

INSPECTION REPORT

BUDEHAVEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Bude

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112045

Headteacher: Mr David Barton

Reporting inspector: Mr Martin Beale
19385

Dates of inspection: 7 – 11 October 2002

Inspection number: 249567

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 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Valley Road

Bude

Cornwall

Postcode: EX23 8DQ

Telephone number: 01288 353271

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Jeremy Dowling

Date of previous inspection: 9th September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19385	Martin Beale	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9275	Candy Kalms	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) 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?
16434	Roger Samways	Team inspector	English; Drama (sixth form)	
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics; Educational inclusion	
7871	Jean Mackie	Team inspector	Science; Biology (sixth form); Physics (sixth form)	
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art; Special educational needs	
30973	Geoff Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology	
22590	Bob Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
20716	Reg Grogan	Team inspector	History; Religious education	
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	Modern languages	
27665	Alrene Lees	Team inspector	Music	
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Economics (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23016	Terry Morrison	Team inspector	Citizenship; English (sixth form)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a large school of 1173 pupils, including 162 in the sixth form. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none has English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is average; the number of pupils with statements is above the national average. The main reasons for higher levels of need are moderate learning, emotional and behavioural and specific learning difficulties. There are also five pupils with a hearing impairment and four with visual impairment. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average as is the proportion entitled to a free school meal. The school was significantly affected by a fire in October 1999, which destroyed 40 per cent of the accommodation. The new building was finally completed in February 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils and satisfactory value for money. Staff and pupils are now benefiting from the stability brought by the newly completed buildings, following a considerable period when lessons took place in temporary accommodation while building work continued on the site. The school survived this period well, in large part because of the leadership and management of the previous headteacher. Some aspects needing attention were not tackled, but have already been identified by the new headteacher and action instituted. Standards are close to the national average and improving, and most pupils are making good progress as a result of teaching that is good overall.

What the school does well

- The pupils make good progress overall, and particularly in Years 10 and 11, and achieve above average standards in many subjects.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Staff are successful in promoting very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The new buildings provide very good facilities and a rich environment for learning.

What could be improved

- Standards by Year 11 in modern foreign languages are below average and following a downward trend.
- The short length of the teaching week is adversely affecting the breadth of the curriculum particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The school has not used rigorously the data available to evaluate its effectiveness, and the work of staff and departments has not been systematically monitored.
- Assessment information is not used consistently to guide planning and individual pupil target-setting.
- Improvement planning is not sufficiently thorough, and the relationship between school and departmental priorities is not clear.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

It is a testament to management and staff that the school has survived a very difficult period in its history. As a result, improvement since the last inspection in 1996 has been satisfactory. Standards are higher than at the last inspection but not all aspects requiring improvement have been tackled with sufficient rigour. The new headteacher has strengthened management procedures, and has begun to focus staff on improving teaching and learning. This, and the shared commitment of staff and governors to raising standards, places the school in a good position to continue its improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	B
A Levels/AS Levels	N/A	A	N/A	

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

Overall national test results and those in English and science for Year 9 pupils were average in 2002. Results in mathematics were higher and were above average. Results in mathematics and science were well above the average of results in similar schools, and were close to the average of similar schools in English. The school's targets were met in English and exceeded in mathematics and science, but have not been set at a challenging enough level for 2003.

The pupils taking GCSE in 2002 made well above average progress from their earlier Year 9 tests. Results were close to the national average and above results in similar schools. The 2002 results were broadly similar to those in 2001. The school's targets were generally exceeded but again have not been raised significantly for a stronger 2003 Year 11 group. Standards in physical education have been consistently above the national average while results in art and Spanish have been regularly below average. Results in modern languages are following an overall downward trend.

A Level results had been consistently well above the national average. The proportion of students who passed in 2002 was similar to previous years, but the number achieving the top grades fell dramatically. Results have fluctuated in individual subjects in recent years but have generally been above average in English literature and below average in physics. Intermediate GNVQ results have been consistently close to the national average.

In recent years boys have been doing quite well compared with girls up to the age of 16. Boys have achieved better results than girls at Year 9 in mathematics and science. Girls have performed better than boys in English in Year 9 and in the overall GCSE results, although the gender gap in performance is much smaller than nationally. This was not the case in 2002 where the difference between girls and boys at GCSE grew considerably. Girls have generally achieved better overall results than boys in the sixth form.

The school has identified the need to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 as a major priority and is taking appropriate action. The introduction of the Key Stage 3 national strategy, improved teaching and the stability of being in new buildings are resulting in the pupils mostly achieving well and making good progress throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress, as do most higher-attaining pupils. This good progress has yet to have a significant impact on attainment as the inspection took place early in the school year. The standard of work seen overall was average, but with some variation between subjects. Attainment is above expected levels by Year 9 in music and ICT. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 was also above average in English, design and technology, geography, history and religious education but below average in each of the modern foreign languages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have a very positive approach to school and to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and at other times is very good and at times is exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are warm and friendly. The pupils carry out duties conscientiously, but could take more responsibility for their learning in some subjects.
Attendance	Attendance is close to the national average and there is little unauthorised absence.

Pupils mostly co-operate and collaborate well in lessons. They behave sensibly in corridors and at break times. School council representatives take their responsibilities seriously. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching and learning are both good overall. The overall quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. A significant proportion of the teaching is of a high quality, much of this occurring in English, geography and religious education. The best lessons are carefully planned, provide a good level of challenge and use resources well to stimulate the pupils' interest. The teachers in these lessons have high expectations and demonstrate a good command of their subjects through lively and interesting teaching. The pupils respond by concentrating well and working hard. New skills and ideas are learnt rapidly here. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in mainstream classes, particularly when supported by effective learning support assistants and in small withdrawal groups for intensive tuition. The adoption of the national strategy for literacy and numeracy has benefited teaching in English and mathematics, but neither aspect is consistently promoted in other subjects. Some unsatisfactory teaching was observed in Spanish, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and in sixth form general studies. There were also some shortcomings in other modern foreign language lessons that were otherwise satisfactory. The main shortcomings in teaching are in planning and lesson preparation and in setting tasks that are pitched at too low a level, particularly for higher-attaining pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum has insufficient breadth and is unbalanced throughout the school. The high proportion of time allocated to English, mathematics, science and modern languages in Years 7 to 9 limits the contribution made by other subjects. Vocational courses are limited for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the range of courses is largely restricted to A Level in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with	Very thorough and accessible individual education plans, good learning support and a wide range of additional activities and specific courses

special educational needs	contribute to the very good provision.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school promotes the pupils' moral and social development well and makes satisfactory provision for their spiritual and cultural development; however, insufficient attention is paid to preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the pupils are good.

The PSHE programme has a low profile and, along with drama and music, makes a limited contribution to the pupils' curriculum in Years 7 to 9. All statutory requirements are met except for religious education in the sixth form. The school has developed a satisfactory partnership with parents. Procedures to monitor the attainment of pupils and to track their progress, while effective in some subjects, are generally inconsistent.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The previous headteacher led the school well through the time of rebuilding and managed the process to ensure the minimum of disruption. Matters that had not been tackled during this period have been identified by the new headteacher, who is ensuring that management and staff focus on improving teaching and learning as the key to raising standards. Leadership and management are now good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and have used the appointment of the new headteacher and deputy head to identify the next steps in its development. Their support and commitment have been instrumental in helping the school through this difficult period.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The procedures to evaluate the school's performance and to monitor the work of staff and departments have been neither systematic nor consistent.
The strategic use of resources	Careful financial planning and the thoroughness with which insurance claims following the fire have been pursued have enabled funding to be put to good use. The school seeks to get the best value when buying services and in making educational decisions.

Management procedures have been strengthened since the appointment of the new headteacher and deputy head. Eliminating inconsistencies in the implementation of school policies is being tackled as the work of staff and departments is coming under closer scrutiny. Planning for the school's improvement has previously not been sufficiently systematic and department plans have not reflected school priorities. The new accommodation is very good. Staffing and learning resource levels are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff expect their children to work hard. • They find staff approachable. • Their children are making good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and quantity of homework. • The information about their children's progress. • The relationship between the school and

	home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities.
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The inspection team affirms the parents' favourable views of the school but not completely the areas of concern, as the range of extra-curricular activities is judged to be good. Homework is generally set, but there is some inconsistency in its quality and value. The partnership between home and school could be stronger, and information on progress, particularly through annual written reports is unsatisfactory.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

BUDEHAVEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 162 students in the sixth form, a figure that has remained fairly constant in recent years. There are no students from minority ethnic backgrounds. About half of the students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form, mostly following a two-year programme leading to A Level. Their attainment on entry, from GCSE results, is above average overall and similar to students embarking on A Level courses nationally. A small number of students study for vocational qualifications, but many choose to leave and follow these courses at colleges some considerable distance from Bude.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education and is cost-effective. Teaching is good overall and the students learn well. A Level results have consistently been well above average, but fell in 2002. The range of courses is limited and does not cater for those wanting to follow vocational routes after 16. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but there has been insufficient strategic development of provision in the recent past.

Strengths

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students achieve good overall A Level results particularly in English literature. • Teaching is good overall. • The students have very positive attitudes to learning. |
|--|

What could be improved

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The below average standards and examination results in physics and art. • The limited range of courses available including the provision of religious education for all students. • The assessment of the students' work, setting individual subject-specific targets and monitoring the students' progress. |
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The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Work seen during the inspection reflects the results at A Level, which have been average over recent years, although with a good proportion of A grades. Teaching is good; the teachers' subject knowledge is good and the students have positive attitudes and work hard.
Biology	Satisfactory. Standards are average. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use an appropriate range of teaching and learning styles

	to enable the students to achieve and make progress.
Physics	Unsatisfactory. Results have been below average for some years and standards are not improving. Insufficient attention is given to the development of a broader range of methods to support the students in their learning.
Economics	Good. Results are consistently above average. This is as a result of good teaching, high expectations and very good relationships between teacher and students.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Physical education	Good. Standards are above average in work seen and the students achieve well. This is as a result of good teaching. Students have a very positive attitude to the subject and work hard.
Art	Satisfactory. Standards are below average. The students are keen to learn, but progress with their personal studies is slowed down by the single lessons allocated to the subject. Their creative energy is not sufficiently challenged in lessons, as too much time is taken up in promoting basic skills.
Theatre studies	Good. Results are above average. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and often very good. Students are very well motivated and make good progress. They work productively together in their practical assignments.
Geography	Good. Results in 2001 were below average but improved in 2002. Standards are continuing to improve and the students are making good progress. Teaching is good. Staff have good subject knowledge and the students have positive attitudes to their studies.
English	Good. Results are consistently above average in English literature and rising in English language. The quality of teaching is good. Students are intellectually challenged, are responsive and learn well.

Lessons were sampled in most other sixth form subjects. Standards were generally average but were above average in music and average in chemistry.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Sixth form pastoral staff provide effective support and guidance but the progress of students is not monitored consistently within departments.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The new head of sixth form has tightened many procedures, but improving the provision has not been a sufficiently high priority for the school until recently. Teaching is not monitored and the performance of subjects not consistently evaluated.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel that their teachers are accessible and help them if they have problems with their work. • They are treated like responsible young adults. • They were helped to settle into the sixth form and sixth form life. • They can follow courses that meet their future career intentions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advice, support and guidance that they are given on what to do in the sixth form, when they leave school and if they have personal problems. • The information that they are given on their academic progress. • The range of activities available beyond those that they are studying.
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The inspection team judges that the students' positive and critical views are largely justified; however, the range of courses, while being suitable for those who have decided to stay on, do not meet the needs of all potential sixth form students.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school as measured by national tests in English, mathematics and science taken in their primary schools has been close to the national average in recent years. The school receives a good proportion of high attaining pupils into Year 7 and similarly several who need additional support for particular learning difficulties. Test and examination results have also been generally close to the national average in recent years. The pupils have, therefore, made average progress overall by the age of 16, but this has tended to be stronger at GCSE than in Years 7 to 9. This reverses the picture at the last inspection.
2. National test results for Year 9 pupils in English, mathematics and science have fluctuated since the last inspection, following no clear pattern. Although the overall trend from 1997 to 2001 was similar to the slowly improving position nationally, this masks some differences between subjects. While English results in 2001 were higher than in 1997 and mathematics results were similar, those in science had fallen. Performance in English and mathematics was close to the national average while results in science were below average. This difference was largely because fewer pupils achieved higher levels in science. Results in 2002 improved considerably in mathematics and science. They were above average in mathematics and average in English and science. The school has identified improving standards in Years 7 to 9 as a major priority.
3. Boys have been doing quite well at Key Stage 3 compared with the national picture. Although girls have regularly achieved better results than boys in English, this has not always been by the same margin as nationally. Boys have achieved better results than girls in both mathematics and science and by a greater margin than nationally. The school met its target for English in 2002 and exceeded them for mathematics and science; however, the 2003 targets have not been set at a particularly challenging level.
4. The trend in GCSE results was of a more rapid improvement from 1997 to 2001 than nationally. GCSE results in 2001 were close to the national average and above the average for similar schools, and represented well above average progress from the pupils' earlier Year 9 tests. Overall, results in 2002 were similar to those in 2001. The school has been successful with all pupils across the ability range. A reasonable proportion of the pupils have gained the higher A* and A grades, while virtually all pupils leave school with at least one GCSE at grade G or better. There has been some variation in performance between subjects. Of the core subjects, pupils achieved better results in English than in mathematics and science in 2001, the last year for which detailed information is available. Standards at GCSE in physical education have been above average and pupils did better in this subject than in the average of their other subjects in 2001. Although art has been the focus of support, results are still below average and the pupils taking this subject achieved lower results than in the average of their other subjects. Standards in the modern foreign languages have been declining. Results in Spanish have regularly been well below the national average and there is a trend of falling standards in German and, to a lesser extent, in French.
5. The picture of boys doing relatively well had also been the case at GCSE. Although boys had achieved lower results than girls, the gap had not been as large as nationally until 2002 when the gap widened considerably. The school achieved its targets in 2001 and 2002, but, again, these have not been set at a particularly challenging level for 2003.
6. The difficulties caused by the fire and the subsequent rebuilding of the school, although handled well, have caused considerable disruption to the progress of pupils. Staff did well by and large to maintain standards in very trying circumstances. The evidence from the inspection is that standards are now judged to be improving throughout the school. Teaching is good overall, leading to the pupils achieving well and generally making good progress. Standards and the progress of

pupils are now benefiting from the stability of lessons taking place in the newly completed buildings. The progress made by pupils across the ability range is generally good except in modern foreign languages where higher-attaining pupils are not being sufficiently challenged. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified on a whole-school basis but are in some subjects. Their progress is satisfactory overall.

7. The attainment on entry to the school in subjects beyond the core is below nationally expected levels largely because of the focus in primary schools on English, mathematics and science. Consequently, although progress is good at Key Stage 3, attainment by Year 9 at this early stage in the school year is close to national expectations in all subjects except information and communication technology (ICT) and music where attainment is above expectations. Indeed, the pupils make very good progress in ICT throughout the school. Overall progress is good in Years 10 and 11 and standards are rising. Standards are judged to be above average in English, design and technology, geography, history, music and religious education. Standards are judged to be average in all other subjects with the exception of each of the modern foreign languages where the pupils make unsatisfactory progress and standards are below average.
8. Boys and girls did not achieve equally in all subjects. There are discrepancies which vary between cohorts, with no overall pattern. In Key Stage 4, the proportions of boys and girls choosing different subjects also varies between years. In modern foreign languages girls outnumber boys in top sets, and boys do not achieve as well in English as girls. In design and technology, both boys and girls fairly equally choose the different options, with many girls choosing electronics, and boys food technology. In mathematics some positive discrimination in placing girls in higher sets has resulted in better results for girls in 2002.
9. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good and is well recorded in the learning support centre. The pupils who benefit directly from the help of learning support assistants make very good progress against the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). Where learning support assistants give more general support, such as in some of the Year 7 classes where there is a larger number of pupils with special educational needs, those pupils make the same progress as their peers and in some cases they make faster progress in their general schoolwork.
10. Literacy standards overall are satisfactory and there is some good practice in art and design, modern foreign languages and history, where pupils are well supported in many aspects of their reading and writing. The main weaknesses are in the development of speaking and listening. Other than in English, drama and physical education, pupils are rarely expected to talk through their ideas at length or in any depth. Collaborative group work is limited and for many pupils, answering teachers' questions in whole-class discussion is their main experience of talk in lessons. Reading is often limited to extracts from textbooks and the links between this and pupils' writing are rarely developed. Literacy development in ICT is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' reading and writing skills. There are some very good examples of teachers making use of the school intranet facilities in a number of subjects.
11. The standards of numeracy are satisfactory throughout the school. Number skills are well taught by mathematics teachers and have a greater focus now. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Science has shown limited involvement in the development of numeracy, and some instances were seen where numeracy problems hindered the understanding of science. Very good examples were seen in geography lessons of high standards of numeracy and the positive development of graphical skills in all years. A good example of using spreadsheets was seen in a Year 10 design and technology lesson, modelling costs of production. In all other subjects numeracy standards were seen as satisfactory and did not hinder learning.

