

INSPECTION REPORT

HERTSWOOD SCHOOL

Borehamwood

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 131971

Headteacher: Mr Ian Lucas

Reporting inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas
3390

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 March 2003

Inspection number: 249590

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cowley Hill
Borehamwood
Hertfordshire

Postcode: WD6 5LG

Telephone number: 020 8238 7202

Fax number: 020 8238 7290

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Taylor

Date of previous inspection: N/A

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3390	Kenneth Thomas	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students or students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
24622	David Davies	Team inspector	English Drama	
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	Citizenship English (sixth form) Media studies	
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Business studies (sixth form) Health and social care (sixth form)	
23880	Olivia Hall	Team inspector	Special educational needs Art and design	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History	
8139	Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Music	

11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Mathematics (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education Physical education (sixth form)	
20247	Roger Parry	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)	
6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20420	Stuart Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Science Science (sixth form)	
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Design and technology	
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English as an additional language	How well are pupils or students taught?
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology: textiles (sixth form)	
8786	Michael Whalley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

The inspection contractor was:

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

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hertswood School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. The school opened in September 2000 following the reorganisation of education in Borehamwood. The school is larger than most secondary schools and the number of pupils (1434) has risen by about 25 per cent since the school opened. There is a broadly equal distribution in the number of pupils across Years 7 to 11, but boys outnumber girls by about ten per cent. The sixth form (175 students) is about the same size as other sixth forms. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has risen over the past three years and is now just below average overall. The proportion of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs is above average, while the proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is well above. Many of the pupils with the highest level of need have emotional or behavioural difficulties, general learning difficulties or specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). Just under ten per cent of pupils have other than white United Kingdom backgrounds. These pupils have mainly Black British or Asian British backgrounds. There are 18 refugees in the school, who are predominantly from Albania. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is higher than in most schools. Five pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The main languages spoken, other than English, are Gujarati, Cantonese, Serbo Croat and Albanian. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. There has been a comparatively high turnover of staff since the school opened, reflecting recruitment difficulties in the area. The school occupies a split site. The lower school (Years 7 to 9) is based on one site and the upper school (Years 10 to 13) on another, with about a half-mile distance between the two.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education overall. The senior leadership and governance of the school are very strong and ensure that there is a constant focus on raising standards. Although overall standards of attainment are below average, as a result of well-targeted and committed teaching, GCSE results rose in 2002 to be close to the national average. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, with much that is good and often very good. However, difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers, together with the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils, have adverse effects on the impact of teaching and the progress that pupils make in some lessons. Resources are very well managed and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teachers' efforts and the good use of information gained from assessment are helping to raise standards at the end of Year 11.
- Very good leadership, with strong support from governors, is ensuring that the school has clear educational aims and a sharp focus on raising achievement.
- Very good arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school underpin all the plans that are made for improvement.
- Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- Very good support is provided for newly qualified and newly appointed teachers.
- Opportunities for pupils to achieve are enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Attainment at the end of Year 9 is too low, particularly that of boys.
- The quality of provision for history, design and technology and information and communication technology.
- The use of information gained from assessment to raise standards in Years 7 to 9.
- The quality of teaching and learning, which is undermined by unsatisfactory management of classes and by a failure to match tasks and activities to pupils' needs.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils.
- The impact of the split-site on the overall quality of education the school provides.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first time the school has been inspected.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	n/a	E	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	E	E	

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

Well below average standards of literacy and numeracy, high rates of teacher turnover and irregular attendance have an adverse impact on standards. Overall, National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science, taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were well below average in comparison with all schools and in the lowest five per cent in comparison with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. These results were similar to the school's 2001 results. The 2002 results in English were below those in mathematics and science and in the lowest five per cent in comparison with all and similar schools. There was no significant difference in standards between boys and girls in mathematics and science, but girls achieved higher standards than boys in English. The current standards of Year 9 pupils, although below average, are above those indicated by the test results and achievement is broadly in line with expectations.

