

INSPECTION REPORT

**GREAT CORNARD UPPER SCHOOL AND
TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

Sudbury

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124797

Headteacher: Mr M Foley

Reporting inspector: Brian Evans
1049

Dates of inspection: 02 - 04 December 2002

Inspection number: 249588

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 13 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Head Lane
Great Cornard
Sudbury

Postcode: CO10 0JU

Telephone number: 01787 375232

Fax number: 01787 377386

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Janet Weavers

Date of previous inspection: 30/09/1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities (sixth form) | Aspect responsibilities (sixth form) |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1049 | Brian Evans | Registered inspector | | |
| 11041 | Marvyn Moore | Lay inspector | | |
| 15472 | Paul Andrews | Team inspector | Music | |
| 4615 | Michael Bostock | Team inspector | Information and communication technology Business education | |
| 25743 | Peter Butler | Team inspector | Chemistry | |
| 27058 | Kathleen Cannon | Team inspector | French | |
| 14490 | Susan Jackson | Team inspector | History | |
| 20527 | Brian King | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| 31688 | Brian McGonagle | Team inspector | Art | |
| 18950 | Carmen Rodney | Team inspector | English | |

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Great Cornard Upper School and Technology College is a mixed non-selective community school on the outskirts of Sudbury, Suffolk. Students enter the school at age 13 from neighbouring middle schools. The 859 students on roll are admitted from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Some students are second or third generation London émigrés. There is an increasing number of sixth form students (196 compared to 168 in January 2002). There is a reasonable balance of boys and girls in most year groups although there are significantly more boys than girls in Year 9. The student population is predominantly white; there are a few Black and Asian students. Three students have English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of language acquisition. A below average number of students are on the special educational needs register; the majority have specific learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems. The number of students with statements of special educational needs is below average. Overall, students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 9 is just above the average. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. The school's library and sports centre is open to the local community throughout the week.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Great Cornard is an effective and improving school. The newly appointed head gives clear leadership on raising achievement through improved teaching and learning. He is supported well by senior managers. The school effectively promotes good behaviour and positive attitudes and relationships. It is beginning to see the benefits of this approach in the standards achieved by students. Improved teaching has led to better attitudes to learning. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and senior managers provide good leadership and focus well on priorities necessary for raising achievement.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Students' personal development results in good attitudes and behaviour, and very good relationships.
- Good provision for students with special educational needs and for those who might otherwise become disaffected ensures that they achieve qualifications.

What could be improved

- Teaching styles that encourage students to contribute more effectively to their own learning.
- Students do not apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills sufficiently in all subjects.
- Time allocated for tutor periods is not always used productively.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Good progress has been made in relation to the key issues identified in the last report. Standards have risen. The school received the Achievement Award in April 2002 for improvement in GCSE results since 1999. Major contributory factors have been the significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and students' positive attitudes to school. More effective strategic planning has led to improvements in management although monitoring and evaluation of teaching needs to be improved. Differences in attainment between boys and girls have narrowed but there remain some differences. Good leadership and management in religious education enable students to make good progress. The school's capacity to improve is good because there is a strong commitment from all staff to raise standards within a well-structured school development plan.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students 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 | B | B | C |
| A-levels/AS-levels | | | D | |

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

By the end of Year 9, standards are above average and students achieve well. Results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. Results were average in English and mathematics when compared to similar schools and well above average for science. Boys achieve much the same results compared with boys' national average for their age group as girls do compared with theirs but with variations from year to year. Improvements in national tests by the end of Year 9 over the past six years have been above the national trend. In 2002, these high standards were maintained in all three subjects. High standards are reached because teaching and learning are above average and because of the positive impact of effective literacy and numeracy strategies. In work seen, there was no significant difference between attainment of the different ethnic minority groups. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

By the end of Year 11, GCSE standards are above average in comparison with all schools nationally and the trend is above average when compared with similar schools. Students of all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The average points score for students entered for GCSE examinations has been above average over the past four years. The trend in the school's averages between 1996 and 2001 was above the national trend. The school has met its GCSE targets over the past two years. Current targets are realistic but challenging. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A* to C was well above the national average in 2002. Performance in GCSE science is well above average; in English language results are above average and in mathematics at the national average. Girls achieved markedly better results in English language than did boys but in mathematics and science there was little difference in the proportions achieving grades A* to C. ICT skills develop well in ICT lessons and are close to the average for students' ages but students do not have enough opportunities to apply these skills in many subjects. In the sixth form, results gained by students entered have been below average. However, this is in the context of most A level, AS level and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) students beginning courses with very modest GCSE grades.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. Students are enthusiastic about the school and this has a positive impact on students' achievement. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good. Students are amenable and courteous to each other and to adults. Staff and students work well together in dealing effectively with any incidents of oppressive behaviour, sexism and racism. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Students of all levels of attainment mix well and respect each other's views. Relationships among students and between teachers and students are very good. |
| Attendance | Good. Attendance is above the national average. Students are generally |

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| | prompt in arriving at lessons. |
|--|--------------------------------|

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of students: | Year 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.

On the evidence of a limited sample of lessons observed in Years 9 to 11, teaching and learning are good. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson. Teaching is better than at the time of the previous inspection because senior staff have worked hard to support a wider range of teaching styles. Teaching is good and often very good or excellent. Teaching is very good in English and science and good in mathematics. Students' attitudes to learning are good. They concentrate well and work well in pairs or in small groups. Teaching strengths include high expectations, good subject knowledge, good class management and well-planned lessons. As a result, students work at a good pace and achieve well. However, the difference between the very good or excellent teaching and that which is good or satisfactory is most often characterised by a greater focus by teachers on developing students' skills in learning for themselves. Support for students with special educational needs in the classroom is good. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good and includes an increasing variety of approaches and support for students' needs which is based on sound assessment data. Support for the few students with English as an additional language is good although resources are limited.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory. Students have insufficient opportunity to apply their ICT skills in many subjects. There is no daily act of collective worship. Good arrangements are made for motivating older students through a combined school and vocational curriculum. Close and useful links exist with the local community, which enrich the curriculum. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | Good. There is a good partnership between support staff and teachers and students make good progress. Students with physical disabilities are integrated well into school life. |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language | Good. Teachers meet well the needs of the small number of students with English as an additional language. |
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good. It is satisfactory for spiritual development. Students' personal development is enhanced by a good personal, social and health education programme. Provision for promoting racial equality is good. |
| How well the school cares for its students | Good. Students are valued and good relationships are fostered. Guidance for students is good. Procedures for assessment are generally good. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. Attention to health and safety is satisfactory. Careers education and guidance are good. The school works hard to achieve good relationships with parents. Tutor periods are not well structured. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The headteacher provides good leadership in the school. Managers have a clear focus on improving teaching and learning in order to raise achievement. However, more effective follow-up is need on the monitoring of teaching to improve the students' independent learning skills. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Good. Governors are developing their roles well in monitoring the school's performance. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. The recent school self-evaluation provides the basis for a sound strategic development plan and priorities for curriculum development. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good. Specific grants are being used appropriately and well. 'Best value' principles are applied to academic success and spending. Staffing, learning resources and accommodation are adequate. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school helps students to become mature and responsible. • Their children make good progress. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school working more closely with parents. • Homework. • Information about how their children are getting on at school. |

Inspection findings support parents' positive views about the school. Inspectors found inconsistencies in the setting of homework between subjects and between teachers but generally homework is set and marked regularly. The pastoral staff work closely with parents. Written reports on progress are at least satisfactory and often good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form currently has 195 students on roll. Typically, around half of Year 11 students join the sixth form annually. The school operates a policy of flexible and open access to the sixth form and is keen to include everyone. In the past, many students embark on sixth form work having only achieved very modest results in their GCSE examinations. However, this year there has been a significant increase in the numbers of students staying on with higher average GCSE point scores. The school's development planning includes a priority on improving the range of vocational courses on offer to meet the needs of students of all attainment levels.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Sixth form provision is satisfactory overall. There are many positive aspects. Overall, students achieve standards in line with their GCSE average point scores and students make sound progress but there are variations from very good to satisfactory in students' achievements between subjects. The quality of teaching is good and the commitment to developing the curriculum to make it more relevant to students' needs is strong. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory and students feel secure and appreciate the opportunities that are made available. The head of sixth form has a good vision of how further improvements might be secured. Their development planning is detailed. Management and leadership are satisfactory; they are organised well, pupils are given good support and guidance but curriculum development is limited and does not meet the need of all students. Students' independent and research skills are not developed well in a number of subjects because there is an over-emphasis in lessons on teacher-led discussion.