Sixth form

12. Results at A Level have risen since the last inspection and were well above average from 1999 to 2001. Results have varied between subjects, although at times the group numbers are too small to make valid comparisons. During the past few years, results in English literature have been consistently above average, while results in physics have been consistently below average. In

2001, the last year for which detailed information is available for A Level, the students taking English literature and economics did better than in the average of their other subjects. By contrast, students taking English language, biology, geography and physics did worse than in the average of their other subjects. Results in vocational courses, taken by relatively small numbers of students have not been at the same high standard as in A Level courses. Advanced GNVQ results were below average during this period, while results at Intermediate level were average. As in the main school, there has been some variation in results by gender. Male students did better than female students in 2001, reversing the pattern of the previous two years. A Level results fell sharply in 2002. The same proportion of the pupils passed in 2002 as in previous years, but the number of A and B grades fell considerably. The school cannot account for this other than that the disruption these students experienced may have limited their progress.

13. The fall in examination standards is not being replicated in the evidence from lessons and from an analysis of the students' work. The students are achieving well and making good progress in English, economics, geography, physical education and theatre studies. As a consequence, standards in these subjects are judged to be above average. By contrast, progress is not sufficient in art and physics where standards are below average. In the former, this is because lessons are not sufficiently long for the students to undertake extended work on their personal studies and the subject is not effectively managed under current arrangements. Progress is slower in physics because the teaching is at best satisfactory, and insufficient attention is paid by physics staff to developing the mathematical concepts needed by the students.
14. With the exception of students following GNVQ courses, little attention is paid in the sixth form to developing the key skills of literacy and numeracy, although all students who need it have the opportunity to extend their ICT skills and capability. In spite of this there is little evidence to suggest that weaknesses in literacy and numeracy hold back progress other than as already mentioned, in physics. The school does not have consistently implemented policies for the promotion of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now very good throughout the school. Relationships between pupils and pupils and their teachers are good, as is their personal development.
16. Pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn. They are well motivated and interested in their lessons. They show particularly strong interest in ICT and design and technology lessons. Pupils concentrate in class, listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions carefully. Some participate well by asking and answering questions and contributing to discussions. In a Year 9 geography lesson, for example, the pupils sensibly put forward good ideas in a discussion comparing life in Britain with life in Jakarta. By contrast, in some lessons the pupils, particularly girls, are often quiet and have a tendency to be reluctant to take an active part. They rarely ask questions and are not always keen to give detailed answers to questions or contribute to discussions.
17. Pupils are very clear about the standards of behaviour expected of them. They respond maturely to the school's high expectations of good behaviour and behave very well in lessons. On many occasions their behaviour is exemplary. They move around the building sensibly. The pupils also report that very little bullying occurs. Although the number of fixed term exclusions has risen since the last inspection, some are attributed to the same pupils. Exclusion is a sanction that is not readily adopted and is only used when pupils have progressed through the system of sanctions or there is no alternative.
18. There is a high level of mutual respect between adults and pupils. This ensures that everyone feels valued. It helps the pupils to develop confidence and contributes to their motivation and learning. Pupils get on well with each other, supporting the school's measures to include all pupils in activities. They work well independently, in pairs and in small groups. They co-operate

and work together in many lessons and this helps them make progress in their learning. Good examples of pupils working well together were seen in physical education. They listen carefully to each other during lessons and show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. This was illustrated in religious education lessons throughout the school.

19. The pupils gain an increasing sense of maturity and confidence as they move through the school. They respond well to opportunities to show initiative and independence in their learning. They are not regularly involved in the day-to-day routines around the school but are keen to take responsibility when it is offered. They act as form representatives on the school council, expressing their opinions about school life. They show an understanding of whole-school issues, for example discussing how to conduct a second survey on bullying in the school. In some year groups they have initiated and organised events to raise money for charity.
20. Attendance levels in the school are broadly in line with the national average, and have changed little since the previous inspection. There are no significant differences in absence rates between boys and girls. Unauthorised absence is low in comparison with other schools. Most pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons.

Sixth form

21. Students have a very positive attitude to the sixth form. They are keen to learn, well motivated and respond well to the good teaching and the interesting work that they are given. They listen attentively in lessons and work with interest and enthusiasm. They not only answer but also ask questions, contributing ideas that challenge and extend their knowledge and understanding. In an English lesson there was good participation as Year 12 students discussed Mary Shelley's choice of form, shape and structure in *Frankenstein*. Students have the confidence to work independently. They also work very well together by supporting each other and sharing ideas.
22. Sixth form students enjoy good relationships with each other and with their teachers. They have a genuine respect for the views and beliefs of others as was illustrated in a number of lessons. During their time in the sixth form, students mature and grow in confidence. Year 12 pupils support younger pupils through the programme of community service. They participate in both the sixth form council and the school council.
23. Accurate records have not been kept of student attendance in the sixth form; however, during the inspection they attended well. Retention rates are good and most students complete the courses that they start.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good overall and has shown some improvement since the last inspection in that there is much more teaching that is very good and excellent and much less that is unsatisfactory. This is resulting in pupils learning new skills and ideas quickly. There is no significant difference in the quality of the teaching in different year groups but there is some variation between subjects. Teaching is generally good in all subjects and is most effective in music throughout the school and in ICT in Years 7 to 9; however, there are some shortcomings that need to be tackled in the teaching of science, modern foreign languages and PSHE where lessons are not of the same consistent high quality.
25. The National Numeracy Strategy has been welcomed by the mathematics department and has influenced changes in teaching and learning strategies. The increase in mental calculation in all years, the encouragement to verbalise mathematics, and valuing pupils' own successful methods of calculation have improved numeracy. The use of individual whiteboards allows teachers to assess instantly the pupils' grasp of concepts or methods. Lesson planning has improved, with the three-part structure seen in both key stages. Similarly, the National Literacy Strategy has been adopted successfully by the English department and is significantly improving teaching.

26. In many lessons, the teachers use their high level of subject expertise well to plan interesting activities and to teach with confidence and enthusiasm. This helps to generate much interest amongst the pupils in the subject material. Learning often then moves forward at considerable pace such as in a Year 11 physical education lesson as the pupils developed personal exercise programmes. Confident teaching and a desire to learn were present in a high quality Year 7 art lesson, where very good planning and preparation gave the lesson a brisk and disciplined start. In the best lessons teachers show that they have high expectations and present challenge whatever the pupils' level of previous understanding. This ensures that the pupils' learning can move forward systematically but rapidly. For example, the pupils enjoyed the challenge of the discovery that contemporary song lyrics can be poetic in a coherently planned English lesson for a below average Year 9 group, which matched closely the pupils' assessed learning needs. Teaching here was pacy with plenty of variation in style, from pupils working in pairs to sessions with the whole class.
27. A high level of subject expertise is often seen in the high quality of the demonstrations given by staff. This gives the pupils good models to follow and try to emulate. Very good teaching by a well-qualified physical education specialist in a Year 9 badminton lesson ensured that through challenging teaching and high quality demonstration, the pupils' skills of serving and returning developed rapidly. Similarly, a clear demonstration of how to capture and manipulate images from the Internet in a Year 10 ICT lesson moved the development of skills on rapidly.
28. Teachers use resources very effectively in some subjects to make their lessons interesting and to hold the attention of the pupils. In these lessons, the pupils concentrate hard and show much enthusiasm for their work. One particular example seen was the excellent use made of video and group discussion in a Year 10 religious education lesson where the pupils were learning to apply the Christian concept of stewardship to Third World development. The very good use of resources was also seen in a very well planned Year 9 ICT lesson where the pupils were developing electronic imaging skills. An excellent working atmosphere was generated by the teacher, and the high number of pupils with special educational needs were fully included in all activities. The teacher in another religious education lesson, this time in Year 9, raised the pupils' awareness of difficulties faced by many in the Third World by using a wide variety of activities and different forms of media to help the pupils to reach an understanding of global responsibility and how faith effects individual action.
29. Many staff have established a warm, friendly and effective working atmosphere in their classrooms. This encourages strong and productive relationships in which all pupils can feel secure. The pupils in a below average Year 11 English lesson responded very well to the teacher's friendly, good-humoured but supportive and challenging style as they analysed characters and the author's use of language in their reading tests. Another teacher used humour well and a good structure to questioning that built up the pupils' understanding of time, pitch and rhythm in a Year 7 music lesson.
30. The overall quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. The learning support assistants are well qualified and experienced and offer very good support to teachers. There has been additional training in lifting and handling, Makaton signing, first aid, the revised Code of Practice and other relevant areas of professional development. Staff and pupils alike value their skilled support in lessons. Where they withdraw individuals and small groups for focused support with basic skills, they work effectively in overcoming the barriers to learning. Staff use very good learning programmes and the detailed knowledge that they have of the pupils' needs accelerates the progress they make with their general schoolwork. Two teachers with additional qualifications teach the additional hours specified in some of the pupils' statements. They provide tightly focused support to their target pupils, enabling them to continue with their studies in the mainstream classes. There were many examples of very good teaching during the inspection, where the individual needs of pupils were well understood by teachers, and a flexible approach enabled pupils with special educational needs to make very good progress. The physical education, mathematics, geography, music and ICT departments are particularly effective in their work with pupils with special educational needs. Other departments are at varying levels of

understanding and good practice; in some cases there is no attempt to vary the set work to meet individual needs, whilst others do not make effective use of the individual education plans. The large majority of departments are developing an inclusive approach in their work.

31. There are shortcomings to some lessons that need to be tackled. For example, higher-attaining pupils are not always being sufficiently challenged by what is otherwise reasonably secure teaching in modern foreign languages. In one unsuccessful lesson, limited strategies were adopted by the teacher in a Year 7 science lesson. Time was not used well, the activities did not match closely the prior learning of the pupils and there was limited interaction with the pupils. Similarly, much time was lost and there were few opportunities for the pupils to participate in a Year 8 PSHE lesson on managing change. More generally, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In some subjects, good indications are given to the pupils about how they can improve their work and these are then followed up. In other cases, marking is cursory and gives little help to the pupils so that they might improve their work. Finally, as some parents suggested, homework is not set consistently throughout the school and is at times not sufficiently challenging.

Sixth form

32. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and is contributing significantly to the good progress that the students are generally making. This good teaching, coupled with the positive attitudes to their studies exhibited by very many students, helps to produce an environment in which good learning can take place. Teaching is particularly effective in ICT and music and of a good overall quality in most other subjects. It is in the sciences and general studies where improvements are required.
33. Staff teaching sixth form subjects generally have a good level of subject expertise and challenge the students to think. They have high expectations. Teachers use their secure command of the subject material to make lessons lively and interesting. For example, in a Year 13 geography lesson on coastal erosion the very good subject knowledge of the teacher coupled with very good questioning, challenged the students. A very good pace to learning was generated and the high expectations of the teacher produced very good attitudes from the students. Pupils were similarly challenged and engaged well through questioning in a Year 12 design and technology case study. The enthusiastic teaching led to considerable involvement of the pupils and a good pace to their learning. Another challenging Year 13 English lesson looking at the form, structure and language used in *The Handmaid's Tale* resulted in the students concentrating and responding well.
34. As in Years 7 to 11, teachers make very good use of resources when teaching sixth form students. Very good use of the video and an interactive whiteboard with a link to the Internet, along with the knowledge and enthusiasm of the teacher led to students in a Year 12 geography lesson developing good knowledge of how the environment can be managed to encourage eco-tourism by using the Galapagos Islands as an example. Similarly, good use of resources in an excellent Year 13 geography lesson on coastal erosion generated pace and challenge. Activities employed are often varied and thoughtfully chosen. For example, a wide variety of activities was used to encourage co-operative working and critical analysis to produce a brisk pace to learning in a Year 12 English lesson where the students were studying *Frankenstein*.
35. There are some shortcomings in aspects of some sixth form teaching. This is often the result of poor preparation and planning. For example, a poorly prepared lesson with low level tasks led to unsatisfactory progress in a Year 12 biology lesson. Similarly, a Year 12 general studies lesson on culture and human beliefs was insufficiently prepared to be effective. Because of this, too many students did not apply sufficient creative, intellectual or productive thought to the topic.

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

36. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils at the school are satisfactory overall. The school's values embrace inclusion, and in theory there is equal access for all pupils to all areas of the curriculum; however, the curriculum is not sufficiently broad and balanced, and disadvantages occur for those who would benefit from more vocational or work-related courses.
37. The short length of the teaching week and the high proportion of time allocated to English, mathematics, science and modern languages in Years 7 to 9 limit the contribution made by other subjects. Specifically, the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is unsatisfactory. The inappropriate size and composition of classes also affect its provision; some are large and the pupils are not always familiar with each other because groups are based on mathematics sets not tutor groups. The additional lessons in English and mathematics to improve literacy and numeracy, and the provision of a third language option in Year 9, further reduce the available time for PSHE as well as art, music and drama. Furthermore, the strategies to develop literacy and numeracy throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 have not been fully developed and are not always evident in the lessons observed. The provision of drama within English does not fully meet the requirements of the subject curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, with teachers using a range of appropriate activities, resources and support staff to ensure pupils make good progress in lessons. All pupils have access to computers and the use of ICT for teaching across the curriculum is good.
38. The core curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is enriched with optional subjects which include courses in business subjects, additional languages and ICT. The provision of religious education is very good, with all pupils studying a short course GCSE in the subject. The school also provides some vocational courses including manufacturing GNVQ and Level 1 NVQs, which benefit a small number of pupils, providing them with the opportunity to progress directly into employment; however, there is still no clear alternative for pupils who wish to follow a broadly vocational pathway through the main school and to continue this into the sixth form. The formal careers lessons for Year 10 and their annual work experience fortnight provide all pupils with some preparation for the world of work.
39. There is a policy for whole-school literacy which was produced after a training day in 2001 in response to the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. It is comprehensive in its scope but there is little evidence that it has been developed by other subjects outside the English department. There is a well-written numeracy policy, and training has taken place for all staff, but with variable response from subject areas. Follow-up sessions are planned, with all mathematics teachers attached to other departments. There is inconsistency between subjects, and numeracy across the curriculum needs further development and central co-ordination.
40. The school provides a wide range of activities beyond those in lessons and these are particularly strong and appreciated in physical education, drama and music; however, some parents would like to see the range of extra-curricular activities widened.
41. There are good pastoral links with the local primary schools, and community and business links are strong. The school is involved in a number of business-related initiatives to widen and enrich the curriculum, including working with the Cornwall Education Business Partnership, and has won curriculum awards including Investor in Business Links and Sportsmark. There is, as yet, no school curriculum statement which defines the overall provision for pupils.
42. Staff are working with some success to fulfil the aim of this being a fully inclusive school. Pupils with special educational needs are treated well, taught with others in mainstream classes in all subjects, with a good provision of learning support assistants for those with statements. The buildings have been adapted for disabled access, with ramps and lifts. No discrimination was seen against any disabled pupils or those with special learning needs. Teachers and other pupils were seen to value each other and treat each other with polite respect. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified on a whole-school basis, and there is no overall co-ordination; however, gifted and talented pupils are recognised in music, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education, and given extension work.

43. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The Learning Support Centre organises and runs several clubs, primarily for those pupils with special educational needs, such as a 'Starspell' club, paired reading, a lunchtime homework club and study skills club. Time and expertise are bought in from two charitable organisations in support of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs: one for anger management training and one for team building exercises on Bodmin Moor. Good links have been developed with North Devon College for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are struggling with their GCSE courses, or who are becoming disaffected with school. These pupils are given a work-related curriculum, which enables them to sit the main subject GCSEs, whilst dropping some of the courses to take up work experience placements and study for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).
44. Overall the school makes satisfactory provision for the personal development of its pupils; however, opportunities are lost because there is no overall strategy for the promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and no formal monitoring to see how well the school is doing. Subjects have no written policy apart from religious education nor are opportunities identified in schemes of work.
45. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies seen during the inspection, although not always religious, had strong moral messages. The school does not observe a daily act of worship for all its pupils either in assemblies or during tutorial time. In religious education pupils are helped to think about the meaning and purpose of life and matters that transcend our everyday experience. Music and drama occasionally offer pupils opportunities to reflect and be moved by what they are doing and what they hear. There are no opportunities, though, for creative writing in modern languages, and the creative impulse is not developed in art and here pupils' feelings and views are insufficiently explored.
46. The provision for moral and social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to distinguish right from wrong, to consider ways of behaving, and to be respectful to each other and to equipment in many subjects. Moral issues are explored well in history. Pupils are encouraged to care for the environment. In religious education pupils think about and make informed judgements on religious and moral issues. They develop a sense of identity and belonging in preparation for life as a citizen in society. Group work in class and in extra-curricular activities fosters co-operation and listening and also provides opportunities for the development of leadership skills. Pupils are encouraged to lend their support to their peers. They raise money for other people and for charities through fund-raising activities and concerts. Social issues are explored in drama and English through plays, poems and songs. In history they evaluate class structure and the role of women.
47. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Many opportunities are provided for the pupils to learn about their own culture and to explore local culture, as in music and art. There are European visits and exchange trips to the continent. Several departments explore cultures from across the world. These were brought together very effectively in a multicultural day for Year 7 last July. Pupils are unsure of the major celebrations and traditions of other faiths though, and apart from work done in religious education on what it is like to be a Muslim and British, they are unprepared for life in a multicultural society.