The 2002 GCSE results, for pupils gaining five higher (A*-C) grades, were below average in comparison with all and similar schools. Nevertheless, these results were above the school's 2001 results. The GCSE average point score, which reflects achievement across the whole attainment range, rose from well below average in 2001 to be average, in comparison with all and similar schools, in 2002. These results represent good achievement at the end of Year 11. Although girls attained better results than boys in English, there were no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science. Girls achieved slightly better results than boys in most other subjects. There were no significant differences in the achievement of any other groups of pupils. The school exceeded the GCSE target set for 2002 and inspection evidence suggests that, although the current standards of Year 11 pupils are below average, the more challenging target set for 2003 should be achieved. Even though results at A level in 2002 were overall well below average, the achievement of most students was consistent with expectations based on their standards of attainment at the end of Year 11.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Unsatisfactory overall. Most pupils show that they want to learn, but a minority display negative attitudes and a lack of interest in learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. The majority of pupils behave sensibly and the school is generally orderly, but disruptive behaviour impedes pupils' learning in a significant minority of lessons in Years 7, 10 and 11.

Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory, but poorly developed social skills are the source of much inappropriate behaviour.
Attendance	Although still unsatisfactory, attendance is much improved and close to the national average in the present school year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The school has worked very hard since opening to improve the quality of teaching and learning and there are many examples of good, very good and occasionally excellent teaching. Teaching is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. There were successful lessons in all subjects taken by permanent teachers. These teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and skilfully use their expertise to give clear explanations and widen pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, not enough attention is paid to the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Because of the school's difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers there is too heavy a reliance on unqualified and temporary teachers (19 per cent of the teaching staff at the time of the inspection) and this is affecting the quality of teaching and learning in most subjects. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching took place in lessons taken by unqualified or temporary teachers. The main contributory factors to unsatisfactory teaching were weaknesses in classroom management and the failure to match tasks and activities to pupils' attainment levels. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress in learning. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because they receive effective specialist support.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory for those in Years 10 and 11. The school is in the early stages of implementing strategies to improve literacy and numeracy in Years 7 to 9. Provision for ICT in Year 10 is unsatisfactory and there is a need for a broader range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to follow work related courses in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good use is made of specialist tuition and guidance to ensure that pupils with English as an additional language are well provided for.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, but that for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The school does not provide a daily act of corporate worship.
How well the school cares	The school takes good care of pupils' welfare. Child protection

for its pupils	procedures are good but there are weaknesses in the overall procedures for ensuring the health and safety of staff and pupils.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is providing the strong leadership necessary to establish the school and take it forward. He has brought to the school clarity of purpose, high expectations and a well-conceived strategy for improvement. Senior managers work effectively as a team, sharing the headteacher's drive to improve the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are effective and supportive. They have a real commitment to the school and provide it with a substantial amount of specialist help and advice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are rigorous and provide senior managers and governors with a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Financial management and planning are very good. All additional funding received is used for the intended purposes. The school seeks to obtain the best value when purchasing goods and services.

Staffing is unsatisfactory. There are enough teachers to cover the curriculum but owing to teacher recruitment and retention problems there is too heavy a reliance on unqualified and temporary teachers. The split-site nature of the school has an adverse effect on teaching and learning and makes the accommodation unsatisfactory overall. Parents are supportive and want the school to succeed.

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 expectation that their children will work hard and achieve their best. They would feel comfortable about approaching the school with concerns or problems. The progress their children are making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The closeness with which the school works with parents. Behaviour. The information the school provides. The range of extra-curricular activities. Homework.

