential for display is poor. Storage and office space are inadequate. There is insufficient range of the most recent video material and textual resources for multi-faith teaching at Key Stage 3.

Artefacts are adequate but do not yet cover all faiths. The department does not incorporate enough visits to places of worship and the numbers and range of visitors to classes is limited, both weaknesses being recognised by the department. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- high standards
- quality of teaching
- attitudes of the students

### Areas for improvement

- expanding the multicultural aspects of its work

141. Standards are well above average throughout the school. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students are able to work effectively through improvisation to explore a wide range of ideas, relationships and issues through language and movement. By the end of Year 11, students have a good grasp of major theatrical conventions and have effectively developed and consolidated their skills. Examination results are very high although the numbers of students studying the subjects is smaller than that found in most schools where drama is studied. Students of all abilities achieve well at both key stages. The most able show a deep understanding of how drama can be used to depict significant areas of human interest. Students with special educational needs are helped to participate in the same activities as all other students and show that they too achieve well.

142. The quality of teaching is excellent. Only the highest of standards are expected of students, both in terms of the quality of the work they produce and their attitudes and behaviour. Especially good use is made of accommodation to help ensure that students learn how to use space and develop their powers of concentration. The simple curtained space of an extremely well maintained drama studio provides an uncluttered area which helps the students to develop and sustain a single-minded focus on the development of their work. This results in learning which is very good. Clear instructions, authoritative guidance and impeccable use of timing are the hallmarks of the teaching, which also has the capacity to excite the interest of students through the use of telling quotation or an effective piece of narrative which ignites their learning. Probing questions, the use of atmospheric recordings and simple properties such as torches and packs of playing cards provide the contexts for developing effective work on improvisation. The understanding of the purpose of drama in helping students to develop awareness is profound and every minute of each lesson is fully utilised in furthering understanding and developing skills.

143. Students are given good opportunities to reflect and to consider the moral aspects of life. They are given extensive scope to produce their own ideas and to work together to develop the skills needed to collaborate. The department makes very good use of assessment. Students frequently present their own work in lessons and are required to learn about communicating with an audience. They evaluate their own work and that of others in the class in a mature way. They feedback to their teachers what they feel they have learned and what they have found it difficult to do. Each module of work concludes

with a self-assessment task which helps teachers and students to know what has been learned.

144. The drama department makes a major contribution to the wider life of the school through its range of productions. Work in drama makes considerable use of cross-curricular themes, a particularly noteworthy example being the lessons on smoking and health which make good use of scientific evidence. Schemes of work are detailed and extremely well resourced and often relate closely to the wider school curriculum. Most of the issues raised in PSHCE and citizenship lessons also find their way into drama lessons. An extremely well researched module on the fate of the Titanic effectively illuminates different aspects of the tragedy and illustrates different social aspects of the culture of pre-war England.
145. The department has had little continuity of leadership since the time of the last inspection but has recently been consolidating its positive position in the school. The department is effectively led and managed. A well produced handbook contains well thought out principles and practice which underpin its work with all day-to-day working practices clearly spelled out. Because its examination results are so high and it is offering experiences of consistently good quality, the department has made good progress since the last inspection. It now needs to continue to attract more students to the courses it offers at Key Stage 4, to strengthen further the multicultural aspects of its schemes of work, and to add further appropriate work on numeracy to complement its good work on literacy development.