Sixth form

48. The school provides a broad range of A Level courses in the sixth form which generally matches the needs of students who stay on; however, the curriculum does not provide sufficient vocational pathways for all students who may wish to enter the sixth form, apart from some intermediate GNVQs which are taken up by a very small number of students. Nonetheless, those students who do opt to stay on have stated that they can follow courses that meet their future career intentions. The statutory requirements of the sixth form curriculum are not being met, as the provision for religious education is unsatisfactory. The teaching of the subject is limited to some coverage in the new general studies course for Year 12 students, with none at all for Year 13 students. The general studies course is also designed to cover students' careers advice as well as their personal, social and health education and as a consequence coverage of each is not

sufficiently full. There are also no opportunities for students to resit GCSEs in mathematics and English.

49. The timetable arrangements for courses provide sufficient time and flexibility to meet the needs of all subjects except art where single periods are insufficient to enable students effectively to develop their personal studies. Nonetheless, the art course provides progression for students who wish to move on to a Foundation course after the sixth form. The small numbers in language classes are appreciated by students and enable them to make very good progress in lessons, working with the skilled linguists in the department. The physical education department runs a very successful A Level programme but there are no timetabled games lessons for non-examination students. Generally, there are insufficient opportunities presented to students for independent learning.
50. The school provides a wide range of activities beyond those in lessons and these are particularly strong and appreciated in economics and business studies and English, and in physical education, where gifted and talented students are given additional coaching; however, parents would like to see the range of extra-curricular activities improved. Some students are involved in community activities and develop their personal skills by assisting with lower school classes. There are very good links with the local business community which provides valuable insights into the world of work and assists with the economics and business A Level.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The school provides good day-to-day care for its pupils. The level of support has been maintained since the previous inspection and there is now a well-organised pastoral system and year teams no longer work in isolation; however, some procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are not in place. The procedures for child protection and looked after children are secure. These aspects of pupil care are taken very seriously, although policies in both areas are in need of attention. The assistant headteacher, as the nominated member of staff, has undertaken relevant training in child protection matters, but there is no regular programme of staff training. First aid and medical care are appropriate but are affected by the position of the sick room, some distance from the main work area of the nominated first aider.
52. The new deputy headteacher, now responsible for health and safety, is committed to ensuring a safe environment, although a clear structure is not in place and there is no health and safety policy. The school is generally a safe place but since taking over the new buildings, many of the recommendations from an external audit have not been dealt with. Informal checks of the site and premises are carried out, but formal arrangements to identify health and safety issues and departmental risk assessments have not been established. Internet access is secure.
53. The school has very good procedures for supporting the pupils' personal development. Heads of year play a central role. They have overall responsibility for monitoring their year group and maintain an overview of each pupil as they move through the school. They liaise closely and share information with tutors and the assistant headteacher. The head of Year 7 ensures that pupils settle well into the school, and the year teams generally remain constant throughout the pupils' time at the school from Year 8 onwards. This continuity helps both tutors and heads of year to know their pupils well and to ensure that any emerging problems are quickly identified and dealt with. A pupil integration officer provides invaluable support for identified pupils in Year 10 and 11, helping them to build their self-esteem and confidence. The school nurse provides a valuable and confidential counselling service.
54. Thorough systems are in place to monitor attendance and punctuality. An attendance officer monitors attendance daily, contacts home on the first day of absence and follows up absences. Attendance data is regularly shared with heads of year who check patterns of attendance and contact parents if there are concerns. The education welfare officer attends the school regularly, meets with heads of year and supports the school's work by following up individual pupils.

55. The systems to monitor and improve behaviour are effective. High standards of behaviour are implicit in the atmosphere and values of the school. Pupils fully understand, and respond in a positive manner to the well-established system of rewards and sanctions. This includes the use of the sanctions room for repeated or serious incidents. Log sheets carefully document all incidents. Pupils causing concern are closely monitored by heads of year and the assistant headteacher. Where appropriate, parents are informed. Pupils and staff spoke of occasional bullying, generally verbal, but pupils confirmed that any incidents are dealt with quickly by staff.
56. The inclusion project worker based in the special educational needs department gives valued educational and personal support for pupils who are deemed to be at risk of permanent exclusion. The IEPs for all those pupils with special educational needs are of a good quality. These are networked to every subject department and hence available to all staff. Targets are reviewed twice a year and both pupils and parents are a part of those reviews. The more forward thinking departments, such as physical education, are setting subject-specific targets to interpret the more general targets set in the IEPs. The special needs department keeps very good records on the progress of pupils through the school, including their public examination successes.
57. There is very good provision for pupils who have the legal protection of a statement of special educational needs. Where there are physical and medical needs, such as for the visually or hearing impaired and those in wheelchairs, the school ensures that any specialist resources such as laptops, visual and auditory aids and special software programmes are provided by the specialist agencies involved. The Learning Support Centre also builds links with specialist services to ensure that requirements set out in the statement are effectively met. The annual review of each statement is held according to the revised Code of Practice. A very high proportion of parents attend the review, along with their child and relevant specialists. Transition reviews are held around age 14 and a Connexions adviser attends in order to set a transition plan in train that will open up pathways to further education and/or employment. The school is fully accessible to those in wheelchairs and justifiably sees itself as a fully inclusive school.
58. A range of data on pupils' attainment is collected and analysed on entry to the school and at the end of Years 9 and 11 as well as throughout pupils' school careers. Despite having this assessment data available to all departments and individual members of staff, it is not comprehensively and uniformly used by all departments to monitor the pupils' progress, to set individual targets and to inform curriculum planning. This is exacerbated by not having an agreed whole-school policy on assessment which is implemented by all departments. The monitoring of individual pupils' subject performance is, however, good overall in geography, religious education, history, physical education and music, and all pupils are assessed for ICT competency. In addition the monitoring and assessment of pupils with special educational needs is extensive and used to inform the pupils' individual learning programmes.
59. Pupils have a general idea of how well they are doing but this is often not supplemented with effective feedback in written reports to parents on what they need to do to improve and how this relates to National Curriculum levels and subject-specific attainment targets. The school has target grades for pupils to achieve but these do not usually form part of the good general support offered through the tutorial system. There is no formal school policy on marking which is adhered to by all departments. The school has initiated academic monitoring days and these have been used to raise awareness of what pupils in Years 10 and 11 need to do to achieve the results of which they are capable. These have worked particularly well in Year 10.

Sixth form

Assessment

60. The use of assessment and value-added data to monitor student progress, evaluate subject performance and inform individual learning needs is unsatisfactory overall, although some departments have good procedures in place. Assessment procedures are good in art, geography,

economics and business studies, drama and ICT and are very good in physical education. In these subjects students have a very clear idea of their current and expected attainment levels and what they need to do to improve; however, the school does not use nationally available data based on GCSE results and predicted A Level performance to set targets and provide specific guidance and support to individual students. In addition, there is not a consistent approach across the school to the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning.

Advice, support and guidance

61. Students receive satisfactory advice on personal and educational matters, although some students rightly believe that this could be improved. The daily tutorial sessions offer regular contact between all the tutors and their students and give time for one-to-one interviews take place between tutors and students; however, this time is limited and does not allow much on-going discussion and monitoring of the students' academic progress. The new head of sixth form is always available for students experiencing difficulties. He operates an open door policy giving students access to help and guidance if they need it. Induction arrangements to support students as they move into the sixth form are satisfactory and help them to settle and feel confident in their new learning environment. Careers information is satisfactory. The recently re-opened careers' library provides a good source of reference material.
62. Students have been made aware of the importance of regular attendance. The school has recently changed procedures to record attendance in the sixth form and as a result all students are now expected to register each afternoon; however, monitoring systems have not been introduced and as attendance in lessons is not recorded there is no way of checking whether students always remain in school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. Most parents who attended the parents' meeting and responded to the questionnaire hold positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with their children's progress and the school's expectations of hard work and feel comfortable about approaching the school. A small number of parents expressed concerns about some areas of school life. They are unhappy about the levels and consistency of homework and the range of extra-curricular activities. They do not feel they receive sufficient information about progress or that the school is working closely with them. Inspection evidence supports the positive views parents have of the school and confirms some of their concerns; however, the school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
64. Sixth form students who completed the questionnaires expressed mixed views about the school. A significant number expressed concerns about some aspects of their life as sixth formers. They do not feel they are sufficiently well informed about what they should do in the sixth form or after they leave school. They feel that the school does not keep them sufficiently well informed about their progress and are critical of the support that they receive for personal problems and of the range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses. In discussions with students during the inspection, they spoke more positively about the care and support given by staff, but still felt reticent about discussing personal problems with them.
65. Links with parents are satisfactory, although in general they have little impact on the work of the school. Parents are invited to a meeting before their child starts in school but this initial link is not being developed further. The extensive building work resulting from the fire has limited what the school has been able to do. In addition, a high proportion of pupils live some distance away making it difficult to establish closer links; however, there are few activities to encourage parents to work more closely with the school. A supportive Friends Association organises events that raise funds for the school's use and subsidises school trips.
66. The school's pastoral monitoring system ensures that heads of year contact the parents of those pupils whose behaviour, attendance or learning are causing concern. They also make themselves

available should parents want to contact them. Parents are also notified if their child receives a commendation.

67. One weakness in the partnership between school and home is the quality of information for parents, particularly about their children's progress. Parents receive two styles of written report on progress. The first is a monitoring alert providing a brief but useful overview of effort and attainment. Secondly, they receive an annual written report that, although giving more detail, has shortcomings. The reports do not provide information about progress in gaining the knowledge and skills of a subject or give information about strengths or weaknesses. A regular school newsletter, the *Budehaven Bugle*, keeps parents informed about dates, news and school matters. Occasional information evenings have been held, but in most year groups parents do not receive regular information about the curriculum or what is being taught in lessons. This reduces their understanding of the school's work and the effectiveness of their support for their children's learning at home. The exception to this is Year 10 which does issue a booklet explaining the GCSE curriculum at the annual consultation evening.
68. Parental involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory. Homework is set but not always consistently. The majority of parents ensure that homework is completed. Homework planners provide a useful means of contact between home and school. Most Year 10 parents attended the monitoring day and valued the opportunity to talk to tutors and discuss progress towards targets.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. The survival and rebuilding of the school since the devastating fire in October 1999 is an achievement of which all associated with the school can feel justifiably proud. The leadership and management of the previous headteacher were instrumental in this success. He was supported well in this by staff and senior managers, governors and many members of the local community who rallied to the aid of the school. The day-to-day running of a school site with over 1200 pupils and staff, containing a large number of temporary classrooms as well as a new building under construction was managed well. Parents and staff speak in fulsome praise of the work of the previous headteacher in holding the school together during a very difficult period. From the ashes of the fire a fine new building has arisen.
70. Much of the headteacher's time was taken up managing the school on a day-to-day basis and helping to plan its reconstruction. As a consequence, several matters highlighted at the last inspection as requiring improvement received insufficient attention during this period. The new headteacher has quickly identified where shortcomings have not been dealt with, and has rapidly instituted measures to improve and strengthen management processes and systems. The new headteacher and the new deputy head have skills that complement each other. They are forming a strong team along with the other experienced senior managers. Their leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has a clear vision of what needs to be done and is already successfully promoting his firm belief that standards can rise through a focus on improving teaching and learning. Parents and pupils report that they have already seen a significant change in the school.
71. Several of the areas that had received insufficient attention related to improving the leadership and management of the school. The consequence is that, although there are pockets of good practice throughout the school, there has not been a consistent approach to the implementation of many school policies. The line management system, whereby heads of department and other middle managers were held to account for the work in their areas had fallen into abeyance. The management structure had also been re-organised, removing the post of deputy headteacher. This post has wisely been reintroduced. The role of senior management has been strengthened as a consequence and the new headteacher has moved swiftly to reintroduce line management procedures. Insufficient attention had also been paid to monitoring the work of staff and the quality of teaching in the school. No systematic procedures were in place to observe teaching, identify and share good practice and provide support and training for staff who might have shortcomings in their work. Formal procedures to manage the performance of teachers had not been suitably implemented. Furthermore, although a considerable amount of test and examination data had

been collected, it was not being analysed and the information used to evaluate the effectiveness of the school and the success of new developments.

72. A further area that was identified as requiring improvement at the last inspection was the thoroughness with which staff reviewed action taken and then planned for the school's development. This aspect has not been tackled sufficiently and remains an area in which considerable work is still needed. The process of development planning has not been sufficiently focused on raising standards through improving teaching and learning. The criteria by which success is to be evaluated are vague. Finally, the relationship between the school's priorities and the response of departments through their development planning is unclear. Financial planning is sound and the school makes satisfactory use of the principles of best value when making decisions about financial allocations.
73. Governors have been instrumental in supporting the school through the difficult period since October 1999. Several, and the chair of governors in particular, have given very considerably of their time to the significant benefit of the school. Governors undertake their responsibilities well with the only exceptions being that there is not a daily act of collective worship and religious education requirements are not fulfilled in the sixth form. The governing body has strengthened the procedures through which it gains oversight of the work of the school. The committee structure and link governor visits have enabled a clear picture to be gained of the school's strengths and the priorities for its improvement. Governors also took the opportunity provided by the appointment of the new headteacher and deputy head to shape the strategic development of the school over the next few years. They invested much time in undertaking a detailed review of the school, identifying what steps need to be taken to move the school forward and securing the appointment of a headteacher and deputy head in whom they have confidence to bring about the school's improvement. There is now an understood and shared commitment to the action that needs to be undertaken.
74. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. The special educational needs co-ordinator leads a well-qualified and experienced team of learning support teachers and learning support assistants to provide a very good level of support and care for pupils with special educational needs. Training and guidance have been given to ensure that subject departments understand and effectively implement the guidelines in the revised Code of Practice. This has been very successful with many of them, whilst the others are coming to terms with their new responsibilities for pupils with special needs. Formal links between subject departments and the Learning Support Centre, which would help the process, are not yet fully developed. There is a clear direction to the work of the department, and the team is very effectively led. The very good accommodation and learning resources are well used during the day, including time before and after school. The Learning Support Centre is a strength of the school.
75. Accommodation overall is now very good, enabling pupils to learn and move around the school in a pleasant environment. Wide corridors, spacious classrooms and the effective siting of lockers all help to achieve this outcome. Sports facilities are very good, with pupils able to take advantage of extensive playing fields, a sports centre and hard play areas. The dedicated drama studio and language suite enable pupils to learn in an appropriate environment. Facilities for pupils with special educational needs are very good with specially designed toilets, showers and wheelchair access around the school. Whilst the school has a large number of computers, the computer rooms are not large enough to accommodate some groups and in science some of the laboratories have pillars which obscure the view of some pupils. The school has a well stocked library which is frequented by a large number of pupils every day. The library provision is good but its resources are not fully integrated into subject schemes of work.
76. The level and quality of staffing are good with all departments having appropriately qualified and experienced teachers. The support programme for newly qualified teachers is good, ensuring that they always have access to advice and appropriate training. Learning resources are good, with all departments having a range of relevant textbooks and subject materials. The 6:1 ratio of pupils to computers is above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs have a good range of appropriate resources to assist them in lessons. Geography makes excellent use in

lessons of the interactive whiteboard and there is a very good range of resources, materials and machines in design and technology.

77. The school is now at an exciting time in its development. The new buildings and new senior staff have served to invigorate staff and pupils. As a result, the school is now well placed to tackle its shortcomings, to improve the quality of the education that it provides and to raise standards.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

78. Insufficient attention has been paid to the leadership and management of the sixth form in the recent past. This has been identified by the headteacher and the new head of the sixth form, who has been in post for just over a year. There has been no strategic plan for the improvement of sixth form provision and no clear long-term vision of possible developments. School and departmental development planning have not been sufficiently focused and have often paid little attention to the sixth form and sixth form courses. Sixth form teaching has not been monitored, although staff training has generally proved to be effective. Tracking the academic progress of pupils and using test data to evaluate the effectiveness of the sixth form had not been undertaken systematically, an issue that is already being tackled by the head of sixth form and senior management.
79. Leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. The quality of the leadership and management of the sixth form provision within individual subjects is variable. The lack of a clear structure to line management and monitoring quality has resulted in some inconsistencies. Good practice which exists in a number of areas has not been shared and in some cases there has been resistance to implementing fully school policies. Where subject staff have committed themselves to raising standards by reflecting on their teaching and using data to evaluate their effectiveness, good progress is occurring. A new line management system has been established which clearly identifies staffing responsibilities for the sixth form. The head of sixth form has identified what some of the next steps are to improve provision, particularly in making better use of tutorial time and in the monitoring of the academic progress of sixth formers.
80. As in the main school, the sixth form is poised for development. The leadership and management and the focus that sixth form provision is now to receive place it in a good position to move forward.