A small number of parents, five per cent only, responded to the questionnaire and only 30 attended the pre-inspection meeting. The views expressed through these channels cannot therefore be regarded as fully representative. Nevertheless, inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The inspection also supports some of the concerns expressed by parents, particularly those relating to the behaviour of some pupils. The setting of homework is also disrupted in subjects where there is a heavy reliance on temporary teachers. However, inspection evidence does not support parents' other concerns. The school tries hard to secure the support and involvement of parents. Through regular newsletters, school reports and parents' meetings parents are provided with good quality information about the school and pupils' progress. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

HERTSWOOD SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has grown significantly since opening in September 2000. The number of students (175) has risen by 70 per cent and the sixth form is now about the same size as most sixth forms nationally, with broadly equal numbers of male and female students. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Seventeen students speak English as an additional language and 55 students are identified as having special educational needs. In 2002 just under two-thirds of students continued into the sixth from Year 11. The overall level of attainment of students starting Year 12 is below average, although there are many higher-attaining students. A substantial proportion of students enter the sixth form with relatively low grades in GCSE English and mathematics. In 2002 the school offered 21 advanced supplementary (AS) courses in Year 12 and the vast majority of these are continued to A2 (A level) in Year 13. In addition, advanced vocational courses (AVCE) are offered in business education, art and design, health and social care, leisure and recreation, and information and communication technology (ICT). A range of intermediate GNVQ courses completes the provision. In addition, students are expected to undertake a voluntary community service activity.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a satisfactory standard of education. Although overall standards are below average, the achievement of most students is consistent with expectations based on their standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good and students respond well in lessons. However, the impact of teaching is adversely affected by general weaknesses in students' basic skills and the irregular attendance of a small number. The sixth form provides a suitable range of courses and a good range of enrichment opportunities. The strategic direction for the development of the sixth form is very clear and is responsive to the needs of students and the local community. At this stage of its development the sixth form is not fully cost-effective, but the strategic plan shows that it should become so in the next two years. The acting head of sixth form together with the sixth form tutors ensure that day-to-day administration is efficient. Good provision is made for students with special educational needs, and the small number with English as an additional language, who are well integrated into the sixth form.

Strengths

- Very good strategic management with a clear resolve to raise standards.
- Good teaching by teachers who know their subjects promotes good learning in lessons.
- The good match of courses to the interests and aspirations of students is increasing the number who are extending their education beyond the age of 16.
- Good procedures for monitoring, evaluating and supporting students' academic progress are helping to raise standards.
- Students' personal development is enhanced by a good range of enrichment opportunities.

What could be improved

- The arrangements for the teaching of history in Year 13.
- The provision of religious education to meet statutory requirements.
- The irregular attendance of some students has an adverse effect on progress and achievement.
- Students' skills in communication, application of number and ICT are below what they should be and impede the progress they are making.
- Many students lack the independent study and learning skills necessary for success in advanced courses.
- The school's responsiveness to the views of students.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Students gain average grades at A level that are above those predicted from their GCSE grades Teaching is good because teachers use their very good subject knowledge and experience effectively.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. From a low base of knowledge when they enter the sixth form students make satisfactory progress in learning. The standards of work seen are above those indicated by the most recent examination results.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Students begin with well below average GCSE grades and achieve satisfactorily, but standards are well below the national average. Teaching is satisfactory and basic making skills are taught well.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Teaching meets the needs of students and good relationships help the majority of students to achieve well. There is a need to strengthen links with local business and increase the use of ICT.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. Numbers on courses are increasing and standards are rising to near the national average.
Health and Social Care	Good. Students following this newly established course are achieving well, although standards of written work are below the national average. Teaching and learning are good.
Media studies	Satisfactory. Attainment is below average, but teachers' good subject knowledge contributes to good teaching resulting in good achievement. Instability in staffing has been a major problem for the department.
Geography	Good. Students begin with above average GCSE grades and achievement is maintained by good teaching and learning.
English language	Satisfactory. Attainment is below average, but good teaching enables students to achieve better than expected results in A-level examinations. Good leadership and management are contributing to a steady improvement in standards.