Strengths

- The students are very supportive of the sixth form and appreciate the opportunities being offered.
- The sixth form is a harmonious community in which the students feel valued.
- The provision for special educational needs in the sixth form is good.

What could be improved

- The breadth and balance of the sixth form curriculum does not provide a sufficiently broad base on which students can select their sixth form courses particularly in relation to vocational courses for lower attainers.
- Students do not have enough opportunity to develop their research and independent learning skills. In particular, students' access to ICT is limited in many subjects.

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 A Level | Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. |
| Chemistry A level | Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. |
| Business studies | Satisfactory. Current levels of attainment in business studies are in line with national standards. The quality of teaching is good overall. There is |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A level | scope to improve learning quality through the use of ICT and industry links. |
| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
| Information and communication technology A level | Good. The quality of teaching is good. Achievement in this subject is good. The quality of ICT resources contributes to standards. |
| Art and design A level | Good. Students make good progress and teaching is good. |
| Music A level | Good. Teaching and learning are good and the few students achieve well. |
| History A level | Very good. High quality of teaching leads to high levels of achievement. |
| English A level | Very good. High quality of teaching and high standards. |
| French A level | Good. Standards of work reflect the good teaching. |

Teaching in the following A-level subjects was sampled. In the single lessons observed teaching was

- excellent in law, German;
- very good in biology, psychology, economics;
- good in Spanish and physical education,
- satisfactory in geography.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| How well students are guided and supported | The quality of careers education and guidance is good. Performance data are generally used well as part of a strategy to improve standards. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | The leadership and management of the sixth form in terms of its organisation and pastoral care is very good. However, curriculum development is weaker and overall not broad enough to cater for the needs of students of all attainment levels. |

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| What students like about the sixth form | What they feel could be improved |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good printed information on courses. • Good teaching. • Teachers accessible. • Most enjoy being in sixth form. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on careers. • Being kept up to date on progress. • Enrichment courses. |

The team shares the students' views of the strengths of the sixth form. There is some inconsistency between teachers in assessing and monitoring students' progress. However, inspectors found that the

quality of careers education and guidance is good. There are a reasonable range of enrichment courses on offer for 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

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher and senior managers provide good leadership and management and focus well on priorities necessary for raising achievement.

1. Good leadership from the previous headteacher has enabled the school to recover well from its low morale, move out of a deficit budget and begin to regain the confidence of its community. The newly appointed headteacher has, in the course of two terms, shown sensitive management skills and clear vision in continuing the improvement begun by his predecessor. He has the full support of the governing body, senior managers and all staff. Management strategies are clearly defined in the well-constructed school improvement plan. The major priorities in the plan are focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Prudent budget management and good financial systems enable the school to plan for improvements in the level of professional development, accommodation and learning resources. Additional funds are earmarked to underpin the review necessary in curriculum development to maintain the momentum of an improving school. As a result of these initiatives, standards are rising. In April 2002, the school received a DFES Achievement Award granted for improvements in students' GCSE average point score. Further evidence of improving GCSE standards is shown by the record percentages of GCSE A* to C grades achieved successively in the last three years. Students' average point scores in national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are above average in comparison with all schools nationally and in line with the average of schools in similar contexts.

Teaching is good and students achieve well.

2. Overall, teaching and learning in Years 9 to 11 is good and makes a positive contribution to effective learning and to the standards achieved. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 68 per cent, very good in 39 per cent and excellent in 12 per cent. One lesson was unsatisfactory. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection two years ago when 16 per cent of lessons seen were considered to be less than satisfactory. A much higher proportion of students is now making satisfactory or better progress. The improved quality of teaching and learning is recognised by the parents.
3. The best teaching is characterised by teachers' high expectations, lessons that are well structured to include a range of learning opportunities and intuitive understanding of how students learn. Such lessons are planned with work that enables students of all attainment levels to build on their knowledge and skills effectively. The following examples exemplify these characteristics:
 - In a Year 11 food technology lesson, a very clear business-like introduction included teacher's skilful probing questioning and students' insightful responses. It set the scene for an excellent lesson in which students showed a real sense of purpose and commitment to their project, a 'Celebration Cake' GCSE coursework topic. By the end of the lesson, students had made a very significant contribution to their own learning.
 - In a well-planned Year 9 physics lesson on electricity and magnetism, students' attention and interest were wholly involved through a progressive series of practical activities. These were carefully sequenced to build and reinforce students' knowledge and understanding about magnetic attraction, field lines and electro-magnets. Confident, lively teaching led to excellent learning by students.
 - In a Year 11 religious education lesson, the teacher's astute knowledge of a diverse group of students led to mature discussion on topics such as drugs and drug abuse. Their research was aided by access to appropriate sources of evidence including up-to documents. A key element in the improvement in students' learning was skilful intervention when appropriate by the teacher which invariably succeeded in developing their thinking skills.
4. Classroom management is good because teachers expect high standards in students' attitudes, achievements and behaviour. In return, most students have positive attitudes to school and in discussion voice respect for the support given to them by staff. Where challenging behaviour is encountered, teachers employ good management strategies to ensure that lessons are not unduly interrupted. Teachers assist one another to ensure good behaviour throughout the school. Generally the students respond well because they feel valued in the school community.

Students' personal development results in good attitudes and behaviour, and very good relationships.

5. Students' personal development is encouraged through a very wide variety of opportunities for learning. These may be a planned part of the curriculum, such as assemblies or planned opportunities identified in schemes of work. Many teachers use group work and discussion as a way of learning, and encourage skills of reflection and respect for others' opinions. In a Year 10 English lesson on the 'Blue Remembered Hills' by Dennis Potter, students reflected maturely on the consequences of inflicting pain on others and empathised with the views expressed by the author. Other opportunities may be features of the school organisation, such as the system of older students acting as mentors to younger students, which provides an opportunity for students to take responsibility. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which are appreciated by many parents. Students respond enthusiastically to charity appeals.
6. Students enjoy coming to school and have a good respect for the feelings, beliefs and values of others. Behaviour around the school is good. Most students know the high standard of behaviour expected of them and respond positively. For example, the dining room is very cramped but students use it without jostling. Students, teachers and support staff display a good level of co-operation and work well together. In most lessons students behave well, display enthusiasm and remain on task. Only a very few students occasionally display anti-social behaviour.
7. Students confirm that incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour occur but that staff deal with them immediately and appropriately. The school has an average number of exclusions but these are given for good reason and the correct procedures are always followed.
8. Relationships in the school are very good. They are well supported and the school is a caring community. A wide range of extra-curricular activities takes place at lunch time and after school. These are well supported by students. A strong indicator of students' attitudes to school is that attendance overall is above average.