Resources

81. As in the main school, staffing and resources for sixth form study are good. The accommodation for teaching purposes is also good but there are insufficient areas for sixth formers to study in private. Courses are staffed with knowledgeable, appropriately qualified teachers. Language provision is particularly well served by very good linguists. Students in design and technology, geography and economics and business studies have access to a wide range of textbooks, materials and research documents. In geography, the use of interactive internet research is used to good effect to illustrate topics such as coastal erosion; however, there are not enough dedicated ICT facilities for sixth formers and there is a shortage of resources for literary criticism in English.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

82. To raise standards further, the school should:
- 1) raise standards in modern foreign languages by: (paragraph 7, 142,144 and 147)
 - increasing the teachers' use of the foreign language in lessons to enable pupils to improve their listening and speaking skills;

- rewriting the schemes of work and improving teaching to ensure that able pupils are challenged, attain higher standards and make faster progress;
 - developing the pupils' independence in writing.
- 2) increase the length of the teaching week to the national recommendations and improve the curriculum by: (paragraphs 36 and 37)
- reviewing the setting arrangements in Year 7 so that teaching groups in other subjects are not dependent on mathematics for their composition;
 - providing regular teaching of PSHE to stable groups in which the pupils can feel confident to participate;
 - ensuring that the drama element of the National Curriculum for English is consistently taught to all pupils;
 - introducing and implementing policies to promote literacy and numeracy in all subjects;
 - ensuring that all pupils have equal access to music in Years 7 to 9;
 - broadening the range of courses provided in Years 10 and 11 to include more with a vocational element that provide a clear route for all pupils into post-16 education;
 - increasing individual lessons to a more suitable length for practical subjects such as design and technology.
- 3) implement rapidly the proposals to use the collected assessment and other data to evaluate the effectiveness of the school, departments and individual staff; (paragraph 71)
- 4) ensure that assessment information is used consistently to guide planning, set individual pupil targets and monitor progress towards achieving them; (paragraphs 58 and 59)
- 5) adopt a more rigorous approach to school improvement planning and ensure that plans for the development of departments reflect more clearly the main school priorities. (paragraph 72)

Sixth form

- 1) Raise standards in physics and art. (paragraphs 12 and 13)
- 2) Broaden the range of courses available, particularly those with a vocational element, and develop and implement a course of study in religious education to meet statutory requirements. (paragraph 48)
- 3) Introduce procedures and monitor their implementation to assess regularly the attainment of the students on all courses, using these to set individual targets, track progress and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. (paragraph 60)

Other issues which should be considered by the school

83. In addition to the items above, the governors may wish to consider the inclusion of the following points in their action plan:
- improve the quality of reports to parents; (paragraph 67)

- improve the accommodation and resources for private study in the sixth form. (paragraph 81)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	137
	Sixth form	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		61

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	7	38	52	35	5	0	0
Percentage	5	28	39	26	4	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	10	25	11	2	0	0
Percentage	6	19	49	22	4	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1011	162
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	76	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	74	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	56

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	106	79	185

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	59	84	75
	Girls	60	61	58
	Total	119	145	133
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	63 (59)	77 (67)	70 (63)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	60 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	27 (30)	54 (44)	40 (24)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	51	82	81
	Girls	59	66	59
	Total	110	148	140
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	58 (56)	78 (71)	74 (59)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	26 (24)	47 (46)	31 (23)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	78	89	167

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	33	73	78
	Girls	49	87	89
	Total	82	160	167
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (49)	96 (93)	100 (98)
	National	51 (48)	89 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE points score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.1 (40.3)
	National	39.0 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	75
	National	76

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	27	36	63

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	184	223	206	0	0	0 (2.0)
National	n/a (16.9)	n/a (17.9)	n/a (17.4)	n/a	n/a	n/a (2.7)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	23	83
	National		76

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	1108	40	
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
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			
Chinese	3		
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded			

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.14	Financial year	2001/2002
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Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3
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Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	681

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.0
Key Stage 4	20.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

	£
Total income	3,103,602
Total expenditure	3,164,436
Expenditure per pupil	2,825
Balance brought forward from previous year	168,705
Balance carried forward to next year	107,871

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.27
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.33

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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	1112
Number of questionnaires returned	551

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	25	59	10	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	33	57	6	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	50	14	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	59	18	2	7
The teaching is good.	17	68	7	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	16	61	18	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	34	56	7	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	54	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	11	61	18	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	15	63	6	3	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	20	63	8	3	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	12	47	16	5	20

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Good quality teaching
- Very good pupil behaviour and attitudes
- Good achievement at Key Stage 4

Areas for improvement

- Development planning and setting priorities
- Monitoring teaching and learning
- Key Stage 3 drama curriculum

84. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, pupils achieved results that were close to both the national average and to results in similar schools. This represented a considerable improvement on the previous year. Girls have regularly achieved better results than boys, but not always by the same margin as nationally. Results in English were similar to mathematics and above science. The 2002 results show an improvement and meet the school's target, but were still average. They were also similar to those in science but below mathematics.
85. GCSE results for 2001 in English language were above the national average. In English literature, the standards achieved were in line with the national average. This represents good progress and achievement since the pupils' earlier Year 9 test results. Similar results were achieved in both examinations in 2002. The gap between the performance of boys and girls is much smaller than nationally. The pupils entered for English in 2001 did better in this subject than in the average of all their other subjects.
86. In the lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 and in the scrutiny of work, standards are in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is having a beneficial effect and standards are improving in Years 7 and 8. In the Year 10 and 11 lessons, and in the scrutiny of work, progress is good and standards are above average. Pupils with special educational needs continue to achieve well. The most able pupils achieve very well and boys in particular achieve standards well above their peers nationally.
87. Teaching is good overall. The best teaching is characterised by a combination of secure subject knowledge, well-planned sequences of work and explicit sharing of learning objectives and assessment criteria. Where teaching is outstanding, work is matched to the pupils' learning needs, lessons proceed at a brisk pace with plenty of challenge and the marking of written work is detailed and diagnostic. Consequently pupils know what they have to do to improve their use of language and increase their appreciation and understanding of literature. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are consistently very good as a result of the good quality of the teaching. Most pupils take their work seriously and are responding positively to self-assessment and target-setting opportunities introduced recently by the English department.
88. Oral work is prominent in English lessons and pupils enjoy regular opportunities to talk through and share ideas in pairs or small groups. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, boys and girls worked well in pairs to explore features of informal speech, telling stories and sharing anecdotes. In another lesson, Year 9 pupils enjoyed the challenge of discussing with a partner whether contemporary song lyrics could be described as poetry. The pupils go on to develop these skills at Key Stage 4 as they meet the more formal demands of GCSE oral assessments. In Year 10 and 11 lessons much of the speaking and listening is individual response to teacher questioning. At its best this allows pupils to try out their responses, taking account of a range of ideas,

including the teacher's. This was illustrated in a very good Year 10 lesson where pupils investigated the subtleties of plot and characterisation in Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*. Similarly, in a Year 11 class, pupils responded intelligently when discussing a poem dealing with issues of apartheid, poverty and protest.

89. As an integral part of their work, all pupils read a wide range of good quality literature, including work by Shakespeare, pre-twentieth century authors and texts written by recent and contemporary writers. They also read a variety of texts from different cultures and traditions as well as non-fiction and ICT-based information texts. The teacher of a below-average Year 8 group successfully used a series of different story openings in challenging pupils to identify the key features of the Gothic Horror genre. In another lesson, the teacher made very good use of the library with a low-achieving Year 9 class of nineteen boys and three girls. They worked well in groups, reading and analysing a selection of books to identify features of viewpoint and genre. In a Year 11 special needs group, the teacher combined focused viewing of a film extract with her good quality reading to the class, to enable pupils to deepen their understanding of the characters in Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men*. Elsewhere in Year 11, the pupils learn to read Shakespeare with an emphasis on language and dramatic performance – as in two good lessons on *Romeo and Juliet*.
90. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught to plan and draft their ideas in a wide range of writing. With the increased emphasis on word and sentence level work pupils are learning to improve their spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. They enjoy the opportunity to use computers both to word-process their work and also to research ideas for their writing. This was seen in a good Year 9 lesson where pupils explored the verse structure of sonnets and also in a Year 10 class exploring persuasive media texts. Year 10 and 11 pupils produce a good range of coursework writing in their responses to poetry, plays, fiction and non-fiction. They learn to adapt their style for different purposes and readers, for example in a factual analysis of the Levi Jeans advertising campaigns or in personal, imaginative writing on being homeless. They also have to learn the skills of writing critical responses to literature in the GCSE examination. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, by modelling a particular aspect of writing in response to the reading of a Roald Dahl story, the teacher helped pupils to understand the difference between D and C grade writing. The department continues to encourage pupils to publish their writing in both local and national competitions.
91. Leadership of the department is good. There are very good relationships between staff and there is a clear purpose and sense of direction; however, there are some shortcomings in aspects of management, namely in setting priorities, development planning and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Curricular provision is good, with the exception of drama at Key Stage 3, where there is no coherent planning to ensure consistent teaching for all pupils. This was a weakness at the last inspection and still needs to be remedied. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There have been improvements in the provision of texts from different cultures and traditions and from non-literary sources. In addition, the department is beginning to make good use of assessment data to track pupils' progress and to set targets. This is particularly good in the arrangements now in place to support the pupils' transition from Year 6 to Year 7.

Drama

92. The most recent results in GCSE drama are well above the national average. Results in the two previous years had been in line with or slightly below average.
93. In lessons observed and in the scrutiny of work, standards are satisfactory overall and often good or very good. In a Year 10 lesson, the pupils responded well to the challenges of learning about sub-text and dramatic irony, enjoying the opportunity to read and experiment with an extract from Sheridan's *The Rivals*. Year 11 pupils were equally well challenged in a lesson where they had to move their work beyond simple narrative into a more stylised form. The most able pupils do very well in drama. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and mostly good or very good. Teachers know their subject well and plan the work effectively to enable pupils to learn the necessary practical skills as well as the theoretical background knowledge required for written

examinations. Pupils are given a rich and varied range of drama experience both in their studio and classroom work and in visits to live theatre.

94. Drama is currently satisfactorily managed within the English department, although there is no discrete teaching of the subject at Key Stage 3. There is scope to develop drama more fully within the arts curriculum so that all pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive a coherently planned programme to prepare them for the GCSE option. Accommodation and resources are good. The school has had a very good reputation for its drama productions; there are now plans to continue this tradition and pupils are very keen to take part.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Improved standards in Key Stage 3, especially of girls
- Good teaching overall at both key stages
- Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good
- Accommodation is very good and resources are good

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring teaching and learning to improve consistency and raise standards
- Assessment and target-setting to help pupils know how to improve
- Increased range of teaching and learning methods

95. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the pupils achieved results that were in line both with the national average and with similar schools. Boys achieved better results than girls in 2001 and in previous years. These results were higher than in science and similar to English. Results in 2002 were much improved, especially for girls and for pupils with higher prior attainment. They were above average and were better than English and science.

96. GCSE results in 2001 were slightly above the national average for the proportion of A* to C grades and average in terms of average points score. Boys achieved much better results than girls; their results were above the national average on all measures, while girls' results were below the national average. More girls than boys were not entered for GCSE. Pupils entered for mathematics did worse on the whole than in all their other subjects. Mathematics results were below those for other subjects. In 2002 girls did much better, although results were lower overall, explained by the school as the result of the deterioration in attitude of Year 11 boys that year.

97. Standards seen are in line with national expectations at both key stages. Pupils with high prior attainment, in the higher sets in all year groups, have standards above and sometimes well above those expected nationally. The number skills of pupils entering Year 7 higher sets are very good. Teachers were seen to challenge and extend the pupils' understanding in a Year 7 top set as they explored their depth of knowledge in an exercise changing fractions to decimals. The use of mental activities as starters to lessons is improving the pupils' numeracy throughout all years, especially where a fast pace is set with a variety of activities throughout each lesson. Grouping pupils by ability allows more individual attention to be given to those with lower prior attainment in smaller classes, especially where learning support assistants help those with special learning needs. In a Year 7 bottom set, two learning support assistants sat with pupils who achieved Level 3 or below in their Key Stage 2 tests and patiently worked through the teaching points on ordering and adding negative numbers, allowing the pupils to understand and feel success by joining in with the rest of the class in the final whole-class discussion. Year 9 pupils with special educational needs made progress understanding reflective symmetry with the help of two learning support assistants as well as the good planning of the teacher. Overall, pupils with special educational needs made good progress.

98. In Years 10 and 11 two sets in each year were challenged to aim for the higher level GCSE, with individual pupils already with very high standards taking GCSE early or studying A/S Level modules. One Year 10 group were using Pythagoras' theorem in practical problems, extending work covered in Year 9. The good planning by their teacher, knowing the requirements for each textbook problem and likely GCSE examination questions, led to fast pace and challenge. Another resource which aids pupils' enjoyment is the use of individual whiteboards, not only for warm-up sessions at the beginning of lessons but throughout as a quick and instant means of assessing individual pupils' grasp of a method or concept. For example, the pupils in a Year 11 Foundation level GCSE group were drawing reflections on a co-ordinate grid whiteboard before embarking on the textbook exercise. Practical demonstrations, such as the teacher opening the door to and fro, and giving directions for a pupil to stand and turn around a certain way, to show the need for angle, direction and centre of rotation, helped the pupils to understand and remember. Teachers also produce their own materials such as the worksheet on adding consecutive numbers to form negative numbers with a bottom set Year 10, which added a 'game' dimension to the lesson, keeping pupils' interest. Most pupils are keen to learn and stay willingly after lessons to go through problems, such as the group in Year 10 staying to cope with homework questions on loci.
99. The quality of teaching is good overall, varying from satisfactory to very good; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Strengths are the subject knowledge of all the mathematics teachers, good planning of lessons, and their calm, pleasant manner with good control strategies which help to generate good relationships with the pupils. The range of teaching methods has improved as a result of the National Numeracy Strategy training, but is still limited, with insufficient development of investigational skills. Apart from this aspect, all of the National Curriculum attainment targets are covered well, with an improvement in number and algebra work since the last inspection.
100. Homework is set regularly, sometimes with an imaginative investigation focus such as the Year 9 research into 'pi' as part of their work on circles. Unfortunately even here the intangible element, the spiritual dimension, of mathematics was not made explicit. The policies and schemes of work do not include sufficient guidance on the spiritual, social and cultural development of pupils, nor mention citizenship. Although homework is marked, few comments help the pupils to know how to improve. Targets set are numerical, such as the next level or grade to achieve rather than indicating what steps are needed to improve. The departmental policy is not to mark work done in lessons, only tests each half-term, expecting pupils to mark their own work from textbook or teacher-talk, which unfortunately results in some errors going uncorrected. Assessment procedures and the use of data have improved since the previous inspection. The department has planned well to integrate the use of computers since the previous inspection, purchasing appropriate software, but limited access to the ICT rooms has held back this development.
101. All teachers have their own rooms, with good displays, and an office and resource base. Accommodation is very good. Leadership is satisfactory overall with a comprehensive handbook and detailed schemes of work. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, and management of the many subsequent initiatives has been good. There is a well-written numeracy policy, with good development in the mathematics department, and training held for all staff; however, the response from other subjects has been variable and is a matter that requires improvement. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of teachers and pupils are planned, but are not yet having sufficient impact to improve standards and provision.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The good subject knowledge of the teachers
- The good relationships between teachers and pupils and the positive attitudes of pupils to their work

- The very good resources and support from the technical staff

Areas for improvement

- Scientific enquiry skills are underdeveloped
- Assessment information is not used consistently to inform pupils about their progress or to influence curriculum planning
- Procedures for monitoring standards and teaching to influence and inform the development planning process lack rigour

102. In the 2001 national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the pupils achieved results that were below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Results were lower than those for English and mathematics because fewer pupils reached the higher Level 6 in science. Pupils had not completed the full programme of study prior to taking the tests. In 2002 the test results improved, exceeded the target set by the school and were close to the national average. They were comparable to results in English but below mathematics. Since the last inspection, science results have improved broadly in line with the national trend, with boys consistently outperforming girls.
103. GCSE results for 2001 were in line with the national average. Pupils entered for science in 2001 did worse in this subject than in the average of all their other subjects. Girls in particular did less well. Overall the pupils' performance in science was better than that in mathematics but not as good as that in English. In 2002 the results were slightly down on those for 2001, with a drop in the boys' performance, although the girls' results improved.
104. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and as a result, the pupils are achieving average standards by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. All teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, resulting in clear and accurate presentations to the class, which are often then reinforced by suitable practical activities. This approach enables the pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attainers, to make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 9 pupils have attained appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding across the three aspects of the science curriculum. For example, the majority of pupils can describe respiration, construct simple word equations to represent chemical reactions and can distinguish between reflection and refraction. Higher-attainers are able to solve quantitative problems on distance and speed, using the correct units. Teachers ensure that basic practical skills are developed in class so that pupils are able to make observations, take measurements with suitable levels of accuracy and record their results in tables and graphs. There are fewer planned opportunities to develop the broader skills of scientific enquiry so the pupils are less secure in this aspect of the subject.
105. The organisation of the curriculum ensures that the pupils make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding as they move from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4, although opportunities to draw on the pupils' prior knowledge are not always sufficiently exploited. Scientific enquiry is more evident in Years 10 and 11 largely because it is a requirement of the GCSE syllabus. There is still insufficient use of investigations to underpin and deepen scientific understanding for these older pupils. There are no significant variations in the standards and achievements of boys and girls at either key stage in lessons.
106. Across the department teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and manage them well in the classroom. As a result the majority of pupils work with interest and concentrate well in lessons. The pupils show positive attitudes to their work in that they are punctual to lessons, fully equipped and treat their books with care. Behaviour is good. The teachers manage practical activities well, paying attention to health and safety. The pupils respond positively, collaborating well in groups and treating the equipment with respect. In a particularly effective Year 10 lesson on the structure and function of the heart, the teacher demonstrated how to set about dissecting a heart and then supported the class in undertaking their own practical work. The pupils had been prepared for the dissection before the lesson so that they were aware of what was to be done. The teacher's enthusiastic approach and good classroom management enabled this group of lower-attaining pupils to understand well how the structure of the heart helps it to function effectively.