Provision was more briefly inspected in other subjects. Because of the small numbers of students taking A-level examinations it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with national averages in many subjects. Unconfirmed results show students' achievement in the AS and A-level level examinations in 2002 to be generally satisfactory. Lessons were sampled in art, biology, dance, economics, English literature, French, history, ICT, AVCE leisure and tourism, music, physics, psychology and sociology. Teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good in the lessons seen. The teaching of A-level history is unsatisfactory because of the disruption caused by a large amount of temporary teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Sixth form tutors meet with their students regularly and ensure that they are aware of help that is available if they have difficulties. The use made of assessment for target setting and monitoring students' progress is satisfactory and improving.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	There is very good leadership with clear priorities for future development. The mentoring roles of tutors are to be strengthened in order to improve students' attendance and the monitoring of their progress. The sixth form management team ensure that day-to-day administration is efficient. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Sixth form expenditure slightly exceeds income. The school plans are appropriate and show that the sixth form should become fully cost-effective in the next two years.

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"> Teachers are accessible to help if students have difficulties. They are helped and encouraged to study and research topics independently. The choice of course allows them to follow a programme suited to their talents and career aspirations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of worthwhile enrichment activities and courses. Advice on what they should do after they leave school. Listening and responding to the views of students.

Inspectors support the positive views expressed by the students. The majority of students who responded to the student questionnaire and who were interviewed were satisfied with the sixth form provision. They felt that they were given helpful and constructive advice about their courses, were taught well and were given clear information about subjects and courses. Inspectors agree that the school could do more to elicit and respond to the views of sixth form students so that they would feel more like responsible young adults. Inspectors do not agree with students' other concerns. Provision for careers education and guidance is good, as is the range of enrichment activities provided for students in the sixth form.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, National Curriculum test results taken at the end of Year 9 both in 2001 and 2002 were well below average in comparison with those of all schools. In comparison with similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the 2002 results were very low, putting the school in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. Results in mathematics and science, although well below average, were slightly better than results in English, which were very low and in the lowest five per cent in comparison with all and similar schools. Fewer pupils reached the expected Level 5 in English (32 per cent) than in science (50 per cent) and mathematics (55 per cent). There were differences in the performance of boys and girls, with girls obtaining better results in all three subjects. The difference was particularly marked in English, where just under half of girls reached the expected level compared with only one-fifth of boys. Comparison of standards attained in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 with the results obtained by the same pupils at the end of Year 9 shows that achievement was well below expectations.
2. Several factors have contributed to well below average results in the 2001 and 2002 National Curriculum tests. Of greatest significance are the following:
 - The attainment of pupils who entered the school in Years 8 and 9 when the school opened in September 2000 was low. Few pupils joined the school with standards expected for their age in English, mathematics and science and the attainment of many was well below this level;
 - Pupils' progress was disrupted by the reorganization of schools in Borehamwood and so none of the pupils who took the tests in 2000 and 2001 experienced a continuous education in one school through Years 7 to 9;
 - The attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils were unsatisfactory;
 - There have been difficulties in teacher recruitment and retention, which affect the quality of teaching and learning. In the school's first two years 150 teachers were appointed and 54 left the school;
 - Because of the two-week timetable the gaps between lessons in some subjects are too long and this has an adverse effect on pupils' progress;
 - The decision was made to give higher priority to improving results in the GCSE examination taken at the end of Year 11.
3. Attainment on entry to the school, although still below average overall, is rising. The National Curriculum test results in mathematics and science of the pupils presently in Year 7, taken in the primary schools at the end of Year 6, were close to the national average at both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. However, standards in English were below average, with the results of boys well below. Standards now show signs of rising in Years 7 to 9; the work seen during the inspection reflects this. As the school becomes more established and pupils experience greater continuity in their education so attitudes and behaviour are improving in Years 7 to 9. However, National Curriculum test results, and in particular those in English, remain a concern.
4. The 2002 Teacher Assessments in other subjects are unreliable. The main reasons for this are:
 - the inexperience of many of the teachers who carried out the assessments;
 - the high rate of teacher turnover, which means that many teachers had limited knowledge of the pupils being assessed.
5. Inspection evidence shows standards by the end of Year 9 to be consistent with expectations in art and design, drama and geography and below expectations in English, mathematics, science,

citizenship, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, and physical education. Standards are well below expectations in design and technology, and history. Standards in religious education are below expectations in the locally agreed syllabus. However, when attainment on entry to the school is taken into account, pupils' achievement is broadly consistent with expectations. This reflects the increased emphasis the school is now placing on raising standards in Years 7 to 9. Nevertheless, achievement is below expectations in science and history.