Good provision for students with special educational needs and for those who might otherwise become disaffected ensures that they achieve qualifications.

9. The school makes good provision for the students with special educational needs, and this is confirmed by their good progress and improved attendance. Groups of students in Years 9 and 10 receive extra tuition in mathematics and English. Some also follow an accredited youth award scheme. For students with specific learning difficulties special arrangements are made with examination boards for extra time or assistance with handwriting. The provision for those with visual impairment is very good. Students with additional learning needs make good progress in their group sessions. Good use is made of computers for word processing their stories and letters and they create simple bar graphs and pie charts in mathematics. However, in other subject areas, although staff have copies of the students' Individual Education Plans, there is no evidence in lesson planning or in the students' work to indicate that individual needs are met in whole-class lessons.
10. The needs of visually impaired students are exceptionally well met by hard-working learning assistants. In addition to providing effective in-class support, learning assistants liaise well with subject teachers for relevant worksheets, texts and pictures, which they transcribe using the department's Braille printer and embossing machine. Their commitment is reflected in the achievement of one student who gained eight A* to B GCSE passes which represented excellent progress in Years 10 and 11.
11. Eleven students in Year 11 follow an alternative work related curriculum, under the school's '3+2' scheme. This is extremely well managed by a committed co-ordinator, who negotiates individual targets through consultation with parents, students and employers. The students are expected to pursue an examination course in basic academic skills for two days per week, with a long-term work experience placement for three days per week. This has raised the students' self-esteem, which in turn has improved their behaviour and, in some cases, dramatically increased their attendance at school. Such is the success of the scheme that some students have received

praiseworthy accolades from their work colleagues. For example, one firm, pleased with the student's hard work and reliability, revised its national policy of a fixed short-term placement and extended this to a full year, with an offer of full-time employment at the end.

12. The special needs co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of special needs throughout the school, and departmental documentation is well planned and implemented. Effective assessment procedures identify those students with additional learning needs, and this information informs the students' Individual Education Plans. The standard of teaching and classroom support is good. Although withdrawal sessions cater well for students with weak literacy and numeracy skills or with specific learning difficulties, all students receive the greater part of their education in classes which are set by ability. This is in line with the school's educational inclusion policy. Staffing levels and expertise are good. For example, three members of staff are fluent in the use of Braille. The main school accommodation is limited for those with mobility restrictions; however when necessary, some lessons are re-sited to ground floor classrooms. Resources are good overall.
13. Although classes are set by ability, there is no specific provision for higher achieving students, who are sometimes insufficiently challenged during lessons. Consequently the progress of gifted and talented students is no more than satisfactory. There are currently no students in need of tuition for English as an additional language,

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Teaching styles that encourage students to contribute more effectively to their own learning.

14. Overall, teaching is good but there are differences in the quality of teaching and learning both within and between a number of departments. For example, in the six lessons observed in science, teaching ranged from excellent to satisfactory and there were similar variations in other subjects. The school has a sound programme for monitoring classroom performance. However, supporting teachers in raising the quality of their teaching once feedback has been given on lesson observation is not as strong and this weakness is recognised in the school improvement plan. There is much good practice in the school on teaching techniques related to lesson-planning and classroom management. Greater emphasis now needs to be given in the classroom to teaching styles that allow students to contribute to their own learning as outlined in the examples given earlier.

Students do not have enough opportunity to apply their ICT skills in all subjects.

15. Students' work inspected in mathematics and science showed little or no evidence of ICT- related tasks. In both subjects very limited use is made of spreadsheet and data analysis. In general, apart from word-processed work in English, the best practice is confined to the design and technology department. The development and application of students' ICT skills in all subjects is a priority within the school's improvement plan. A major part of the problem has been the absence of a specialist ICT co-ordinator. However, a well-qualified applicant has now been appointed to take up the post in the near future.

Time allocated for tutor periods is not always used productively.

16. Students register in tutor groups and when not in assembly have three twenty-minute sessions a week with their tutor. Generally these are pleasant relaxed sessions in which the register is taken efficiently and business conducted in the first five minutes. In many tutor groups, the remainder of the time is taken up with informal discussions between students while others just sit in silence. Behaviour is good and relationships with each other are good. However, the school needs to review whether this is an efficient use of 60 minutes within the school timetabled curriculum. For example, it could be linked on occasions more closely to the discrete personal and social education programme that is timetabled separately.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

17. In order to raise levels of attainment and improve the quality of education in the school, the governors, senior management team and teaching staff need to:

(1) Extend the range of teaching styles that encourage students to contribute more effectively to their own learning.

[Paragraph 14]

(2) Improve the range of opportunities for students to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in all subjects.

[Paragraph 15]

(3) Structure tutor periods so that the time is used more productively.

[Paragraph 16]

Sixth form

(1) The breadth and balance of the sixth form curriculum does not provide a sufficiently broad base on which students can select their sixth form courses particularly in relation to vocational courses for lower attainers.

[Paragraphs 27, 34]

(2) Students do not have enough opportunity to develop their research and independent learning skills. In particular, students' access to ICT is limited in many subjects.

[Paragraphs 25, 38, 43, 49, 63, 67, 75, 78]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 9 – 11 | 34 |
| | Sixth form | 45 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | | 36 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 9 – 11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 4 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 12 | 27 | 29 | 29 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 7 | 14 | 16 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 16 | 31 | 35 | 16 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 9 – 11 and the sixth form here as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's students

| Students on the school's roll | Y9 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Number of students on the school's roll | 663 | 196 |
| Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals | 42 | 0 |

| Special educational needs | Y9 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 10 | 2 |
| Number of students on the school's special educational needs register | 78 | 6 |

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

| Student mobility in the last school year | No of students |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 9 |
| Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 27 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| |
|---|
| % |
|---|

Unauthorised absence

| |
|---|
| % |
|---|

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 7.3 |
| National comparative data | 8.1 |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.9 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

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

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2002 | 120 | 107 | 227 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 74 | 87 | 90 |
| | Girls | 91 | 82 | 79 |
| | Total | 165 | 169 | 169 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 73 (73) | 75 (77) | 74 (82) |
| | National | 66 (64) | 67 (66) | 66 (59) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 43 (33) | 51 (46) | 38 (50) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 45 (43) | 33 (34) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 71 | 75 | 106 |
| | Girls | 86 | 78 | 98 |
| | Total | 157 | 153 | 204 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 69 (69) | 67 (69) | 90 (88) |
| | National | 67 (64) | 70 (68) | 67 (64) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 36 (38) | 36 (38) | 52 (43) |
| | 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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2002 | 115 | 99 | 214 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of students achieving the standard specified | Boys | 64 | 109 | 113 |
| | Girls | 70 | 86 | 93 |
| | Total | 134 | 195 | 206 |
| Percentage of students achieving the standard specified | School | 63 (60) | 91 (94) | 96 (98) |
| | National | 50 (48) | 91 (91) | 96 (96) |

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

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| GCSE results | GCSE point score |
|--------------|------------------|

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|------|
| Average point score per student | School | 43.1 |
| | National | 39.8 |

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

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

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

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year, who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 40 | 30 | 70 |

Post-16 data for 2001 are being shown since 2002 is not yet available.