107. The teachers question pupils to check their understanding, usually of technical vocabulary. These are largely closed questions and there are few opportunities for pupils to speak at length and discuss their own scientific ideas. Too many opportunities are missed to elicit levels of understanding when pupils are engaged in writing or drawing graphs. A wider range of questioning techniques is required to ensure that the higher-attainers are sufficiently stretched and that lower-attainers in mixed-ability groups are given more opportunities to contribute to the lesson. On some occasions, the pace for lessons with higher-attaining pupils is leisurely rather than challenging. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants and consequently make satisfactory progress in their learning.
108. The teachers plan lessons appropriately in accordance with national guidelines. Whilst activities are clearly explained, the learning objectives are not regularly shared with the pupils so that they are not always aware of what they are expected to have achieved by the end of the lesson or of how well they are doing. Insufficient use is made of attainment data to track pupil progress and to set targets for the next steps in the pupils' learning. There are few comments in the pupils' books which help them to improve their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas. The setting and marking of homework are inconsistent, with some classes in the same year group receiving more than others. Language and number skills are adequately promoted, although more systematic planning to develop these basic skills and strengthen scientific understanding at the same time is required. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning has been limited to date but it is developing now that the department has a dedicated suite of computers. The resources and the support from the technicians are both very good and make a positive contribution to the work of the department. Equipment is always ready and available for the teachers at the beginning of lessons.
109. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory. There are clear procedures for managing the day-to-day work within the department. The experienced and committed staff are mutually supportive and are largely working with a sense of common purpose. The pupils' attainment levels and test results are well documented. The departmental development plan is, however, insufficiently based on a thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses in standards and teaching. Priorities are broadly appropriate but actions identified do not focus clearly on developing teaching and learning. Given the steady improvement in results at the end of Key Stage 3, the sustained standards at Key Stage 4 plus the increased data on pupil performance, improvement since the last inspection is judged to be satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching in Years 7 and 8
- The resources for learning

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations
- The use of computers in art
- The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching
- The leadership of the department

110. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the 2001 GCSE examinations was significantly below national averages. All pupils passed the examination. Results for 2002 indicate slightly worse results. There has been a steady decline in results over the past three years, resulting in the department being one of the least successful in the school. A number of factors have contributed to the present position: the fire led to art being taught in temporary huts for more than two years; the department is not managed effectively from within the design department; a temporary supply teacher standing in for a teacher who was subsequently forced to retire on

health grounds led to an unstable situation for Years 7 to 11 last year. Most of these factors have now been removed. The department has good new accommodation, although rooms are not linked together and this makes resource management difficult. Staff expertise has been significantly improved through a new appointment, albeit temporary. The department is raising its profile. The overall good, often very good and occasionally excellent teaching observed during the inspection, in particular in Years 7 and 8, along with the generally very positive and enthusiastic response from pupils, indicates a department that is poised to improve standards and raise attainment in the coming years.

111. In work seen during the inspection standards were satisfactory overall at the end of Year 9. They were higher in Years 7 and 8 where the standard of teaching was particularly high, and where pupils were managed exceptionally well. The pupils make good and often very good progress, including those with special educational needs, who are known well and well supported by the Learning Support Centre where necessary. A high standard of linear work was seen in a Year 7 lesson on op-art, in which pupils explored the expressive qualities of line and learned how to build form in the style of artists such as Bridget Riley, Klee and Escher. Excellent provision is made to support literacy standards in the school. The Key Stage 3 strategy is well used to encourage speaking and listening during the introductory session and pupils are asked to read from the prepared worksheets. They are required to write notes on their work and on the artists that they study. By Year 11 pupils develop their own interior designs in the style of Vieira da Silva, although they are unable to explain clearly the connection of their work to that of da Silva. Some imaginative work was seen in a lesson in which pupils designed beverage packets. "Battlefield Tea" and "Eterni-tea" were amongst the most imaginative. Work in the sketchbooks and folders of Years 7 and 8 shows a creative, but disciplined approach to art. Those in Years 9 to 11 generally lack richness and variety, although there are individual examples of work at a high standard.
112. The quality of teaching is generally good. It is better in Years 7 and 8. The Key Stage 3 strategy is used effectively in the majority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, ensuring that pupils settle to work quickly and make very good progress towards the lesson targets set by the teacher. They put considerable intellectual and creative effort into their work. The final whole-class session rounds these lessons off well by encouraging the pupils' critical awareness of their work and by checking the learning that has taken place. All teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and build good relationships within the classes, so that there is generally a relaxed, positive and creative working atmosphere in which to work. On occasion there is background music that has not been planned to link with the cultural theme being taught and this leads to distracting conversation about the music. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and behaviour is generally very good, marred on occasion by the disruptive activities of one or two pupils.
113. The leadership of the department is no more than satisfactory under the present arrangements. There are two joint heads of department and they work under the leadership of the head of design, weakening the process of monitoring and leaving the department with no clear sense of direction. The curriculum, whilst well planned, is lacking in flexibility and does not fully explore the very good range of resources available to the department. Photography and textile work are very successful and are occasionally combined in very good collaborative projects. Digital cameras and computers are not yet used to full effect in lessons. Very good use is made of visiting artists under the national scheme for easing the transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7. The accommodation is spacious and light, although the lack of blackout facilities in one of the rooms makes it difficult to use the very good spot tracks that are installed. Resource management is complicated by the separation of the rooms. Overall this is a department that has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, raised its profile in the school, and is poised to improve standards in the years ahead.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The contribution being made by history and religious education
- The knowledge and understanding of the statutory curriculum by the co-ordinators in each key stage

Areas for improvement

- There is no overall plan for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to ensure comprehensive coverage of the curriculum
- There is no system for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievements in relation to published end-of-key-stage descriptions

114. Citizenship is not allocated specific timetable sessions but aspects are taught through several subjects, most notably history and religious education. It is not possible to reach a judgement upon standards, as the school had introduced the subject into the curriculum only a few weeks before the inspection. In the lessons observed, where citizenship could be identified, pupils are beginning to acquire knowledge and understanding of aspects of society. In a religious education lesson, Year 8 pupils were made aware how they can promote justice for peoples of Third World countries by supporting aid agencies and choosing to buy Fair Trade products. Year 9 pupils, while investigating the causes of the First World War, were led by the teacher into the issue of an individual's responsibility for resolving conflicts fairly. In considering issues emerging from the world as a global economy, pupils are developing skills of enquiry and communication. A Year 10 class in religious education, discussing the incursions of multi-national organisations on to land occupied by indigenous peoples, became very interested in human rights and responsibilities. Pupils are challenged to think about and especially empathise with the injustice. Pupils of all ages participate in the school council. Others take part in school and community activities, such as Young Enterprise, Youth Speaks, and various theme days.

115. Some of the teaching is good. The teachers mostly have high expectations and work from clear citizenship objectives. Citizenship is clearly identified in the schemes of work in history at Key Stage 3, in religious education at Key Stage 4, and in PSHE at both key stages. Where citizenship is an element in the lesson, questioning is well managed, and pupils are challenged to think and combine knowledge in order to form their own opinions and question the opinions of others. This contributes significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

116. An audit has been undertaken to establish the subjects that contain elements of the National Curriculum for citizenship, and the extra-curricular activities that could contribute. Citizenship is provided through and within other subjects, by citizenship events and activities, and tutorial work. An adjustment to the schemes of work in history and religious education enables most of the required syllabus to be covered. Several departments, such as geography have identified their contribution through their scheme of work, but others, such as mathematics and science have yet to do so. There is no overall plan to ensure that teaching and learning is monitored and evaluated, or to ensure that the prescribed curriculum is comprehensively undertaken. There is no procedure for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The standard of teaching throughout the department
- The breadth and relevance of the design and technology curriculum
- The provision for ICT
- The development of independent learning skills in Years 10 and 11

Areas for improvement

- Develop further computer-aided manufacturing (CAM)

- Ensure a greater challenge for higher-attaining pupils by developing more effective design, analysis and evaluative skills
- Improve the ongoing assessment and monitoring of pupil performance

117. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was above the national average. Girls performed better than boys overall. The pupils entered for design and technology did better in this subject than in most other subjects. GCSE results in 2001 fell from the previous year and reversed a previously rising trend; however, results in the 2002 examinations rose significantly.
118. The curriculum is broad and balanced and opportunities for the use of ICT, in particular designing and making using computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), are evident in Years 7 to 9. A good example of this is the Year 8 packaging project where pupils are given the opportunity to use a computer-aided cutter to produce a packaging net. In general design skills, evaluation and analysis are less well developed than making skills. This is evident in all material areas. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are always well planned and their pace is brisk. A good range of activities captures interest and involves pupils at all levels of attainment; pupils with special educational needs progress at a rate which matches that of other pupils. Work is usually matched to the needs of the pupils; however, higher-attaining pupils are not consistently extended or fully challenged. The department has identified gifted and talented pupils; however, schemes of work and lesson activities are not sufficiently varied to ensure a consistent challenge for the most able.
119. The carousel system used in Years 7 to 9 does not ensure sufficient planned progression taking into account prior learning in the units taught; this leads to a lack of challenge for higher-attaining pupils in some of the material areas. Homework is effective in Years 7 to 9, is set consistently across the department and is used to reinforce learning. The department has an established assessment policy; however, not all teachers are consistently applying it. In particular, assessment is not being used effectively to provide constructive feedback or to set targets for future improvement.
120. The standard of the pupils' work is above average in Year 11. As at Key Stage 3, practical skills are well developed. Pupils show confidence in using a range of materials and processes and use product analysis as an effective research technique. A good example of this is in food technology where pupils disassemble food products to ascertain their physical and sensory properties. One of the strengths of the department is the extent to which pupils work independently. ICT is well used and is having a beneficial effect upon standards. The quality of making, particularly in resistant materials, is very good. The higher order design skills of analysis and evaluation often lack the rigour needed to achieve high levels of attainment. Design specifications and subsequent analysis are not being used consistently as the basis for performance criteria within projects. This is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects and occasionally leads to superficial design activity. The quality of pupils' coursework is good particularly in electronic products and textiles. Standards achieved in the new GCSE in manufacturing are good. Pupils are motivated and the school makes good use of industrial links to add relevance to the course.
121. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 10 to 11 is good overall. There is some very good teaching in textiles technology, where pupils are engaged in a variety of interesting, challenging activities. The pace of learning in these lessons is brisk, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. The standard of marking and ongoing assessment is satisfactory, although evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers inconsistently apply it across the department. Where assessment is effective, realistic grades and targets for improvement are shared with pupils on a regular basis. Where it is least effective, it does not set targets or provide feedback on how to improve. The use of target-setting to improve performance is very patchy. Pupils are generally unaware of their own performance targets and do not know what they need to do to improve. There is an inconsistent approach to the monitoring of pupil performance, particularly in GCSE coursework. Where this is effective, clear targets for improvement are set and guidance given to support the pupils in raising attainment.

122. The pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They are interested in their lessons, concentrate well and work hard. Behaviour throughout the department is excellent; pupils are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety.
123. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of the pupils' literacy by concentrating on the use of technical vocabulary. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it through wall displays in classrooms. A good example of this is the sensory vocabulary used in food technology. The pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed through activities such as accurate measurement, marking out and weighing.
124. The leadership and management of design and technology are good. The monitoring of teaching by the head of department is a positive development. The departmental action plan is not linked to the school development plan and as such does not provide a strategic overview of the department's needs. In addition, the co-ordination of design and technology at Key Stage 3 does not sufficiently ensure that the many valuable learning opportunities developed in one area are reinforced in the others. The department is beginning to use self-evaluation as a tool for improvement. The department has benefited greatly from recent investment, and overall the quality of resources and accommodation is very good; however, the rooms used for the teaching of food and textiles are very cramped.
125. Overall, the department has made good progress since the last inspection. At the time of the previous inspection teaching was satisfactory overall; it is now consistently good. Pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 is now good and the standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved. The department has been active in developing strategies to improve all aspects of teaching and learning; the improved standards reflect this. The department needs to make greater use of self-evaluation in order to identify fully its strengths and weaknesses and to overcome the current inconsistencies in the application of policies and practices.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards and examination results are rising as a result of the very good leadership
- Staff are very committed and enthusiastic about the subject
- Teaching is good; teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations
- The focus on pupil assessments and feedback to pupils has started to improve standards
- Curriculum development over the last two years has been rapid; this is a consequence of module development for use with interactive whiteboards

Areas for improvement

- Greater access to computers is needed for the investigative elements of geographical work
- Greater involvement by pupils in their learning is needed in order to enhance standards especially in Years 7 to 9
- The monitoring of teaching needs to be systematic and formalised in order to share good practice
- The range of activities and tasks is, at times, not wide enough to meet the needs of all pupils especially the higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented

126. GCSE results in 2001 were close to the national average. Pupils entered for GCSE geography in 2001 performed as well as in this subject as they did in the average for all their other subjects, with boys marginally out-performing girls. The 2002 GCSE results show a substantial improvement, with no significant difference between boys and girls.

127. Attainment in lessons is close to national expectations by Year 9. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress at Key Stage 3, in relation to their below average geographical standards on entry. For example, geographical skills such as using keys, scale, co-ordinates and symbols are low on entry to Year 7. This initially inhibits the development of mapwork; for example their location of places is underdeveloped. The good progress is a consequence of a sound curriculum, which is supported well by a good range of resources including three interactive whiteboards. These are an excellent and well-used feature of lessons. They support good and consistent teaching and learning, which are further enhanced by good pupil behaviour and positive attitudes; however, in a small minority of lessons, there is an insufficient range of activities and tasks to meet the needs of the higher-attaining pupils, as observed in a Year 7 lesson on four-figure co-ordinates. Pupils begin to understand four-figure co-ordinates and map symbols, using them successfully as a result of repetition and consolidation. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils; they require good quality presentation of work and good answers to their questions as seen in Year 8 when pupils study the equatorial rainforest and begin successfully to explore conservation issues. Many pupils begin to understand the importance of the rainforest to the world's environment. Many use technical words like 'shrub layer' and 'emergent trees' correctly. Confident and enthusiastic teachers with good geographical knowledge ensure that the pupils' learning is good. Vivid demonstrations enable the pupils to develop a good understanding, as seen when learning about the water cycle in the rainforest. Year 9 pupils successfully compare the different cultures and life styles of Jakarta and their own town of Bude. The skills of observation and evaluation are successfully being developed by the teachers through challenging questions, which make the pupils link the different aspects of geography.
128. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress in Years 10 and 11. As a result, standards of work seen by the end of Year 11 are above average and continuing to rise. Very good leadership has enabled departmental initiatives to develop. Assessment, the targeting and tracking of pupils' attainment, curricular development and good teaching have resulted in improved standards. Teaching and learning are both good in Years 10 and 11, although in a very small minority of lessons a greater range of teaching methods is needed to meet the whole ability range, especially the higher-attaining pupils. The teachers' geographical knowledge and its application are good and sometimes very good. Theory and practice are successfully combined, as seen in Year 10 lessons on the spheres of influence exerted by different settlements. Hexagonal shapes were successfully used in plotting this work. The subject supports literacy through the correct use of technical words such as 'mantle', 'island arcs' and 'hot spots' when studying volcanoes. In Years 10 and 11, teachers make even greater use of interactive whiteboards, using material that they have developed within the department. These are good quality resources, which raise the quality of the work that is produced by most pupils; however, the pupils have limited access to computers in lessons. This constrains the investigative elements of the course. Many pupils have access at home or in school outside lessons to use computers for coursework, which overall is of high quality. Pupils are learning how to combine information and knowledge from a range of sources in order to make an analysis; this was well exemplified in a Year 11 lesson on quarrying. Many pupils were able to come up with the advantages and disadvantages of the location of a quarry. Some high-attaining pupils suggested solutions to some of the environmental problems of quarrying and understood that compromise might be needed to solve a problem. Co-ordinates in mapwork and analysis of population growth through graphs are used to support the development of numeracy. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by both teachers and the learning support assistant and as a result make good progress in line with their peers.
129. Both leadership and management are very good. There is a very clear sense of direction to the work of staff. Curricular planning and pupil assessment are particular strengths. Lesson planning needs to extend further the range of activities and tasks in order to meet the needs of all pupils especially the higher-attaining and the gifted and talented. Sharing of good teaching practice needs to be developed in a rigorous and systematic way. Procedures for the monitoring of pupils' work are good; recent monitoring has had a positive effect on the GCSE results and minimised the gender difference.
130. The progress made since the previous inspection has been good; the majority of issues raised have been dealt with successfully. Improvements have been seen in the development of the

curriculum through the use of the interactive whiteboards. The focus on pupil assessments and feedback to pupils has also started to improve standards. There is strong evidence that standards are continuing to rise.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management of the subject
- Innovative use of ICT to improve teaching and learning
- Effective procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress

Areas for improvement

- Closer matching of lesson tasks to pupils' different levels of attainment, to ensure that they are given sufficiently challenging work
- Opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9

131. GCSE results were above average in 2001, with both boys and girls performing slightly better than pupils of their own age on average. By comparison with the same pupils' average performance in all their other subjects, they did less well in history. Higher results were achieved in 2000, but the 2002 results were lower, affected by a long period of teacher illness.
132. By Year 9, standards are average overall and progress is good. This is the result of the focused teaching of history skills such as the use of historical sources and how to write history essays, explaining causes and consequences of events such as Hitler's rise to power in Germany. Teachers launching a Year 9 project on life in the trenches had high expectations that pupils would engage in wide-ranging research to produce facsimile diaries, letters and memorabilia from the Great War. The pupils responded well, adopting a studious approach to the rich supply of resources that they were given. Behaviour in lessons is very good and pupils are well motivated in their approach to their work. A great asset to enquiry-based learning is the department's own suite of computers, giving the pupils easy access to information on recommended sites. Teachers are enthusiastic about the potential of new technology and are using interactive whiteboards to great effect in their presentation of lessons, capturing the pupils' interest. Good marking of assignments, which includes diagnostic comments and targets for improvement are helping to raise standards, as is the routine correction of spelling and grammar. Literacy is being promoted well through the subject. Alongside the studies in depth of particular events, the pupils are also achieving a breadth of knowledge through overviews of the period that they are studying. Year 9 pupils have made their own selection of important people and events of the twentieth century and were able to justify their choices.
133. Whilst the quality of teaching is good overall, in some lessons the work is not well matched to give the right amount of challenge to pupils at different levels of attainment. Consequently, Year 8 lower-attaining pupils had difficulty preparing a report on the conspiracy theory behind the Gunpowder Plot and higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 were not given the opportunity to find out more information for themselves on the tactics employed at the Battle of Hastings. The pupils' knowledge of local history needs to be developed, along with opportunities for fieldwork and visits to historical sites.
134. By Year 11, the pupils' attainment is above average, reflecting the high ability of many pupils studying the subject at GCSE. They are achieving well and reaching standards set in previous years. Year 11 pupils are making good progress towards their target grades, helped by their teachers' close monitoring of their work through review sheets. Thorough marking sets the pupils targets for improvement, and their teachers give extra time to supporting any pupil who has difficulty or needs to catch up with work. Consequently, pupils with special needs make good progress on the course. Relations between pupils and their teachers are good, making the

learning experience an enjoyable one and the atmosphere in class conducive to study. The standard of coursework on the local history of Stratton is high, showing a good standard of literacy and successful use of historical records. Similarly, pupils keep full notes on topics, which are well presented and a valuable aid to revision. Their imaginative writing, whether reporting on medical advances in Ancient Greece or the excitement of the Californian gold rush, is well founded on historical facts. More practice could be given in answering examination questions as the course progresses. Good teaching and positive attitudes are producing a high standard of work overall.