6. GCSE examination results improved considerably in 2002. The GCSE average point score, which is a broad indicator of pupils' performance across the full grade range, shows that pupils' performance rose from well below average in 2001 to average in 2002 in comparison with all and similar schools. Many of the factors influencing standards at the end of Year 9 also contributed to the results achieved at GCSE. These results therefore represent good progress for most pupils from their National Curriculum test results two years earlier and are a direct result of the concentrated effort put into improving results at the end of Year 11. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five higher A*-C grades, although below average, showed a significant rise in comparison with the results obtained in 2001. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades also showed a significant rise to average in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools. Given the contextual factors that had affected the education of pupils entered for the 2002 GCSE examinations, the targets set were challenging. Nevertheless, they were reached. Inspection evidence indicates that, although the overall standards of pupils in Year 11 are below average, the improvement shown in the 2002 results is being maintained and the school is on course to reach the increased targets set for 2003.
7. The percentages of pupils gaining A*-C grades in English language, mathematics and science were well below the national averages. Pupils' achievement in all three subjects was affected by well below average levels of literacy and numeracy. Although girls attained higher standards than boys in English, there were no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science. The percentages of pupils gaining A*-C grades in art and design and French were particularly good, being above the national average. The percentages of pupils gaining these higher grades were below average in all other subjects. Girls achieved better results than boys in all subjects other than mathematics, science, ICT and history.
8. Low levels of literacy impede pupils' attainment and achievement, in all years. Although the English department has introduced the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 and there are examples of emphasis being given to the development of pupils' literacy skills in some subjects, not enough is being done to develop pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in a systematic way in all subjects. Pupils' numeracy skills are well below expectations and the development of these skills is being impeded by the lack of a co-ordinated approach in all subjects. Pupils' ICT skills, although below expectations, show signs of improving in Years 7 and 8. This is because of improved schemes of work and better teaching in the discrete ICT lessons in the lower years.
9. There are 83 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The overall achievement of these pupils is comparable with that of their peers. Five pupils are in the early stages of English language acquisition. These pupils are making good progress because of the high level of support they receive in lessons and the good teaching they receive when withdrawn for individual language tuition.
10. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily both in lessons and over time. Many pupils achieve well and make significant gains in learning. In art and design, for example, three-quarters of pupils with special needs obtained higher grades in the 2002 GCSE examination. Pupils make very good progress in reading and spelling because of the effective use of the *TRACKS* literacy support programme. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs make good progress towards their targets because in-class support is effective and carefully monitored by the special needs co-ordinator. Most pupils make satisfactory progress towards targets set for them in their Individual Education Plans because work is generally well matched to their learning needs. Many pupils with emotional and behavioural learning needs make satisfactory progress in developing social skills and learn a range of strategies to handle

situations through anger management classes. However, the progress of pupils with special needs in Years 10 and 11 is adversely affected because the range of in-class support for pupils with behaviour difficulties is limited and work is not always well matched to their learning needs. When this is the case behaviour deteriorates and progress is impeded.