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------|
| | | Male | Female | All |
| School | Number of candidates | 40 | 30 | 70 |
| | Average point score per candidate | 9.5 | 19.2 | 13.7 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | 16.9 | 17.7 | 17.4 |

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations | | | For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------|
| | | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| School | Number of candidates | 40 | 30 | 70 | 14 | 4 | 18 |
| | Average point score per candidate | 9.5 | 19.2 | 13.7 | 6.6 | 10.5 | 7.5 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | 16.9 | 17.9 | 17.4 | 9.8 | 11.4 | 10.6 |

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

| International Baccalaureate | Number | % success rate |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------|
| Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied | School | 0 |
| | National | 81.0 |

Ethnic background of students

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---------------------------------------------|
| White – British |
| White – Irish |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean |
| Mixed – White and Black African |
| Mixed – White and Asian |

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 787 | 60 | 2 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 60 | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|------------------------------------------|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 51.2 |
| Number of students per qualified teacher | 16.8 |

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 15 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 382 |

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 77.8 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------|

Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 2 | 0 |
| Key Stage 3 | 25.9 |
| Key Stage 4 | 22.0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2001-2002 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--------------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 3174506 |
| Total expenditure | 3031461 |
| Expenditure per student | 3554 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 62104 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 143045 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 21.4 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 18.6 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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) | 1 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 859 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 282 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 32 | 57 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 35 | 59 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 26 | 60 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 22 | 52 | 17 | 4 | 4 |
| The teaching is good. | 27 | 62 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 23 | 50 | 21 | 3 | 3 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 41 | 50 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 52 | 44 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 19 | 57 | 17 | 2 | 4 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 26 | 58 | 5 | 0 | 10 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 30 | 59 | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 30 | 49 | 9 | 1 | 11 |

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

18. GCE A level results have been well below average in recent years and were very low in 2001. Many students find the A/AS courses difficult because they start from a base of a B or C grade in their GCSE examination in the subject chosen. The proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades in 2001 and 2002 A/AS examinations was below average. Overall, the proportion of grades A-E achieved has improved since the last inspection. Retention rates for students completing courses are good.
19. In the reported subjects and courses, male and female students are achieving in line with expectations based on target grades derived from students' GCSE performance. In September 2000, the AS level was introduced as a separate intermediate qualification leading to the GCE Advanced level (A2). A number of students were under pressure to cope with the heavier workload of studying more subjects than previously and this adversely affected pass levels in some subjects. Levels of achievement are generally satisfactory because most have only modest GCSE results.
20. The provision for special educational needs in the sixth form is good. A small number of post-16 students have additional learning needs. These are specific such as dyslexia or visual impairment, and their needs are very well met, which enables them to fully access the curriculum and participate on equal terms with their peers. They make very good academic and personal progress.
21. Where necessary, students are provided with laptop computers for taking notes and completing their work. Special arrangements are made with examination boards for extra time or assistance with writing. The school has invested in specialist equipment to support those students with visual impairment, and experienced and trained learning support assistants give very good levels of support in lessons. For example, they ensure that the close circuit television screen, which magnifies texts, and the raised Braille keyboard are in place and working before lessons actually begin. Students also use speaking software to support their studies.
22. Annual Review procedures are well managed and the recommendations of these are well implemented in the target setting and resources provided for individual student's needs. The accommodation in the new sixth form block is good, having a chair lift for upper floor access. However, there is no toilet in this block. Wheelchair access is possible for most of the ground floor in all parts of the main school, but there are no other lifts. Consequently, students with restricted mobility must have all their lessons in ground floor classrooms.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

23. Students have positive views about the help that the school provides for them. They receive a good level of support from teachers and their personal learning skills are enhanced as a result. Students receive good advice regarding their future careers but the lack of adequate study facilities and small library inhibits their learning.
24. Students display good attitudes to the school. They enjoy sixth form life and have well-developed study skills. Most students provide a good example and excellent role models for other students. Coursework and assignments are completed promptly. Behaviour in sixth form lessons is very good. Students are proud of their school and are anxious to develop their skills.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. The overall standard of teaching in the sixth form is good. In the 45 lessons and other work observed, three in every four lessons were good or better and nearly half were very good or excellent. There was one unsatisfactory lesson. Lessons are planned well and teachers use

their subject knowledge well to motivate students to explore their knowledge and understanding further. On occasions, too much teacher-directed activity in a lesson stifles students' motivation and does not inspire them to work through their own hypotheses and ideas. Students do not get enough opportunity to develop their independent learning and research skills. Assessment data are not used rigorously enough to monitor the performance of each individual student.

26. Provision for the teaching of key skills is good. In English, communication skills are developed well through discussions. Number skills are developed in a number of subjects, for example, in geography.

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

27. The sixth form curriculum does not provide a sufficiently broad base on which students can select their sixth form courses. There are limited vocational courses on offer and no foundation GNVQ courses available.
28. There are good enrichment opportunities available to sixth form students overall. A successful venture has been the Engineering Education Club for Year 12 students. The school's project in 2001-2002 earned particularly high praise from adjudicators. A local company believes that the 'blow down' system developed by students may have the potential for a successful product. Sixth form students take part in the local and regional Young Enterprise competition and are very successful. Sixth form students play an important part in the induction of Year 7 students and are attached to Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11 tutor groups to provide general support. A range of social activities is planned and organised by students during the year.
29. Students have opportunities to talk to careers staff in the sixth form and are encouraged to make contacts with the local Connexions office. There is a range of information available in school but this is not all in one place and is therefore not as accessible as it should be. Education about the careers available is not yet fully built into the induction process or student reviews in the sixth form.
30. Provision for moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form is good; provision for spiritual is satisfactory. The general studies and religious studies programme makes some contribution to spiritual development, but many opportunities are missed to enhance this aspects of students' personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

31. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress are good. While work is marked regularly, and students feel they get good and helpful feedback to help them improve, they are not given enough information on the standards of their work in relation to examination grades. The school can make use of value-added measures to provide reliable predictions about students' performance.

Advice, support and guidance

32. The school offers good advice and support for students in the sixth form. The school has a good relationship and liaises well with external careers services which offers the students good advice. A significant number of sixth form students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that the school does not give helpful and constructive advice and they were not advised about future options. In interview, students stated that they felt that the advice given to them was good. Attendance in the sixth form is good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

33. Parents' views of the sixth form are positive. In the main, sixth form students are positive about what the school is able to offer them. Most students feel that they are given a good level of responsibility and are treated as adults. Students interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that they felt the sixth form worked well and study facilities were good. The positive links with parents mentioned in the previous report have been maintained and the school has a welcoming and open attitude to parental involvement.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

34. The leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Management and organisation of the day-to-day welfare and support of students are good and arrangements for careers and guidance are good. However, curriculum development, including the evaluation of the range of vocational courses offered, is only satisfactory. The school recognises that the curriculum offered post-16 does not adequately meet the needs of students of all attainment levels. The use of assessment data as a management tool is generally good but lacks rigour in some subjects. The sixth form is cost-effective and inspection evidence indicates that many students are achieving well in terms of value added measures. The governing body exercises its responsibilities well and works in close partnership with the headteacher and staff.
35. The school promotes good relationships between all students and is successful in encouraging racial harmony. Links with the local community and with industry are strong.

Resources

36. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are generally at least adequate except in those subjects which have limited access to ICT facilities. Disabled students have access to all parts of the ground floor of the school.