135. Leadership and management of the subject are good, monitoring the teaching and learning well to identify areas for development. A major initiative has been the investment in new technology with the recent move to new accommodation. This has given the department a new lease of life after the setbacks suffered in the fire, when it lost all its resources. New resources are now scanned onto computers for all to share. Teamwork is strong in the department. Standards have been maintained through difficult times. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and has included development of more rigorous assessment procedures for testing pupils' progress in history skills in each year. The department is at an exciting stage in its development and has the enthusiasm and capacity to make further improvements to the quality of history education for pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in ICT courses which enable pupils in all years to develop their ICT capability
- Monitoring and assessment of pupils in the ICT courses in all years
- The use of ICT in design and technology
- The provision of computers, which exceeds the national average

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in some subjects should be developed further, in particular the use of data logging in science for measuring and responding to changes during practical work
- Variations in the amount of ICT teaching time between some groups in Years 7 to 9.

136. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in ICT by Year 9 are above average and improving. Inspection evidence and nationally accredited skills tests indicate that standards by Year 11 are consistent with national expectations and are also improving. The first results for the A/S ICT examination in 2002 were encouraging; national comparisons are not yet possible.
137. In ICT lessons and in work seen in Years 7 to 9, learning is very good, with pupils making very good progress. This is made possible by good schemes of work and very good teaching, which enables the confident teaching team to ensure that the whole range of pupils benefits. A Year 7 class quickly learned to use elements of sophisticated software to manipulate images for a presentation. In a Year 8 class spreadsheets were constructed quickly; pupils used both hands effectively on keyboards then used a range of appropriately challenging formulae. Different abilities and needs are well catered for; pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Liaison between teachers and learning support staff is very effective and the ICT technical staff also provide a significant level of support to pupils in many lessons. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good. Those pupils who take an additional language in Years 8 and 9 have significantly less time to develop their ICT skills; they do not consolidate their skills as effectively as other groups.
138. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from their timetabled ICT lessons which enable them to continue with the development of their ICT skills and knowledge in a well-structured way. Pupils achieve success in CLAIT skills qualifications. Teaching is usually good or very good and well supported by technical staff. Pupils in a Year 11 GNVQ class made very good progress in using presentational software to very good effect when promoting products that they were manufacturing. They used images taken with a digital camera as well as resources from the Internet and the school intranet.
139. Pupils in all years have a very positive attitude towards ICT. They are keen to learn and to make full use of the many opportunities that are offered for using computer rooms outside lesson times. A significant number of older pupils volunteer to help to make these sessions more productive. There is a great deal of autonomous use for homework as well as for examination coursework.
140. Very good classroom management, brisk pace and the availability of activities to stretch the more able are all contributory factors to the overall very good quality of ICT teaching in all years. Assessment is thorough and teachers use it well as an aid to planning. Some examples of excellent teaching were seen at each key stage.
141. There has been much improvement in ICT provision since the last inspection. The increase in the number of timetabled ICT lessons is made possible by the significant increase in resources with the rebuilding of the school. The number of computers is better than the national average and some departments have projection facilities with interactive whiteboards. These are used to very good effect. Several subject departments take full advantage of both the increased resources and the improving level of pupils' skills in their use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. Notable

among these is design and technology. There is still scope for most departments to make greater use of ICT. In particular, more use needs to be made of ICT equipment for measuring and responding to changes which occur in practical activities in subjects such as science. The curriculum has now been mapped in detail by the ICT co-ordinator to prepare the way for the school to plan a more structured cross-curricular approach.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The excellent language knowledge of the teachers
- The teachers' strong commitment to improving the department
- The progress pupils make in reading
- The pupils' good attitudes to language learning and their very good behaviour in lessons

Areas for improvement

- Improving GCSE standards in all languages
- Increasing the teachers' use of the foreign language in lessons to enable pupils to improve their listening and speaking skills
- Developing pupils' independence in writing
- Giving more boys access to learning a second language
- Rewriting the schemes of work to ensure that able pupils reach higher standards and make faster progress

142. French, Spanish and German are taught at the school. On entry to the school, pupils take either French or Spanish and from Year 8, pupils in the top sets take German as a second foreign language. Almost all pupils continue with one foreign language in Years 10 and 11. In 2001, GCSE results in modern languages overall were slightly below the national average. In 2002, GCSE results in German and French fell below the national average. In Spanish, GCSE results in 2002 were well below the national average; pupils entered for GCSE Spanish in 2002 were mainly of average and low ability. In recent years, GCSE results in modern languages overall have been below average, and there has been a general decline in GCSE standards. In German, the decline in GCSE standards is most distinct, in spite of the high ability of all the pupils in the German groups. In Spanish in 2001, the boys performed above the national average for boys. The pupils entered for German in 2001 did worse in this subject than in the average of their other subjects. The department is currently under temporary leadership owing to the illness of the head of department.

143. By the end of Year 9, standards are generally in line with national expectations and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. In German, pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 9 and their achievement is very good, given the short time they have for learning German. In French and Spanish, although some higher-attaining pupils reach above average standards by Year 9, many underachieve. This is because the language level of the course books does not sufficiently challenge the abler pupils in the top sets, neither do teachers always use efficiently the reduced lesson time the top sets have in these languages. Low-attaining pupils make good progress in listening and speaking in French and Spanish. This was seen in a very good Year 9 Spanish lesson about food in which low-attaining pupils listened to and repeated key expressions, answered questions, and in groups used and adapted this language confidently in a café situation. By contrast, many higher-attaining pupils in French and Spanish make insufficient progress in listening and speaking because the teachers do not consistently use their own fluency as a model for pupils to understand and copy. In German, speaking is currently well taught and pupils make good progress. For example, in a Year 9 German lesson about school life, the pupils expressed their subject preferences confidently in German because of the teacher's lively questioning and his genuine interest in the pupils' responses. Progress in writing in French and Spanish is good in Year 7, and satisfactory in the lower sets in Years 8 and 9, where pupils can write short

sentences accurately under guidance. Although teachers support pupils well with frequent and constructive marking in all three languages, most higher-attaining pupils could do much better in writing. Pupils in the top sets have a sound topic-based vocabulary and can use the present and immediate future in short sentences, but sample exercise books showed that pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their language independently and creatively in extended writing tasks. There are also weaknesses in the writing of pupils in the middle sets in French. Many more girls than boys are currently in the top sets and therefore fewer boys take German as a second language in Year 8.

144. By Year 11, standards in modern languages are below average overall and achievement for most pupils is unsatisfactory. In all three languages the pace of learning is not fast enough, especially in Year 10, and teachers' expectations of the able pupils are not high enough. In the wide ability French and Spanish groups there is insufficient extension work for the abler pupils and standards fall in German because the teachers do not continue the strong pace evident in Years 8 and 9. In a very well-structured Year 11 French lesson for mainly able and middle-attaining pupils about shopping, the pupils practised speaking, listening, reading and writing skills but the ablest in the group were restricted to the simple language of the majority in the paired speaking activities. In other lessons seen in Years 10 and 11, most pupils worked with guidance materials in situations where many could recall and rephrase the language for themselves. As in Years 7 to 9, the lack of consistent use of the language by teachers leads to pupils making inadequate progress in listening and speaking. In listening by the end of Year 10, higher-attaining pupils in all languages can follow the gist of recorded familiar language, and middle and lower-attaining pupils can identify single items with the help of support sheets, but all require much more contact with natural spoken language. In writing, standards are below average overall in modern languages. Higher-attaining pupils can express themselves using the present, past and future tenses in coursework when supported with word lists and key phrases, for example to describe their work experience or an ideal school; however, scrutiny of a sample of exercise books showed that many pupils do not routinely develop written language beyond simple expressions and all, including the ablest pupils, continue to make basic errors in grammar and spelling. The pupils' reading is confident in Year 10; they can understand a range of texts in French and Spanish, within which most can identify main points and specific detail.
145. Pupils have good attitudes to learning languages; for example, in a Year 7 mixed-ability Spanish lesson, the pupils, especially the boys, proudly showed off their ability to spell their names in Spanish to the rest of the class. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Over half of the lessons seen were satisfactory; the remainder were good or, in two cases, very good. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen. The teachers have excellent subject knowledge, being fluent or bilingual speakers of one or more foreign languages. The language assistant supports the department well.
146. The department uses ICT well, for example in enabling pupils to prepare coursework in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the very good shared planning of the teachers and the learning support assistants. The department supports pupils' literacy well by emphasising correct spelling and how language works. Pupils practise basic arithmetic, for example when buying travel tickets. Identifying gifted and talented linguists is inconsistent across the department. Teachers test pupils regularly and set targets for improvement; however they do not consequently take action to tackle low standards.
147. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory and there has been insufficient progress since the last inspection. The temporary joint leadership organises the day-to-day running of the department well; the teachers work hard and have a strong team commitment to improving the department. The areas for development are: improving the GCSE results; redrafting the schemes of work to bring about higher standards and faster progress for able pupils in all years; improving overall teaching quality; ensuring that more boys take a second language. Improvement since the previous report is unsatisfactory especially regarding GCSE standards.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning
- Standards in performance and improvisation are high
- Instrumental teaching is of very high quality

Areas for improvement.

- Pupils are not currently involved in the assessment process and data is not used to plan for the development of the subject
- Curriculum changes this year mean that pupils in Year 7 to 9 do not receive the recommended time for music
- Computers are needed for pupils to use for their compositions

148. In the GCSE examination in 2001 all eight pupils achieved a grade, and seven of the eight pupils achieved a grade between A* and C. In 2002 four of the five pupils entered achieved a grade between A* and C, and all five achieved a grade between A* and G. The number of pupils taking examinations is too small to make reliable comparisons with national averages.

149. Standards at Key Stage 3 are above average. Pupils perform music fluently in class and in groups, with a good sense of rhythm, and correct notation on a variety of instruments. The standard of improvisation is high. Compositions are confident and creative. The pupils listen carefully when playing together, achieving a good ensemble. In Year 11 there is a wide range of standards but they are above average overall. Standards of performance are high, and again the pupils' ability to improvise is well advanced. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because the teaching is very good. They learn very well in lessons and are very interested in the highly practical nature of the work that they are given to do.

150. Teaching and learning overall are very good. Pupils are acquiring good knowledge of a wide range of music and the skills to play and improvise with confidence and fluency. The teachers are practising musicians and as such are good role models. They are able to demonstrate how to play the classroom instruments. This is particularly effective and pupils learn quickly by it, listening and watching. The teachers organise and plan their lessons very well so that pupils can build on what they know and can do. They help individuals during rehearsals so that pupils of all abilities are challenged appropriately to extend their skills. This is particularly useful for lower-attaining pupils where simple parts are provided using note names. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class; for example, large print worksheets are made available to those with visual impairment and learning assistants support pupils well in beating time and helping them to concentrate. For the higher-attaining pupils there are parts written in staff notation with increasingly difficult parts to learn. Improvisation ideas are also introduced regularly to provide further challenge for all pupils. The quality of improvisation as a result is confident and often exciting at all levels in the school. The standard and quality of improvisation in the school during the jazz workshop held during inspection weak was impressive.

151. Teachers keep the momentum of the lesson going by setting a good pace, and pupils respond by working hard. Pupils are interested in music and enjoy the practical work particularly. The majority of pupils behave very well in lessons and concentrate well. When concentration is not so good there are usually too many pupils in the class. As many as 35 Year 9 pupils in a lesson creates problems of space and resources, and becomes especially difficult when instrumental lessons are taking place at the same time. Also, for the first time this year, pupils in Year 7 only have a lesson once a fortnight. This is an unsatisfactory situation which means pupils are not receiving the nationally recommended curriculum time for music between Years 7 and 9. This will have an impact on the development of performing and composing skills.

152. At present there is little opportunity for pupils to think about the quality of their work in class. National Curriculum levels of attainment and examination criteria for assessment are not shared with the pupils, and as yet they do little to assess themselves. Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well though, and this enables them to challenge individuals, setting small targets for improvement. This has a positive impact on progress. The department is not using accumulated information about pupils' progress and standards to help plan for the future.
153. Instrumental lessons are very good and these feed into promising extra-curricular bands and groups. A new wind band showed the caring nature of the pupils in the school when able players came to help and support the first rehearsal. Concerts are put on to raise money for charity. The leadership of the department is good. Progress since the last inspection has been good, against trying odds. Standards in Years 7 and 9 have risen because teaching and learning have improved. Standards in GCSE have remained high in spite of the pupils having to study for this outside time-tabled hours. Option choices have worked against those wishing to take the subject at this level. The department still needs computers for pupils to use for their composition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons with a range of activities that allow all groups of pupils to learn well
- GCSE examination results are very good
- Leadership has a strong commitment to improvement and success
- The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning
- The very good quality of indoor and outdoor sports facilities enhances pupils' learning

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- Replacement of the gymnasium floor to allow apparatus work to be taught
- The provision of opportunities in more lessons for pupils to plan and evaluate work

154. In the 2001 sports studies GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well above the national average. Results in the 2002 examination are similar to those achieved in 2001. Pupils achieve better results in physical education than in their other examination subjects. High-attaining pupils, including the talented, achieve well in a range of sports at area, county and sometimes national levels. Students achieve particularly well in netball.
155. Standards in lessons and the work of Year 9 pupils matched national expectations and showed good improvement from work in Year 7; most pupils are achieving well. They understand basic fitness principles, make effective use of individual and team skills in games and have a sound knowledge of rules. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good, which enables pupils to make considerable gains in their understanding of technique, tactics, rules and fitness. This was very evident in a Year 9 badminton lesson where pupils of different attainment made good progress because the teacher planned work that was appropriate for all levels. Lower-attaining pupils progressed well because the teacher modified equipment, simplified tasks and used demonstrations. The standards of a small minority are well below average. Their poor levels of skill, hand-eye co-ordination and spatial awareness restrict progress. Higher-attainers use well-refined skills and tactics consistently to out-manoeuvre opponents; their learning is accelerated by extension tasks in lessons and through extra-curricular activities. Learning and the achievement of pupils were not as good in a few lessons, because teaching was more prescriptive and pupils were given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. Pupils in all years have good opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills. They are given opportunities to measure and record performance and to use scoring systems. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These methods improve the technical vocabulary, speaking

skills and ability to listen of pupils across the attainment levels. The subject provides few opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills.