Sixth form

11. Students' results at the end of their General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level (A-level) courses in 2001 and 2002 were well below average. Overall standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are below average but analyses of performance relative to standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form indicate that most students achieve their targets and the achievement of those who complete the course is broadly satisfactory.
12. The school is in the process of building up the sixth form and the numbers of students so far entered for A-level examinations have been too small to make meaningful comparisons with national averages in many subjects. Of those subjects where comparisons were possible, results in 2001 (the most recent year for which national comparative data is available) were well above average in psychology, below average in history and well below average in art, biology, chemistry, media studies, economics and English literature. The unconfirmed 2002 results show that all of the students entered for art, business, media studies, English literature, English language, design and technology (textiles), geography, history, physics and sociology obtained grades in the A – E range. Single entries were made in chemistry, mathematics, physics and sociology and all obtained pass grades. The unconfirmed 2002 advanced supplementary results show that virtually all of the students entered obtained pass grades, although few obtained higher A or B grades.
13. In lessons observed and in the samples of work scrutinized, achievement is generally consistent with standards on entry to the various courses. Students following the GNVQ Intermediate health and social care course are achieving well and attainment is in line with course expectations. Good teaching is helping to raise standards in most sixth form subjects. Students' work shows a satisfactory response to teaching that generally encourages them to make increasing demands on themselves. However, the impact of teaching is diminished by a number of factors, many of which have also contributed to the well below average results in the 2001 and 2002 A-level examinations. Of greatest significance are:
 - the below average overall standard of attainment of students on entry in Year 12;
 - teaching strategies that are too dependent on the teacher;
 - students' weak independent study skills;
 - the very small teaching groups in some subjects which restrict students' opportunities to exchange views and challenge each other's thinking;
 - the disruption caused by the irregular attendance of a minority of students;
 - the adverse effects on teaching and learning of frequent changes in teachers;
 - well below average skills in communication, application of number and ICT;
 - a loss of teaching time in some lessons because of the time taken by teachers to move between the lower and upper schools;
 - the disruption caused to students' learning by the reorganization of schools in Borehamwood.
14. The school is aware of these issues and is in the process of developing strategies to tackle them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. In June 2001, towards the end of the school's first year of operation, the headteacher and governors invited the local education authority (LEA) to conduct an independent review of the school in order to establish a baseline from which progress could be measured. The review noted that the attitudes and behaviour of pupils in the lower school were unsatisfactory in over 25 per cent of the lessons observed. It was also noted that, in contrast to the upper school, where there was a clear concentration on examination work, the lower school lacked a sense of purpose.

16. The school has tackled this issue with a reasonable amount of success. The lower school is much calmer and there is a greater sense of purpose. This is particularly evident in Years 8 and 9 where in only one of the lessons observed were pupils' attitudes and behaviour unsatisfactory. However, in about a third of the lessons observed in Year 7 the attitudes and behaviour of pupils were unsatisfactory or poor. These lessons were distributed across the curriculum and not confined to any particular subjects. Amongst the contributory factors are:
- the weak classroom management skills of many temporary teachers;
 - learning activities that are not well matched to the attainment levels of pupils;
 - inconsistent application of the school's behaviour strategy by some inexperienced and temporary teachers;
 - the delay caused to the arrival of teachers at some lessons by the need to travel from the upper to the lower school site.
17. Movement around the school is generally orderly and teachers are diligent in supervising corridors and open spaces in the lower school at lesson changeover times. The school policy is that teachers should be at their classroom doors to meet pupils when they arrive so that entry into classrooms is orderly. However, because teachers have to move between sites this is not always possible. As a result, some classes congregate around classroom doors as they await the arrival of their teachers. This creates situations in which behaviour can deteriorate and puts an added strain on those teachers who are present and who may be striving to control classes additional to their own. Senior managers are much in evidence to support their colleagues, but it is impossible for support to be provided in all areas.
18. On the upper school site it is evident that the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 come to school to learn. However, the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour on the lower site noted in the 2001 LEA review have now transferred to the upper school site as these pupils have moved through the school. In discussion, many pupils speak of the frustration they feel when lessons are disrupted by the inappropriate behaviour of a few. In 25 per cent of the lessons observed the attitudes and behaviour of pupils were unsatisfactory or poor. While these lessons were distributed fairly evenly across Years 10 and 11, and across several subjects, they occurred most frequently in ICT, science and mathematics. Many of the factors that contribute to unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour in the lower school also apply to the upper school, but in addition:
- a small number of boys quite deliberately set out to disrupt lessons regardless of the nature of the learning activities;
 - the social skills of many pupils are poorly developed;
 - some pupils speak of the resentment and lack of motivation they feel as a result of the disruption caused to their education by the re-organisation of schools;
 - some pupils speak of the resentment they feel at the frequent changes of teachers and this surfaces as a reluctance to comply with the requests of teachers in lessons.
19. The school takes its responsibilities for social inclusion very seriously and works hard to maintain pupils in full-time education. Exclusion is used only when absolutely necessary. However, the determination of senior managers and governors to improve standards of behaviour inevitably leads to the exclusion of pupils who exhibit the most challenging behaviour. As a result, the number of permanent and fixed period exclusions in the last school year was well above average for schools of this size. All exclusions are well documented and mainly for physical or verbal abuse. The school works hard to involve parents as much as possible in order to prevent such behaviour recurring. Pupils in all year groups indicate that boys and girls get on well. There have been a few incidents of racism and these are well handled when reported to staff. The school takes a very serious view of bullying: all staff are made aware of the procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying and these are included in the staff handbook. Pupils say that there is some bullying, especially in Years 9 and 10. The school takes any instances of bullying very seriously and pupils interviewed during the inspection week thought that, when it does occur, it is dealt with effectively and immediately. Two specific instances of bullying were drawn to the attention of the inspection team by parents before the start of the inspection. The inspection team are satisfied