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

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS level courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Biology | 6 | 83 | 52 | 17 | 2 | 1.3 | 0.8 |
| Chemistry | 1 | 0 | 43 | 0 | 5 | - | 0.8 |
| Physics | 1 | 100 | 52 | 0 | 4 | 1.0 | -0.9 |
| Art and Design | 1 | 100 | 83 | 0 | 23 | 2.0 | 2.3 |
| General studies | 73 | 49 | 77 | 16 | 19 | 1.3 | 1.9 |
| History | 1 | 100 | - | 0 | - | 2.0 | - |
| Sociology | 1 | 100 | 63 | 0 | 7 | 1.0 | 1.2 |

GCE A level and Post-16 AVCE courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| A level unless otherwise stated | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Mathematics | 20 | 60 | 87 | 20 | 43 | 3.1 | 5.8 |
| Biology | 15 | 87 | 88 | 27 | 34 | 4.7 | 5.3 |
| Chemistry | 12 | 67 | 90 | 25 | 43 | 4.2 | 5.9 |
| Physics | 9 | 100 | 88 | 11 | 40 | 3.8 | 5.7 |
| Full Design and Technology | 5 | 100 | 91 | 40 | 30 | 4.8 | 5.4 |
| Business studies | 11 | 64 | 92 | 18 | 32 | 3.1 | 5.5 |
| Business Post-16 VQ | 1 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 6.0 | 10.5 |
| Information technology Post-16 VQ | 12 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 8.0 | 10.0 |
| Art and design | 3 | 100 | 96 | 0 | 46 | 4.7 | 6.6 |
| Art and design Post-16 VQ | 3 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 12.0 | 12.2 |
| Drama | 1 | 100 | 91 | 100 | 38 | 10.0 | 6.6 |
| Geography | 26 | 96 | 92 | 27 | 38 | 5.1 | 5.8 |
| History | 22 | 100 | 88 | 27 | 35 | 5.8 | 5.5 |
| Sociology | 9 | 100 | 86 | 11 | 40 | 3.8 | 5.7 |
| Other social studies | 9 | 100 | 88 | 22 | 34 | 4.4 | 5.3 |
| English language | 13 | 100 | 91 | 8 | 30 | 4.8 | 5.3 |
| English literature | 11 | 100 | 95 | 73 | 37 | 8.2 | 6.0 |
| French | 3 | 100 | 89 | 67 | 38 | 7.3 | 5.6 |
| German | 2 | 100 | 40 | 100 | 91 | 10.0 | 5.8 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|---|---|----|---|----|---|-----|
| Spanish | 1 | 0 | 89 | 0 | 39 | - | 5.7 |
|---------|---|---|----|---|----|---|-----|

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

MATHEMATICS

Overall provision for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Subject knowledge of staff is very good, and teaching is promoting good learning.
- There are very good staff-student relationships.
- Courses have been reconstructed to match staff and student needs.
- There is good departmental leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Students perform less well in pure mathematics modules.
- Re-assess marking policy and make target-setting more specific.
- The provision and usage in the department of information technology is inadequate.

37. Unvalidated Advanced level results for 2002 show an increased average point scores of candidates over the previous two years. A-level results for 2001 were well below national averages, relative achievement was at least one grade below performance in candidate's other subjects, and over a third of candidates failed to attain at least E grade. At AS-level in 2002 more than a third of candidates achieved grades A or B, but 5 were ungraded. Most received lower marks in pure mathematics modules than in methods or statistics. Two of the higher attainers have discontinued mathematics to concentrate on other subjects, and six lower attainers have not proceeded to the A2 course. At both A2 and AS boys achieved slightly more highly than girls. Some students resit GCSE mathematics; most attain the target grade C.
38. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Years 12 and 13 are rising and that students are achieving well with many on course to achieve the high grades predicted for them. Securing these will depend upon thorough understanding of pure mathematics topics. Suitable changes in course emphases are addressing this weakness.
39. Teaching and learning are good. In the past year the department has been under new leadership, and two of the four other staff commenced this term. All five teach at least one module of the AS/A2 courses, exhibiting very good subject knowledge and sound planning of lessons. Lessons have a brisk pace and good student involvement. Students receive exemplar solutions and are challenged to formulate ideas for themselves - as seen in a very good Year 12 statistics lesson developing understanding of conditional probability. The importance of careful diagrams and analysis in mechanics was well demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson on forces and equilibrium.
40. Students are receptive and focused, their attentiveness and application promoting their learning, as in a Year 13 pure mathematics lesson on integration by parts. They display confidence in their teachers and are not afraid of seeking clarification when uncertain. They achieve well. Progress builds effectively on prior attainment. Tasks undertaken beyond lessons reinforce their learning, though their skills as independent learners are as yet less developed. They are aware of current performance and predicted grades but not enough use is made of assessment data in setting targets for individual students. This links with marking policy which, in work seen, relies too much on student self-assessment. Exercises are reviewed in class and analyses of test results are fed back to students but more consistent and regular marking would secure higher standards. Access to ICT facilities are inadequate and hinder the development of students' independent learning skills.
41. The department is managed well and is led with enthusiasm and vision. After a difficult period over the past few years, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Professional training, lesson observation exchange and sharing of good practice are good,

schemes of work are being reviewed well and other changes are producing benefit. Overall, there is considerable opportunity for the department to blossom and confirm improvement in standards.

CHEMISTRY

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

Strengths

- Lessons are planned effectively, well structured and delivered at an appropriate pace.
- A variety of good learning opportunities is offered to students.
- Relationships between staff and students are good, and students work well together.

Areas for improvement

- There is underachievement in the quality of grades at A-level by students who are high attainers at GCSE.
- Many students tend to be passive in their learning approach; there is a greater need to challenge and inspire students in class.
- Assessment procedures are not thorough enough to provide sufficient guidance for students.

42. The A-level results in Summer 2001 were at about national average figures showing a slight increase in average points score on the previous three years. The 2002 results show a marked decrease on previous years and were well below that of other A-level science subjects. Currently numbers taking AS and A-level chemistry are low and just over half continue on to the A-level course. This is partly due to the broader choice students have in Year 12 but also reflects the difficulties some students experience in adapting to the post-16 standard of work.
43. Work seen during the inspection is at least average and in some instances above average. Students achieve satisfactorily. Year 12 students demonstrate good levels of scientific thinking. They can correctly explain observations made in a series of redox experiments and then confidently handle the related ionic equations. In Year 13 students work through routine examples on lattice energies without difficulty but need some help in applying their knowledge to new situations. Practical work is written up well and most students have good sets of notes. Students' progress in lessons is often good although achievement over time and in relation to prior attainment is only satisfactory especially for the higher attainers. On occasions, teachers' expectations are not high enough to deepen their knowledge and understanding. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
44. Students show positive attitudes in lessons. Relationships between staff and students and between students themselves are good. The learning programme contributes to their social development and moral values are promoted in the department. This is reflected by the way they work co-operatively, support each other and develop good personal relationships.
45. Teaching is satisfactory with many good features. Principal strengths are the very good subject knowledge of teachers, the effective planning, good lesson structure and pace appropriate to the needs of learners. In a lesson on the reactions of alcohols the experimental approach used enabled students to learn effectively. The teacher's good questioning technique then allowed students to develop theoretical explanations from the practical observations. Communication skills of students in their written and oral work are satisfactory, and numeracy skills are appropriate for post-16 work in chemistry. The use of ICT is restricted to accessing the Internet for research purposes and setting up spreadsheets and producing graphs in problems relating to equilibria. Homework is set and marked but opportunities are occasionally missed to provide guidance to further students' progress. The learning of students is satisfactory. They show interest in their work and are able to consolidate their knowledge. Year 12 students began a lesson with a straightforward exercise on oxidation states and completed the lesson by successfully completing a similar but more advanced exercise requiring a deeper level of understanding. However for the impact of teaching on learning to improve significantly, students need to be challenged more, adopt a less passive approach in lessons and take on greater responsibility for the learning process.