156. Standards in lessons and the work of Year 11 pupils matched national expectations. A significant minority of Year 11 pupils are participating in GCSE sports studies; they are on target to achieve above the national average. Pupils achieve well overall because of good specialist teaching, the quality of relationships in lessons and the teachers' good management of their classes. This was very evident in a Year 11 GCSE health-related fitness-based lesson, where the teacher provided opportunities for pupils to plan and undertake their own exercise programmes, evaluate performance and suggest improvements. Higher-attaining pupils make good use of their understanding of theoretical principles to analyse and improve practical performance. Most pupils can apply the principles of attack and defence in games; they show sound levels of fitness and, when given the opportunity, evaluate performance well. A small minority lacks body co-ordination in trampolining and the necessary levels of tactical and spatial awareness to be effective in match situations. There are few opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning through ICT. No significant differences were observed in the standards achieved by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are talented make good progress.
157. Leadership and management are good. The joint subject leaders have a strong commitment to improvement and success and are ably supported by an experienced and enthusiastic team of specialists. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are good and are used well to monitor the pupils' progress and to set targets. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the provision of high quality indoor and outdoor facilities. The department liaises well with the library; pupils have good access to up-to-date reference material. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
158. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The examination in GCSE sports studies has been successfully introduced and results are well above the national average. The good standards of teaching seen at the last inspection have been maintained. Assessment is now a strong feature. All pupils now have equal access to the curriculum. The overall provision for gymnastics in terms of lesson content and staffing has improved; however, the replacement gymnasium floor is unsuitable for apparatus work. In order to improve further, the department needs to increase the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, provide more opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate work and improve the flooring in the gymnasium.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching that enables pupils to understand the practical ways in which religious beliefs affect how a person lives
- Above average numbers of pupils completing examination courses in religious studies and achieving above average standards
- Very good leadership and management of the subject

Areas for improvement

- Moderation of assessments needed in Years 7 to 9, against the criteria set out in the attainment targets for religious education
- The use of homework in Year 9 to promote extended writing in the subject

159. The school has consistently achieved average results in the GCSE short course examination in religious studies over the past three years, with an average of 168 entries a year. A higher proportion of Year 11 pupils are entered for GCSE than is found in the majority of schools. As virtually all of the year group has been entered for the examination, whereas in many schools it is

an option, by comparison standards are above average. Only a small number of pupils upgrade to the full GCSE but they nearly all achieve grades A*-C.

160. The attainment of pupils by Year 9 is average compared with national standards and their achievement is good. Pupils have a reasonable knowledge of basic beliefs in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. They are able to apply the teachings of these faiths to environmental and world development issues. Consistently good teaching, making full use of video materials and practical activities, is helping the pupils to understand how beliefs affect the way people live their lives. For example, in Year 9 lessons a video report of an aid project in Ghana enabled the pupils to question the fairness of trade for cocoa producers in the developing world and see the difference that aid agencies can make. Pupils were enthusiastic about the practical activity which followed, preparing shoeboxes of Christmas gifts. The department has links with an aid project in Burkina Faso and organises charitable fund-raising that is effectively developing the pupils' sense of global responsibility.
161. Pupils with special educational needs learn well, helped by the carefully structured workbooks on rites of passage that are used in Year 9. Higher-attaining pupils are limited in their responses to questions by the space allotted to answers in these books. Literacy is well promoted through regular discussion but not to the same extent in writing. Girls are producing more thoughtful work than boys on ultimate questions raised by religious teachings about suffering and death. In general, homework is not being used enough in Year 9 to allow pupils to develop their ideas in writing in more detail and demonstrate higher levels of understanding. There are good opportunities for small projects in Years 7 and 8 but independent enquiry is not developed well in Year 9. Limited use is made of ICT to support learning in lessons.
162. Standards are above average by Year 11, the result of good progress in lessons and sustained achievement over the two years. The course is now well established and pupils are positive in their attitudes towards the subject. This is evident in the thorough note-making on topics and the good standard of coursework on Christian and Muslim teachings about wealth and poverty, which is carefully drafted and much of it word-processed. The quality of teaching is good, engaging pupils in their learning through discussion and simulations, such as acting as consultants applying Christian teachings on stewardship to a conservation project. Year 11 pupils studying marriage and family life have a good understanding of Christian and Muslim teachings on relationships and of the causes of marital breakdown. Teachers maintain the right balance between secular and religious views in discussion of moral issues, making the topics relevant to the pupils' own experience of life and allowing them to think through their own values.
163. In their writing, higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 show critical thinking when weighing up arguments about the origins of life and the existence of God. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from the smaller numbers in Year 10 classes and the variety of activities in most lessons, which allow them to express their views orally. In general, girls are producing more detailed written work. Most pupils are able to support their views in writing but some are not explaining religious teaching fully, nor substantiating their own ideas adequately. They need regular written practice of discussion questions and more diagnostic feedback on how to improve. The pupils' personal development benefits greatly from the insights afforded by the two religions studied and the emphasis on moral and social issues in the course.
164. Standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection when GCSE results were below average and fewer pupils took an examination in the subject because of the limited lesson time available. Religious education has developed from part of a life skills programme in the upper school to become an established core subject in its own right. Pupils' attitudes towards it have subsequently improved. Teaching is now uniformly good and better, involving pupils more actively in learning through discussion. Strong leadership and management of the subject, supported by a committed team of humanities teachers, have achieved much. Monitoring of the work of the department is satisfactory, and a high level of professional support has helped to ensure consistent standards of teaching. Assessment procedures similar to those in National Curriculum subjects have been introduced but require careful moderation and more rigorous application of the criteria for determining different levels of attainment if standards are to rise higher by Year 9.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, with national comparisons for 2001.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average points score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics A Level	10	60	87	20	43	3.4	5.8
Chemistry A Level	11	73	90	0	43	2.4	5.9
Biology A Level	9	67	88	22	34	3.8	5.3
Physics A Level	8	75	88	0	40	2.8	5.7
Design and technology A Level	8	88	91	25	30	5.0	5.4
Economics and business A Level	11	100	92	36	32	6.7	5.5
Leisure and recreation (double) AVCE	9	94	n/a	56	n/a	7.8	n/a
Leisure and recreation (single) AVCE	3	100	n/a	0	n/a	5.3	n/a
Art A Level	8	100	94	38	46	6.3	6.6
Music A Level	1	100	93	0	35	2.0	5.7
Drama and theatre studies A Level	5	100	99	20	38	6.0	6.6
Geography A Level	12	100	92	17	38	4.3	5.7
History A Level	7	86	88	0	35	3.7	5.5
Sociology A Level	10	100	86	20	35	5.2	5.3
Psychology A Level	3	100	87	67	34	8.0	5.3
English language A Level	27	100	92	22	30	5.4	5.3
English literature A Level	18	94	95	17	37	4.7	5.9
French A Level	1	100	89	0	38	2.0	5.6
German A Level	2	100	91	0	40	4.0	5.8

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	4	75.0	n/a	25.0	n/a	25.0	n/a
Health and social care	7	57.1	n/a	14.3	n/a	0	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

165. Mathematics was inspected in detail in Years 12 and 13. In science, the focus was on biology and physics but chemistry was also sampled. In chemistry only four students took the examination in 2001 with three achieving either a grade A or B. Results for 2002 dropped significantly. Attainment was below average in the lessons observed, although teaching enabled the students to make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The teachers have a good knowledge of their subject
- The attitudes of the students are good, with a willingness to try hard

Areas for improvement

- Full coverage of all AS modules in Year 12, to raise standards
- Extend teaching and learning methods to encourage research and initiative and help the personal development of students
- Increase the numbers embarking on sixth-form mathematics, especially girls, and improve the retention rate from Year 12 to 13

166. The A Level results in 2001 were in line with national averages overall. The proportion of A and B grades was above the national average but the percentage of passes was below the national average. Of the 17 students who entered, the six female students did particularly well. Numbers taking A Level have been about the same over several years until 2001, with results usually in line with, or just above, national averages. In 2002 numbers dropped to eight and, although passes were similar, the proportion of top grades fell.

167. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are in line with national expectations overall. The two students taking further mathematics in Year 12, who obtained A* and A at GCSE, are working at a level that is well above average. They worked very closely with the teacher on route inspection problems from the decision mathematics module, well advanced at such an early stage in the course. A larger group of Year 12 students, also at an early stage in the pure mathematics course, showed good concentration in tackling factorising of polynomials. The teacher covered the basics of factorising simple expressions at first, making sure that all students were following the argument while emphasising that factorising could be fun. All students were involved and many asked sensible questions, including the boy recently arrived from abroad who was more confident in the use of surd form than others. All of the class left the lesson having advanced their knowledge and understanding of quadratics. Several students, looking at the Remainder Theorem for the first time, had difficulty with working out because of minor errors, incorrectly transferring co-efficients or powers between lines; however, all managed to understand the concept and method by the end of the lesson, with the teacher's patient persistence. Other Year 13 students were going through homework problems finding the maximum volume of a cone given the sloping side and angle. This involved revision of differentiation of trigonometrical functions. The teacher flexibly changed his plan to move on to the next stage of parametric equations, taking the group to the adjacent computer room to look at sketching the curve of parametric equations using appropriate graph-drawing software.

168. The benefit of having two option groups in both Years 12 and 13 is the variety of subjects which can be combined with mathematics, but numbers need to increase to be viable, particularly to offer further mathematics as well. There is also a group of non-A Level students taking numeracy in Year 12 for one lesson a week, taught very well but with low standards. The relationships between teachers and students are very good, and the students enjoy the more adult way of working;

however, teaching methods are not varied. A broader range of learning methods involving research and initiative, discussion and presentations would improve the personal development of the students, adding breadth and a wider dimension.

169. Retention rates from Year 12 into Year 13 have been affected by the large numbers of students who were ungraded in the Pure 2 module last summer. The head of department and his teachers need to review the planning and teaching of AS modules for the students to achieve greater success. More also needs to be done to improve the quality of marking and the assessment of the students' work so that teachers can plan work appropriate to the needs of the students. The team of well-qualified teachers able to teach to A Level is a strength. Accommodation is very good for sixth-form lessons, although students do not have sufficient personal study areas. New textbooks have been provided, and appropriate software purchased. Leadership is satisfactory overall with a comprehensive handbook and detailed schemes of work. Many changes to the structure of sixth-form mathematics have occurred since the previous inspection, and improvement overall is satisfactory.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm with the students
- Teachers provide good expositions, enlivened by their own personal experiences of biology
- Very good resources and technical support ensure that practical activities enrich the students' experiences

Areas for improvement

- Students have insufficient opportunities to develop their capacity for independent work
- Marking and feedback to students need to be more focused on what students need to do to improve
- Assessment is not used sufficiently to inform curricular planning or match work to the needs of students

170. The 2001 GCE A level results for biology were in line with the national average. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B was also in line with national figures. Results were similar to those of previous years, although students did less well in biology in 2001 compared to their other subjects. In 2002 the results dropped, with particularly weak results for the male students.

171. The standards of work of the current students are broadly average. Year 13 students show a sound knowledge and understanding across the syllabus. For example, most students are able to discuss the endocrine system and the function of different hormones. Year 12 students who have only just started their sixth form studies are able to distinguish between different organelles within individual cells.

172. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and provide accurate and stimulating expositions which engage students and sustain their interest. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that the full curriculum is covered and provide a suitable range of activities including practical tasks and the use of videos to support students in their learning. As a result, students make satisfactory progress over time. In some instances lessons lack pace and there are insufficient demands on the students to make active contributions and thus deepen their understanding of the subject. Students remain passive and do not always readily volunteer responses. The use of ICT to support learning is limited.

173. Students are required to write essays at the end of a topic which enables teachers to assess levels of knowledge and understanding. Staff often give grades in line with A Level expectations which helps students to know how they are doing. This practice needs to be applied more consistently and would benefit from more diagnostic comments to enable the students to improve.

The information should also be used more systematically in planning to ensure that teachers pitch work at the correct level. Teachers provide individual support to those students who require additional help but the practice of target-setting and monitoring progress towards those targets is insufficiently developed.

174. The department is led by an experienced member of staff who ensures the smooth running of the A Level course. The small team works closely together and the teachers teach to their particular strengths and interests. The technician provides very good support and the department is well resourced. More needs to be done to evaluate the impact of teaching on learning so that there is a systematic approach to continued improvement within the department. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Physics

Overall the quality of provision in physics is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The good subject knowledge of the teachers enables them to give clear explanations
- Support for students in lessons helps them to overcome individual difficulties

Areas for improvement

- Standards are too low
- The range of teaching and learning styles is too limited to support the students' progress over time
- The use monitoring and evaluation to inform and develop teaching is poor

175. Recent results in A Level physics have been below the national average and in 2001 were well below average with only two of the eight students gaining a higher grade B. Three students were unclassified. The performance of the students in physics was well below that in their other subjects. The 2002 results were similar to those of 2001 with no student gaining a higher grade.

176. Standards in lessons are below average, although some students are achieving well. Year 13 students are able to describe quite sophisticated physical phenomena but their understanding of some of the underlying principles is limited. For example, one student working on a specific heat capacity experiment showed confusion about the distinction between current and voltage. Another student was unable to recognise a helium nucleus as an alpha particle. Year 12 students are beginning to work with equations of motion with increasing levels of confidence, although some are hampered by limited mathematical skills.

177. Teaching in individual lessons is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables them to provide clear explanations of particular aspects of physics such as the process of radioactive decay or the relationship between gravitational force and acceleration. Lessons are planned carefully and supported by practical activities where appropriate. As a result students concentrate well and work together collaboratively when solving problems or carrying out practical work. There are examples of teachers working very closely with individual students to help them when they are in difficulty, most often when undertaking mathematical calculations, enabling them to make progress in their learning. In some instances pace is modest and students do not cover as much work as they could. Too few opportunities are provided for students to take responsibility for their own learning.

178. The students are set exercises and past papers to test understanding. Where mathematical problems have not been understood, there is often extended feedback to show where the errors occurred and how to tackle the problem successfully. Marking is less helpful when it comes to misconceptions in key physics principles. Some work has not been marked. There is little evidence of students being given the equivalent of A Level grades so that they can judge how well they are doing. Whilst individual support is given to students, evidence from marking and informal

assessment is not being used to plan a sufficiently varied teaching programme that will help all students to make consistent and steady progress in their learning.

179. The small department is led by an experienced teacher who manages and co-ordinates the A Level programme efficiently. Resources and technical support are very good; however, there is a reluctance to analyse and reflect on past and present performance levels and to use the data systematically to develop teaching, building on good practice, so that the rate of progress and standards overall are improved. The narrow perspective adopted within the department has resulted in unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

180. No subjects were inspected in detail in this curriculum area, but design and technology was sampled. The quality of teaching in design and technology, and the learning that it promotes in Years 12 and 13 is good. Students are sufficiently challenged and the work shows progression from Year 11. Students work with confidence and make good use of ICT. Lessons are well planned and the individual nature of much of the teaching means that individuals can be rigorously extended and challenged.

BUSINESS

181. Economics was the main focus for the inspection, but some lessons of business studies were also sampled. Results in business studies are consistently above average. This is as a result of good teaching, high expectations and very good relationships between the teacher and students.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Attainment is good with results consistently above the national average
- Teaching is good with high expectations of students
- Teacher-student relationships are very good and produce a friendly but purposeful working environment in lessons
- The students' attitudes to the subject are very positive; they are well motivated and able to research topics to good effect

Areas for improvement

- Lesson outcomes are not explicit enough to enable student progress to be evaluated
- Lessons do not always include activities which fully stretch the more able students

182. Attainment is good with results consistently above the national average. Of the 11 students who were entered for the 2001 examination all achieved at least a pass and 36%, the national average, achieved A or B grades. Students also do significantly better in this subject compared with their other A Levels. Current students are also attaining very well. Well-motivated students are able to apply economic and business principles to current topics and use economic terms accurately and with confidence. Several students' economic understanding was outstanding, and they were able to use terms such as 'opportunity cost' and 'efficiency' when analysing economic policy. A minority of students are not yet at the stage of being able to understand the important economic cause and effect principles associated with economic and business decision-making, such as the trade-off effects of budgetary measures. Students show a good level of key skills competence in their work. They are able to communicate effectively in discussions, use appropriate numerical concepts in their written work and are confident in the use of ICT for research; however, there are not enough opportunities for students, particularly the more able, to develop their presentation skills.

183. Teaching in the subject overall is good. The teacher is knowledgeable and prepares interesting and stimulating lessons which encourage self-learning and research by students, although outcomes are not always explicit enough to assist with evaluating the effectiveness of the lesson. In a good lesson on budgetary measures, the teacher gave a very clear explanation of the lesson activity and stimulated the class with effective questioning on the topic. Teacher-student relationships are very good. Lessons are conducted in a friendly but purposeful manner with students encouraged to offer their own opinions and use their prior economic and business knowledge to provide answers to the questions posed. In a good Year 13 lesson students were able to explain the effects of changes to world commodity prices on the various stakeholders involved in the production and consumption of coffee. Students work collaboratively and are respectful of each other's contributions.
184. The head of department is committed to raising the status and standards of the subject further and is discussing ways to widen the choice of business courses to include an advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE). Assessment of students is good and systems are in place to ensure that they are aware of what they are currently achieving and what they are expected to achieve. Accommodation and learning resources are very good, including good access to and use of computers. The subject was not covered by the last inspection report.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

185. All students have timetabled opportunities to improve their ICT capability. The subject was not inspected in detail but lessons were sampled. In the AS ICT course good teaching enables the students to make good progress. In one lesson, they were creating a database for a specific client in which they were able to demonstrate a series of complex queries to meet the client's needs. Attainment overall was consistent with national expectations. In addition to the AS course there are ICT lessons for other pupils leading to a skills qualification. Those taking GNVQ are particularly well supported in the development of ICT skills relevant to their course. In one ICT skills lesson, the results of a questionnaire were analysed well and several pieces of software were effectively combined to produce informative reports.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Strengths

- All teaching is by specialist teachers with extensive subject knowledge and expertise
- The co-ordinator has a strong commitment to improvement and success
- Opportunities for students to develop their key skills
- Quality of learning resources, including facilities for practical work

Areas for improvement

- Increase the numbers of girls taking sixth form courses
- Provide opportunities for all students to participate in curricular physical education
- Increase students' use of ICT to enhance their learning

186. The A Level physical education course was introduced last year and twelve students undertook the 2002 AS examination. There is no official data available at present to compare their performances with national averages.