that the school is dealing with these in an appropriate way. The school intends to introduce further strategies in order to ensure that instances of bullying are dealt with more quickly.

20. Relationships and personal development are generally satisfactory and underpinned by the citizenship programme, which emphasises relationships and attitudes to others. When given the opportunity most pupils show that they are able to work effectively in pairs and small groups. Most pupils show respect for their teachers and know there is someone they can approach to share concerns and seek guidance. The majority of pupils are polite when speaking to visitors to the school and many show consideration in the way in which they hold doors open so that others can pass through. Pupils are given responsibility by being appointed as school prefects and are able to participate in decision-making through being elected to the School Council. However, the Council, with over 110 pupils, is rather unwieldy and debate is often teacher-dominated.
21. Poorly developed social skills are the source of much of the inappropriate behaviour. Although relationships are generally satisfactory, many pupils have little understanding of the impact of their actions on others and too many, particularly boys, engage in thoughtless behaviour. Pupils' lack of social skills is particularly apparent in the public places in the upper school at lesson changeovers. Although teachers exercise very close supervision at these times a significant minority of pupils act immaturity and there are instances where some boys display impulsive behaviour and shout loudly at one another for little or no reason. There is a need to reinforce the work in this area through the citizenship programme by a more systematic and co-ordinated approach to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. The school is seeking to appoint an inclusion co-ordinator as part of its strategy for improving standards of behaviour in the upper school.
22. A large number of pupils (30 per cent) are on the special educational needs register. These pupils are well integrated into school, work hard and enjoy school life. They receive good support from specialist teachers and other staff, and this helps them to make good progress in their personal development. Pupils value the support they receive and many take part in activities such as the breakfast and homework clubs, where they learn to take responsibility and work independently. The school is making particularly good progress in the support offered for more vulnerable pupils, who are now attending school more regularly and joining mainstream lessons.
23. Although the attendance rate is below average the school is working hard and successfully to bring about improvement. The attendance rate has risen from 83.7 per cent in 2001, to 89 per cent in 2002 and to 92 per cent in the present school year. The below average attendance is due to a well above average rate of unauthorised absence, most of which is parentally condoned.