46. The area manager for science offers good leadership and a clear educational direction. The two newly qualified members of staff are committed to achieving high standards. Technician support is good and the science accommodation provides a satisfactory learning environment. Student learning is supported by adequate resourcing for practical work and an appropriate range of books in the library. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. There are good initiatives in the development plan to improve examination results. Suitable arrangements for the monitoring of the quality of teaching have been introduced and are leading to a wider range of teaching and learning styles being developed.

BUSINESS EDUCATION AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision for business studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching of business studies is good.
- Standards are improving.

Areas for improvement

- ICT should be used more for company research, data processing and presentation.
- Links with local companies and organisations would provide improved contexts in which to apply the theoretical aspects of the subject.

47. The school offers business studies at the AS-level and at A-level as a single award subject. Results in 2001 and 2002 were significantly below the national average. Current students' standards of work reflect the full range of ability and represent an improvement upon examination results in recent years.
48. Students make calculations on a month-by-month accounting sheet to show how the balance profile over time is affected by the need for up-front costs of materials, fixed costs and product payment in arrears. They plot the results on a graph and deduce the need for an overdraft to cover a period of net loss. In the best examples of current work, students had produced notes from theory lessons that recorded key terminology and definitions in a systematic way, providing a good basis for subsequent revision. Students' current levels of achievement are in line with their results at GCSE. Students of all attainment levels were seen to engage in the lesson equally, although lower attainers sometimes struggled with the theoretical demands of the lesson.
49. Teaching is satisfactory. The teacher has a good depth of subject knowledge and draws upon examples of how business principles and concepts operate. The level of detail provided in handouts encourages a rigorous approach to learning in this subject. The teacher's exposition of this subject is clear and deals in depth with the concepts, terminology and application of the subject; for example, when explaining the exploration of liquidity and why profitable companies can go into receivership. Teaching is effective in both giving information and in applying its use within practical tasks. Good examples are provided of business contexts and the teacher explores a concept from different angles requiring students to think critically. For example, in a lesson on break-even analysis, the effect of sales overseas, price increase, and competition was explored. Individual attention is given to students during the lesson but directed questioning is insufficiently used to determine how well particular students are learning.
50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although good quality text books and information sheets are issued to students, the range of learning opportunities do not fully meet the needs of lower attainers; for example, consideration needs to be given to the introduction of an Intermediate Level course. Further development of industry links would be advantageous in providing contexts to support project work. A greater use of ICT for company research, data processing and presentation would also be desirable. The last inspection report indicated good standards in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching of ICT courses is good.
- The quality of ICT resources contributes to standards in this subject.

Areas for improvement

- Greater consistency in the effectiveness of teaching.
- The further development of electronic teaching resources would promote the high quality of learning seen in the best lessons.

51. The school offers ICT at the Advanced Vocational Certificate level as either a single or double award. Results in this subject in recent years have been below the national average, but were good in relation to their prior GCSE grades. Inspection evidence indicates that current levels of attainment in Year 13 and Year 12 are broadly in line with the national average.
52. Good examples of coursework show a systematic approach to study of the course units. In a unit of work on spreadsheet design the student had produced a design specification for a spreadsheet to record the financial profile of a small theatre company over a season. This was accompanied by a technical guide to the completed spreadsheet and technical notes referring to the spreadsheet features used. The student had recorded a personal action plan for completion of the unit with reference to the grade criteria for the unit. Coursework produced by lower attainers is generally at least satisfactory. A case study on system installation provided a pictorial user guide to installing a hard disc, but was less detailed in the description of test procedures and how problems could be overcome. A particular feature of Year 12 lessons is the way that students demonstrate high levels of ICT skills and independent learning. In the best lessons seen, the quality and pace of learning of students are good because they use a variety of software applications unaided and have the skills to use the Internet for additional research. As a consequence, they achieve well. The progress made by lower prior attaining groups differed in the level of detail, understanding and evaluation used in the development of their work in the subject units, but progress remained good in the ability to apply ICT skills. Higher prior-attaining students were able to take full advantage of ICT facilities to develop their ideas and create reports, designs and records.
53. The teaching of ICT is good overall but ranges from very good to the occasional unsatisfactory lesson. In a very good lesson, the teaching enabled students to work effectively at a brisk pace using a range of new technology including media and software programs. Well-judged intervention by the teacher assisted the understanding and progress made by individual students. The availability of course materials and grade descriptions through the school network helps to promote attainment.
54. In a lesson judged as unsatisfactory, the teacher dictated notes for a significant portion of the lesson without checking students' understanding. The pace of learning as a consequence was relatively slow. Opportunities were missed to use ICT to present information and to use the teacher's knowledge to engage students more effectively in their learning.
55. Learning is good overall. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and towards their teachers, and this was a factor in the effectiveness of lessons. Students are attentive and ready to contribute. When using ICT they are able to demonstrate good ICT skills and independent learning. They undertake research using the Internet and exercise good judgement in evaluating what they find. Their experience of using a broad range of media and application software leads, in the best cases, to well-developed investigative work.
56. Leadership of this subject is good. Recent investments in ICT have led to improvements to the quality of learning with ICT. The department makes use of performance information in order to monitor student progress. However, there are differences between teachers in the planning and management of lessons and the use of resources which need to be addressed to raise standards further. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

ART AND DESIGN

Overall the quality of provision in art is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers possess good subject knowledge.
- Teachers are familiar with the examination specifications and assessment requirements.
- Students settle readily to their work and are keen to develop their ideas and concepts.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Basic drawing, painting and craft skills need to be improved.
- The narrowness of the current curriculum; little evidence of photography or ICT.
- Students' understanding of the design process.

57. In the 2001 GCE A Level and the GCE AS Level Examinations attainment by all students was below national expectations. However, attainment in the GNVQ Advanced Art and Design Course in 2001 was broadly in line with national expectations. In 2002, there was some improvement in attainment in the A /AS Level grades and results were just below the national average, with three candidates achieving a grade B. In 2002, one student achieved a higher advanced vocational grade.
58. In work seen, students overall are making good progress. The standard of work being produced by the majority is broadly average with a few students working just above. In one lesson seen, students settled readily to their work and were keen to develop those ideas that they had collected in their visual diaries. They worked well to acquire new knowledge and to improve their technical skills. As they worked, their self-confidence grew and they gained greater control over a range of media and materials. Some produced interesting collages using tissue paper and card. Others have started to make some tentative use of photography as a recording medium for collecting visual information that can be stored in their visual diaries. Higher attainers apply effort to their work and are beginning to think and learn for themselves. The majority manage their time well and work at a good pace. However, standards in basic drawing, painting and craft skills are not always high enough. A minority of students experience some difficulty in communicating their ideas, concepts, attitudes and beliefs through art, craft and design activities.
59. Students in Year 12 are making good progress. They carry out research into the set task with some degree of independence away from the art studios. A minority remain over-dependent on their teacher to resolve problems for them. Although many develop more complex ideas, a number struggle to demonstrate their understanding of the design process through their work. In the visual diaries, it was possible to detect improvement over time in the quality of research studies that lead to well-executed final pieces of work. In Year 13, students continue to make good use of their visual diaries for collecting and storing information in the form of drawings and occasionally photographs. However, a few have difficulty in developing these ideas, either by producing much larger pieces of work using charcoal or other media such as plaster of paris on board. Painting skills are satisfactory, but some students continue to have difficulty in achieving a smooth gradation of tone, from light to dark, in their paintings. Most are making good progress and are producing work of a standard that is close to the national average.
60. Teaching is good. Teachers are well-informed and familiar with the examination specification content of the various courses on offer. This ensures that assignments are written in such a way that students are given ample opportunity to produce art, craft or design work that will satisfy the requirements of the various courses. Planning prior to lessons is good and teachers make very good use of exemplar material. It is evident from the work in the portfolios that objectives have been clearly set and students knew what it was that they were expected to produce. Lessons are well organised and teachers employ methods that are wholly suited to the activities. These range from whole group discussions to interaction with individual students. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. The students obviously feel well supported in this learning context. They respond positively to the tasks that are set and learning is good.

61. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader is making good progress in updating and improving procedures and systems for assessing, recording and tracking students work over time. This is designed to provide students with much fuller feedback and will enable much more detailed target-setting for individual students in the future. She is keen to extend the range of activities on offer to students to include photography and ICT. A number of high attainers have begun to use commercially produced photographs in their visual diaries. This practice is to be encouraged and extended to enable students to produce their own enlarged black and white prints. Students should also be provided with opportunity to produce images as a result of working with computers, scanners, printers and digital cameras in the art studios themselves. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Students continue to achieve grades in all courses that are close to the national averages.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in Music A and AS level is **good**.

Strengths

- Class teaching is very good.
- Students are proud of their musical achievements.
- There is a good range of musical opportunities on offer.

Areas for improvement

- Few students opt to follow A/AS courses.
- Students do not have enough access to ICT provision.

62. Few students have been entered for A and AS music examinations in the past four years. Some students have obtained high grades but numbers are too small to make comparisons with national averages. In work seen, attainment is line with the students' GCSE grades in Year 11 and achievement patterns are good. Essays are well-constructed and benefit from the effective advice and support from the teacher. The Year 12 student has a good knowledge of harmonic principles and her folder of work includes useful notes on research and composition. There is limited evidence of research through the Internet to extend the range and scope of her work. Recall of different musical genres and styles is good.
63. Teaching is good. Lessons are very well planned, objectives are clear and students find the teacher's rapid pace of delivery stimulating. They speak highly of the excellent input from the present teacher towards the end of the AS course, when they had fallen behind because of staffing difficulties. The quality of marking and feedback to students is excellent; students are provided with very precise information about the quality of their work and how to improve. The teacher makes very effective use in her teaching of her own advanced musical skills and her deep understanding of and enthusiasm for the subject.
64. There are good opportunities for instrumental teaching and ensemble playing and these have improved since the last inspection. Students concentrate well in their ensemble playing. Students make good use of the opportunity to take initiative through setting up and directing ensembles and exercising responsibility through music.
65. Since the last inspection there have been significant and substantial improvements in the quality of music teaching. The curriculum is more clearly defined and planned, assessment criteria are clearer to students and the departmental handbook sets out clearly the department's intentions and procedures. The department is improving as a result of the good leadership of the head of department. However, the department is a little isolated from the rest of the school and as a consequence it fails, at present, to make a significant impact on the lives of most sixth formers. Since the last inspection no progress has been made with the introduction of ICT into the music curriculum. This important motivating resource therefore continues to be a priority for development. Students and students generally enjoy the performing arts yet this enjoyment does not convert into enrolment for sixth form music courses. There is a need for a concerted, whole-school approach to the further development of this subject throughout the school.

HUMANITIES

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The high quality of teaching.
- Positive relationships which contribute to the enthusiasm for history demonstrated by the students.
- The appreciation of the way students learn and level of support offered to individuals.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of ICT because resources are limited.

66. In 2001 and 2002, A-level results were above national averages. As in the previous two years, all students achieved a pass grade and the performance of male students was superior to that of the female students. In 2002, more students were entered for A-level history than in any other subject in the school. The overall results were better than those achieved in all but one minority subject. At AS-level, the results were similarly impressive for both years. In 2002, the AS-level results attained in history were the best in the school. The variation in attainment at AS-level between boys and girls was more marked in 2001, when girls performed better than boys.
67. In work seen, students achieve well and make very good progress in relation to their GCSE grades in Year 11. Students in Year 12 draw on previous understanding gained from the GCSE courses and are developing the confidence required to reach sound historical judgements independently. Encouraged by their teachers, they learn to think creatively and to consider different analytical approaches and interpretations. Written work demonstrates the growing ability of all sixth form students to challenge the assumptions implied in a question and to select and use knowledge relevantly and effectively. The high levels of enthusiasm for history shown by the teachers, together with a teaching style which is both active and, on occasion, flamboyant, has a positive impact on the students. They are attentive and responsive, whether collaborating in small groups to share different perspectives and ideas, or articulating their views in class discussions. Overall, students learn well and show clear progress in the development of their understanding and historical skills.
68. Teaching in the sixth form is very good overall, and in a significant proportion of lessons seen was outstanding. Teachers possess excellent subject knowledge which they deliver confidently, and with panache. The very good teaching of basic skills is clearly evident from student files, and especially in the lead up to written assignments. Teachers give high priority to the intellectual development of students. Their aim is to challenge students deeply and to provide multiple opportunities for discussion and debate. Using skilful questioning techniques, teachers heighten the appreciation of different factors in historical causation. In one class observed, the range and professional ability of the teacher was demonstrated when seamlessly incorporating the views of a blind student working on a set of class documents from braille, and a politically astute foreign exchange student. In this instance, the level of inclusion of those with special educational needs was exemplary. In general, classes are lively, demonstrating high levels of interaction and involvement. The good relationship of staff and students contributes to an atmosphere that is simultaneously secure and dynamic. Teachers offer high levels of individual support and ensure that each student acquires the self-knowledge and assurance required for success. The consolidation of learning takes place through effective plenary sessions, student presentations and practice exercises. It is clear from discussions with students that they recognise that they are being very well taught and find their lessons thought provoking.
69. The department organises a number of external visits to enrich the curriculum. Good use is made of resources to develop understanding and to enliven lessons. The school library is open to the public and runs an ordering service. This enables students to read widely in support of the subject. As yet, the subject provides few opportunities to develop ICT skills. This is due to current pressures on a limited number of school computers - some of which are out of date - and the lack of dedicated workstations in history teaching rooms.

70. The department is well led and managed by a vigorous teacher. Overall, the emphasis of the department is on good practice rather than theory, and the departmental materials in general lag a little behind the high professional standards exhibited in the classroom. In the same way, standards of display do not reflect the energy or sweep of classroom transactions. By contrast, the high quality of individual support seen in the classroom is mirrored in the assessment of written work. Diagnostic feedback, which is invariably constructive in tone, provides students with a clear view as to how they can improve their work and move forwards. Marking is both thorough and carefully organised.
71. Standards of learning, attainment and achievement are in line with those recorded in the last inspection, which noted significant progress and impressive performances at A level. The quality of teaching, described previously as generally high, has improved.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment and achievement have risen in recent years.
- Quality of teaching and learning.
- Marking and assessment of students' work is good and enhances their learning.
- Students are eager to learn and have positive attitudes to English.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough access to ICT.
- There is scope for more effective analysis and use of examination data.