187. Standards in lessons and the work of the current Year 13 students, all boys, are good and above those expected nationally. Their work shows good improvement from standards in Year 12; all students are achieving well. They use their knowledge of the physiological and psychological factors affecting performance to plan, evaluate and improve fitness programmes. Most students are able to write at length on a variety of topics, such as the historical and cultural basis of sport and global trends in international sport. The extended writing skills of a small minority are less well developed. Students learn well as the result of good teaching. Enthusiasm for the subject and wide subject knowledge enable staff to interest and motivate the students. Teachers are aware of the different ways in which students learn, and work hard to use methods and resources that meet their needs. In an A2 lesson, featuring practical work on the energy systems, the teacher provided equipment for students to devise models of chemical reaction chains and opportunities to analyse and compare the relevance of the three systems to specific sports. In an outdoor lesson, the availability of video facilities enhanced the students' work on skills analysis and performance improvement. All students made good gains in their knowledge of these aspects. Students are able to ask quite perceptive questions of their teachers using appropriate technical language. Speaking and listening skills are good. The co-ordinator contributes to the students' learning by guiding them towards a wealth of background information and resources, including the well-stocked library and subject base. A few students do not make sufficient use of ICT to research written assignments. The teachers' expectations of the students are high, and they respond very well. Their work is marked consistently, and good diagnostic comments ensure that students know how to improve. Outside speakers are occasionally used to provide specialist input; these include representatives from Sport England and a paraplegic Olympian.
188. Students in Year 12 have made good progress since they started the AS course in September, and the standards of most students are in line with national expectations. They have a good rapport with their teachers and good relationships when working in groups. In a lesson involving the coaching of small groups of Year 10 GCSE students, they showed good planning skills, evaluated performance well and suggested appropriate improvements. Year 12 students have a sound grasp of the theoretical work covered to date, particularly in the historical and social aspects. Most are able to apply their prior understanding of fitness principles to the practical analysis of performance. A significant minority of the students are finding the change to sixth form study difficult and do not take sufficient responsibility for personal learning. The co-ordinator gives good support and guidance by easing them into research and further reading. Some students use the Internet to research information, but ICT generally is under-used. They make appropriate use of technical vocabulary and written work is satisfactorily presented. Students in both year groups show good numeracy skills; these are very evident when they handle fitness testing data.
189. The leadership and management of sixth form physical education are good. The examination courses are now well-established and good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are good and used well to monitor the students' progress and to set targets. The students' learning is enhanced by access to very good resources. The students' personal performances in their selected sports are enhanced by extra-curricular activities and some perform well at area, county and sometimes national levels. A number of students help in the coaching of younger members of the school.
190. In order to improve further the department needs to increase the numbers of girls following A Level courses, provide all students with an opportunity to have timetabled physical education and increase the students' use of ICT to enhance their learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

191. Art and theatre studies were inspected in detail, and music was also sampled. Music is taught to A/S and A Level. Small numbers of students in most years take the course and the examination. Teaching and learning are very good and all students are successful in achieving a grade at A Level. Students learn well independently and are interested to research new areas of study and to

listen as widely as possible. They are building very good knowledge of compositional techniques and compositions are promising. They are well motivated and enjoy the subject.

Art

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

Strengths

- The students' interest and enthusiasm for the subject
- The separate accommodation for students
- The resources available to the department
- Tutorial arrangements for the students

Areas for improvement

- Standards attained in A Level examinations
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching
- Single periods of art impede the development of personal studies
- Leadership of the department

192. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B in A Level examinations in 2001 was below the national average. This was a decline from the previous year. Provisional results for the current year indicate a rise, although the very small numbers taking the examination result in larger fluctuations than would otherwise be expected. The numbers taking AS Levels over the past two years have been too small to make any fair comparison with national averages. Examination results have been at the lower end when compared with other subjects taken by students at the school.

193. In work seen during the inspection standards of achievement in Year 13 are below national expectations, although the students make good progress in their lessons. This results from the good teaching seen during the inspection and the boost that has been given to the department in moving to the very good accommodation following the fire. The students also show interest in and commitment to their work and the majority are keen to carry their studies forward to art college or university. The department has had to use temporary accommodation whilst building work was under way. Both students and staff speak of the difficulties they have experienced during that period. The research that students undertake in both Years 12 and 13 is a strength of their work. Using reference books, the Internet and occasional visits to art galleries, they build up a very good knowledge of the artist or the topic on which they are focusing. They make extensive notes on their work, which further improves their literacy skills. Year 12 students benefit from a collaborative project on seaside patterns, textures and fashions, that takes in photography, textiles and painting and drawing, taught by the two senior subject teachers. In Year 13, the students experiment with different media to explore their personal studies, although some creative focus is lost as students return to basic observational drawing to build up the supporting studies for their examination portfolios. Some make use of digital resources, although these have not yet been introduced to full effect in the department. Students who are personally motivated are able to pursue studies outside school hours and are committed to the highest standard of attainment. Other students take advantage of the open nature of the department and put in free study time to advance their work. This goes some way towards offsetting the unsatisfactory allocation of single periods to art.

194. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use it particularly well in the tutorial time that they are able to give to students. Good records are kept of the progress of students, and lessons are generally managed well, although opportunities to demonstrate practical skills to the class are not always taken and students' critical skills are not effectively developed in the relatively short time available in lessons.

195. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. The two permanent staff are both heads of art and although they work well together they find it difficult to set a clear direction for development. This, along with the separateness of the art rooms, leads to management weaknesses, in particular when it comes to monitoring the work of the department. The very good ceramics resources are not currently in use and computer and digital resources have yet to be used to full effect. The lack of an assigned technician creates difficulties when ceramics and photography are being considered for the curriculum, especially given the insufficient lesson time to set up and clear away the resources.
196. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning have improved and the rate of progress in lessons has quickened. The department profile is rising with the good displays of work around the school. These improvements have yet to feed through to improved standards in examination results.

Theatre Studies

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

Strengths

- Above average examination results for the higher grades
- Well-motivated students
- Very good accommodation and resources

Areas for improvement

- Develop theatre studies with other arts subjects

197. The most recent examination results were above the national average for students gaining the higher grades, a consistent pattern over the past three years.
198. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory with a number of good features, including subject knowledge and positive rapport with students. In a Year 12 lesson, however, where the early pace was slow and where there was insufficient challenge, opportunities were missed to enable students to extend their knowledge and understanding of theatre conventions. By contrast, in a Year 13 lesson group collaboration featured strongly, and students achieved very good quality dramatic outcomes in moving away from naturalistic interpretations by using features of Brechtian theatre. They showed that they had learned to use a range of drama techniques and to exercise considerable independence in developing their work.
199. Further evidence of this good quality work is seen in the written assignments, where students describe and evaluate their practical work. This is especially so where some of the assignments present a considerable intellectual challenge for students. They collaborate most effectively with partners to produce high-quality accounts of their practical work. One Year 13 group, for example, produced a thoroughly researched piece of theatre dealing with sensitive issues of mental illness. They showed that they had learnt both to use a range of drama techniques and also to draw on their frequent experiences of live theatre. Teachers' marking of these student assignments is supportive and diagnostic.
200. The subject is well co-ordinated and efficiently managed by a member of the English department who holds specific responsibility for GCSE and sixth form courses. Students enjoy the intellectual and practical demands of the subject and make effective use of the very good studio facilities and resources available to them.
201. Since the last inspection theatre studies has strengthened its position and status in the sixth form curriculum. There is now scope to develop the subject in partnership with other aspects of the arts curriculum.

HUMANITIES

202. Geography was inspected in detail and lessons in history were sampled. In history, only four candidates were entered for the A Level examination in 2001. All passed with average grades. Results in 2000 were better, all twelve candidates passing and achieving above average grades overall. In 2002 the standard fell to below average, as a consequence of unexpectedly low results on the individual coursework assignments. In the two lessons observed, teaching was good overall. Attainment in the current Year 13 is up to standard. In the lesson observed, students were making satisfactory progress researching their assignments, and the supervision and monitoring of their work was thorough. In Year 12 good use was made of video and written sources when studying the Versailles Peace Treaty; however, the students could have made better use of the material in the time available to produce their own speeches explaining the aims of the peacemakers.
203. Provision for religious education in the sixth form is insufficient to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Except for limited inclusion of religious topics in general studies, there has been little progress towards providing a proper entitlement to spiritual and moral education in the sixth form.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and high expectations of their students
- Students have good positive attitudes to the subject and teacher/student relationships are good; both enhance learning
- Teachers show great enthusiasm for geography, which is transmitted to the students
- Staff produce high quality materials for use with the interactive boards; this is a great asset to geography teaching
- The department work well as a team; leadership of the department is very good

Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to raise the levels of attainment
- Students' work needs to be even more closely monitored to ensure that sufficient demands are made to improve their examination results
- Further development of fieldwork is needed to reinforce work in the classroom
- Greater access to computers by the students is needed to reinforce the investigative elements of geographical work
- The monitoring of teaching takes place within the department; however, regular, consistent observation of teaching is needed to share good practice

204. Standards were marginally below average at A Level in 2001. Students did worse in this subject than in the average of their other subjects. There were no significant gender differences in performance. Results showed a slight improvement in 2002. Although all students passed, none did so with the higher grades. The small number of students taking geography makes any statistical comparison of gender invalid.
205. The students are achieving well and making good progress now. Standards are beginning to improve. In work seen during the inspection standards in both Years 12 and 13 were above average. Recent curriculum development and the high expectations of the teachers are starting to impact upon the students' work. The students respond well to the relationships established by their teachers and behave in a mature and committed way. This fosters good learning. Most join in discussions with enthusiasm and get opportunities to discuss topics. Teachers have very good and, at times, excellent geographical knowledge; they use it to extend the students' knowledge and understanding. In a Year 13 lesson, excellent knowledge of coastal erosion used with video

clip and Internet materials produced excellence in learning. In this example, the immense power of the sea was well demonstrated in cliff erosion. Teachers prepare their work thoroughly and have high expectations of the students, as seen in a Year 12 lesson where students confidently looked at a range of world population graphs and data. They were guided well and challenged by the teacher to analyse the data and to form hypotheses. In all sixth form lessons seen there was good use of technical words. The teachers have the ability to generate confidence in their students. Students use computers for research and the presentation of work, most of which is undertaken outside lessons. Students in Year 12 are only just starting their course; already they understand the extra demands of the new courses. In addition to the use of video film clips and the use of material from the interactive whiteboards there is a fieldwork programme which enhances classroom learning; however, this could be further developed.

206. The leadership and management of geography are very good. The sixth form geography curriculum is well resourced. The very high quality of the materials produced by staff through computer-generated work for the interactive board is an asset. Assessment, monitoring and tracking the students' progress has taken place and there is now a need to improve this in order to help the students to gain higher examination grades. The monitoring of teaching takes place within the department; however, regular, consistent observation of teaching is needed in order to share the very good practice that exists within the department.
207. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection; however, the improvements are not yet sufficiently embedded to reflect improved standards. Lessons in which new technology is used have inspired both staff and students to do well; consequently teaching and learning are good and often very good. Teachers involved in the courses work well as a team. They are working very hard to improve the quality of geography courses and they show a capacity for further development and the raising of standards.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

208. English was inspected in detail and lessons were also sampled in modern foreign languages. AS and A Level courses are offered in French, Spanish and German, but numbers in modern languages have declined over recent years, and are now low. In the current Year 13 there is one German A Level group of two students, but no French or Spanish. In Year 12 there are low numbers in all three languages. At A Level in 2002, the single student in French gained an E grade and in German the two students gained a C and E grade respectively. Over the last few years low numbers of students have passed with average or below average grades; there have been no A grades since 1999 and there has been an overall decline in standards. Most pupils complete the courses and are well motivated learners. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The students sometimes make good progress in speaking because of the increased opportunities for discussion in the small groups. This was seen in a Year 13 German lesson in which the two students and the teacher discussed a text about asylum seekers which had been prepared in advance as homework. In a Year 12 Spanish lesson, the teacher's fluent Spanish provided good listening practice for the four students as they studied a text about equal opportunities. Because there was no prior preparation of the text by the students, time was not used effectively for a simple discussion to which the students could knowledgeably contribute.

English

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

The focus was on English language and English literature, but communication studies was also sampled. In communication studies, examination results were broadly average in 2001. One lesson was observed. There was a well-sequenced structure of activities that led to students understanding the format of reports.

Strengths

- The standard achieved at GCE A Level in English literature is good
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are committed to high standards, and encourage intellectual inquiry. The questioning of students is challenging and perceptive
- The quality of relationships is very good. The students are positive and enthusiastic in their attitude to the subject

Areas for improvement

- Department planning is not developed, and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are seldom undertaken
- The curriculum is not planned beyond examination syllabi, so that key skills and the students' personal development are not covered
- The procedures for assessment are neither detailed nor rigorous enough to inform curricular planning sufficiently, and to a lesser extent of the needs of students

209. The standards achieved by students in the GCE A Level examinations in English literature in 2001 were high, and had been above the national average for the previous three years. The students entered for English literature in 2001 did better in this subject than in the average of all their other subjects. Since the last inspection, the standard attained in English literature has risen. The standard achieved by students in the 2001 English language GCE A Level examination was below the national average; however, the number of students studying the subject was small. The introduction of a new course has led to an increase in the number of students studying English language, and the standard achieved in the 2002 examination was close to the national average. Students' achievements in the AS examinations in 2001 in both English language and literature were above the national average.
210. Observation in lessons and a scrutiny of students' written work, confirm that, overall, standards are above average. Students are knowledgeable about the features of language and employ linguistic concepts to analyse written and spoken language. They successfully produce original texts, together with informed commentaries, and are able critically to evaluate their own language. By the end of Year 13, their exploration of language is increasingly rigorous. Critical writing is informed and displays both sensitivity and insight. The writing of AS students demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of the texts being studied, and by the end of Year 13 they have established an independent and critical voice in their writing. A feature of higher-attaining students' writing is sensitive and perceptive analysis, managed in a controlled yet lively manner to interest the reader: for example, the comparative analysis by a Year 13 student of Burns' poem, *A Red, Red Rose*, and Eliot's, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The quality of students' oral skills is good. They listen well, participate in discussion, use correct terms, and develop and express a personal viewpoint in their analysis and explanation of text. Students in Year 12, discussing Williams', *A Streetcar Named Desire*, were aware of the historical and social context, and recognised the textual signals of character, expressing these clearly and fluently. In their writing and class discussions, students illustrate their criticism with well-chosen quotations. Reading skills are well developed in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
211. The achievement of AS and A Level students is good. They respond to the quality of teaching, and there is no significant difference between the work of male and female students. Good progress in thinking and writing skills is evident because the expectation of the teachers is high, teaching is challenging and students are committed and prepared to work independently. Whilst there is development in the quality of students' writing and the range of reading that they undertake, their written work does not always indicate that they read beyond the confines of the examination syllabus, nor make extensive use of textual criticism by other writers. Students are encouraged to explore different forms of writing, to write creatively and intellectually and to be self-critical. As a result, there is a developing maturity and a growth of critical insight and understanding. Good use is made of the Internet for contextual, critical and biographical purposes.
212. Overall, teaching is good. The teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, demonstrating a blend of scholarship and an awareness of the students' learning needs. They convey to students their enthusiasm and interest. Lessons are well planned and students are effectively challenged,

both productively and creatively. Questioning is perceptive and often, though not always, inclusive, drawing from students an increased understanding and further challenging them to think for themselves. Intellectual inquiry is encouraged, as is the expectation that students should take responsibility for their own learning through independent study. The students' work is marked regularly; however, the quality of marking is not consistent. In the best instances, students are able to understand how they are progressing and how they might improve further.

213. The attitude of the students is good. They remain focused, have a commitment to learning, enjoy the subject, and their enthusiasm is often evident in the lessons. The relationship between the teachers and the students is very good, being relaxed, yet respectful. The teachers offer praise and encouragement, and the students recognise the support that is given to them. They also appreciate the encouragement that they receive to express their personal views when engaged in textual criticism. The department has procedures for the assessment of students' work, but these are insufficiently detailed and rigorous. The students are clear about examination requirements and can measure the level of their own performance against the known criteria.
214. Overall, leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. The department is well led by an experienced teacher, who engenders good relationships and collaboration between colleagues. There is clear educational direction and a commitment to high standards. The teachers are well qualified and work hard for the benefit of students, but there are no formal meetings to give coherence to the department's work. As a consequence, planned work on key skills and the students' personal development does not occur. Although some monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning takes place, it is insufficient to be effective. There is little analysis of the department's performance, and planning is not developed. Resources within the department are good, although access to literary criticism and reference texts on language development is limited for students.