Scope of provision

72. The focus was on the AS-level and A2-level courses offered in English language and English literature. GCSE English is offered to students who wish to improve their grades.
73. Over the three years up until 2002, standards of attainment in English literature have been consistently above average and have been one of sustained performance since the last inspection. The 2001 results were above average and included two-thirds of students who achieved an A or B grade. Up until 2002, the average points score showed an increasing trend; however, the 2002 AS-level results and A-level examinations dipped significantly, well below the standard expected. The unexpectedly low A-level results were subjected to review although few grades were changed. The 2002 AS-level results are unvalidated and are also inexplicable given that students' performance did not reflect the quality of their coursework or teachers' assessments. All students achieved a grade in the 2002 AS-level English examination. Whereas boys do better than girls in English language, girls' results exceed boys in English literature.
74. Given the entry criteria for English, the consistently good quality teaching, support and the preparatory pack, students achieve better than expected with most exceeding their target grade. Standards of work seen in lessons and students' folders confirm good achievement, a characteristic feature of students' achievement except for the inexplicable dip in standards in 2002.
75. Students achieve above average standards in speaking and listening. They respond well during discussion, giving structured and well thought-out answers when explaining, describing or expressing their views. They use the communication skills required when articulating their ideas or intervening during discussion. They reach good standards in reading and analysis and, often, their exploration of literary and non-literary texts is indeed very good as a result of the emphasis teachers place on close reading and in-depth analysis of texts. For instance, in English literature, students read widely to inform their interpretation and appreciation of literary texts as demonstrated in their work on 'Othello' and 'The Tempest'. In English, Year 12 and 13 students

draw on a substantial body of information, use terminologies accurately and display skills of analysis and synthesis when focusing on the purpose and use of language; for example, in their work on language acquisition or when discussing the social attitudes to language. They present well-argued points as demonstrated in their interpretation of the written work on Brixton riots. Standards of written work are good overall and essays are well structured. Written work is less effective when they do not ensure the quality of their written expression is clear. Students are very positive about their work in English. They work studiously and do not waste time. There is a high level of maturity and all take their work seriously.

76. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Three excellent lessons were observed. Teachers are authoritative and use their expertise to ensure that lessons are intellectually demanding. They develop students' understanding of literary texts and linguistic features by emphasising text level work through discussion, close analysis and interpretation. Students are always challenged. In the exemplary lesson in English, students were taken through a series of texts in order to apply the frameworks in line with the assessment objectives. The analysis and discussion culminated in an intensively timed mini-test whereby they were required to identify and begin applying the key features of language in order to address a synoptic examination question. Students were fully stretched in this lesson. Similarly, in the literature lessons on Chaucer's 'The Pardoner's Tale' and 'The Tempest', teachers used their authoritative knowledge to help students acquire a wider breadth of knowledge and understanding when using different critical approaches to interpreting the texts. As such, students were made aware of the views of renowned critics such as Coleridge, Bradley and Borges to assist them in beginning to plan their own presentation papers. Teachers use their linguistic knowledge to increase students' awareness of the power and use of language in texts. For example, in the lesson on Chaucer's 'The Pardoner's Tale' and Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber', the teacher enabled students to begin analysing the semantic fields when looking closely at the images. Overall, lessons are very well structured and identify what students must, should and could know. Teachers make very good use of time and the assessment criteria ensure that students are continuously assessed. Marking is diagnostic and students know what they need to do to improve their work. Homework is demanding and contributes to students taking control of their own learning through wide reading and researching in preparation for the next stage of their learning.
77. The head of area is a very effective leader and leads a strong and committed team of teachers through his clear vision of stretching students to achieve their potential. The continuous professional development as well as the teamwork ensures that teaching and learning are very good. Enrichment activities, which combine a blend of practical production and intellectually challenging conferences with university academics, contribute effectively to students' learning. There is however scope for widening the provision for the gifted and talented students. Students have good access to a range of resources but have limited access to using ICT. This provision has not improved since the last inspection. Teaching and learning is monitored but there is not a systematic programme in place. Although the department scrutinises examination data, there is scope for analysing it to measure value added and to note emerging trends. The department is well poised to reclaim the high standards it has maintained for a number of years in spite of the dip in 2002.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- A-level results are improving because all teachers are subject specialists and the quality of teaching is good.
- The provision for students with visual impairment is very good.
- There are very good links with other European countries.
- Management and leadership are good.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning.
- The provision for gifted and talented students is underdeveloped.

78. Although the main focus of the inspection of modern languages centred upon French, lessons were observed and work samples were examined in Spanish and German. The standard of this work was consistently high in all three languages, which is a reflection on the good quality of teaching.
79. Students must have already gained A* to B grades in modern languages in the GCSE examination in Year 11 before embarking on an A-level of study. Only a very small number choose to continue their studies to AS-level and A-level. It is therefore not possible to make comparisons against national average standards. However, in the AS examination for 2001, three students achieved an A, B and C grade respectively, and in the A-level results, one student gained an E grade and the other was unclassified. There were no entries for A2 examinations in 2002, but the two students entered for the AS examinations for French both achieved A grades. An analysis of examination results over the last four years indicates an upward trend in the achievement of high grades in all languages.
80. Post-16 students make good progress in French, and demonstrate this admirably during lessons. For example, they engage very well in debates on European politics, showing a clear understanding of the turmoil in Europe after the Second World War. They listen very well and their oral abilities are good, and they use a wide range of verbs and tenses accurately. For example, they read aloud from news items or works by Francois Mauriac or poems such as Oradour. There is good evidence in their work of extended writing on topics ranging from personal critiques of French literature to letter writing and reports on visits and outings. However, there is little evidence in their work that they use computers for their presentation or the Internet for independent research. They are well organised and know what they must do to reach their targets, and they make good use of their homework tasks to prepare for lessons.
81. The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are lively and well planned and there is no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form. The teachers are subject specialists and use French throughout the lesson, which ensures that students hear and respond to the spoken word in various situations. Lessons are well planned, but not always well balanced, and sometimes debating or reading sessions are too long, leaving insufficient time for research or written tasks. Nevertheless students respond with positive enthusiasm to the teachers' high standards and expectations and there is a good learning atmosphere. Relationships are very good. The teachers make excellent provision for students with special needs. For example, where necessary, worksheets are transcribed into Braille, complete with embossed pictures and maps, which ensure that students with visual impairment are able to fully participate in lessons alongside their peers. The department also makes good use of specialist equipment, which magnifies printed and handwritten texts. However, provision for gifted and talented students during lessons is less well developed. The quality of marking is good, and sometimes contains suggestions for specific research, including website addresses. Teachers keep good records of their students' progress and use this to estimate examination grades, which are awarded to each completed piece of work, Thus students have a good awareness of their learning and what still needs to be achieved.
82. The subject manager has successfully addressed most of the issues raised in the previous inspection. Assessment procedures are good and are used to inform lessons and highlight staff and student needs. There are procedures in place to monitor the subject and its teaching but this is not yet fully operational. The departmental improvement plan has identified the need to develop the use of computers to support learning, but this has yet to be achieved. Although there are no computers in the department, teachers make efficient use of overhead projectors, videos and cassette tape recorders. The department has set challenging examination targets for 17-18 year-olds for 2003 and 2004.
83. Students' learning is enhanced by the department's very good links with other European countries. Students participate in residential visits to France, Germany and Spain, as well as participating in two-week work experience placements in France and Germany. This strongly promotes their cultural awareness and guides them well towards European citizenship. Visits to a local but authentic French restaurant, staffed by French people, provides students with further opportunities for social and cultural development by speaking with foreign nationals and

considering the differences in national cuisine. The level of improvement since the last inspection is good.