Sixth form

24. Students' attitudes to school and their work are satisfactory. In many lessons attitudes are good or better, and in some lessons in design and technology, health and social care, and physical education, attitudes are excellent. The majority of students are keen to succeed but many lack the independent learning and study skills necessary for success in the sixth form. The sixth form is in an early stage of development and has yet to develop an ethos within which students fully appreciate the demands of sixth form study. A significant number do not apply themselves to their studies when they have independent study periods and when they are at home. Some, for example, do not appreciate the need to work to deadlines and thus their coursework is not always completed on time. Also, progress is impeded in some lessons because teachers have to spend too much time going over previous work as a result of some students doing too little work between lessons. Although the school emphasises the importance of regular attendance to students' progress and achievement, the overall attendance rate is unsatisfactory. This is because of the irregular attendance of a small number of mainly Year 12 students. These absences affect the progress and achievement of students who come to school regularly because they, too, end up wasting time when teachers have to go over previous work in order to allow the absentees to catch up.

25. Students' personal development and relationships are satisfactory overall. Students work co-operatively together and this was seen in Year 13 psychology, for example, where, by evaluating each other's answers to A-level revision questions, they helped to consolidate their understanding of key concepts. Similar co-operation was seen in a Year 12 English lesson, where students discussed gender differences in language use. There is a good deal of reciprocal respect between students and teachers, and students say that they appreciate the support they receive. However, because students are given too few opportunities to engage in independent enquiry and are exposed to teaching strategies that are generally heavily dependent on the teacher they do not take enough responsibility for their own learning.
26. Students interviewed during the inspection were articulate and measured in their opinions about the school. The majority of students who responded to the student questionnaire and who were interviewed were satisfied with the sixth form provision. They felt that they were given helpful and constructive advice about their courses, were taught well and were given clear information about subjects and courses. A significant minority of students thought they were not treated like responsible young adults, the school did not listen to their views and they could not rely on strong support for their personal problems. The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed and, to some extent, with their critical comments. Inspectors agree that the school could do more to elicit and respond to the views of sixth form students so that they would feel more like responsible young adults. One of the reasons why the sixth form has yet to develop its own ethos is the negative effect that the behaviour of some pupils in Years 10 and 11 have on the atmosphere in the upper school as a whole.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school has worked very hard since opening to improve the quality of teaching and learning and has introduced robust procedures for monitoring teaching and supporting teachers, particularly those who are temporary and newly qualified. Nevertheless, there are continuing difficulties in recruiting and retaining well-qualified staff. As a result, although there are many examples of good, very good and occasionally excellent teaching, there is too much unsatisfactory or occasionally poor teaching. This is largely attributable to the school's heavy reliance on unqualified and temporary teachers – at the time of the inspection, 19 per cent of the teaching staff were unqualified. This has particularly affected teaching and learning in history. In lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory or better in 91 per cent of lessons, good or better in 58 per cent and very good in 16 per cent of lessons. Two excellent lessons were observed in the lower school, one in religious education and one in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. Teaching was unsatisfactory in seven per cent of lessons (two lessons in design and technology, two in mathematics and one lesson each in religious education, geography, science, history, ICT and PSHE) and poor or very poor in two per cent (one poor lesson in religious education and one poor, and one very poor lesson in ICT). There was little difference in the quality of teaching in the lower and upper schools, and most of the learning reflected the quality of teaching. Teaching is good in art and design, drama, geography, modern languages, music, physical education and religious education and satisfactory in other subjects. The overall quality of teaching represents a considerable improvement from the position reported in the 2001 LEA review. However, the impact of teaching is reduced by the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a small number of pupils.
28. There were successful lessons in all subjects taken by the permanent teachers and by enthusiastic, newly qualified subject specialists. These teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and skilfully use their expertise to give clear explanations and widen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Their primary aim is to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, most pupils in lessons taken by these teachers make good progress because they are given appropriate activities to further their learning. This was seen in the excellent Year 8 religious education lesson where pupils grappled with the difficult concept of the meaning of the resurrection of Christ to Christians today. In this lesson, achievement was well above expectations because of the way in which the learning activity was carefully matched to the

attainment levels of pupils. As a result, pupils were keen to engage in class discussion and gave increasingly perceptive responses to the skilful prompting of the teaching.

29. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that there is a brisk pace, well-judged questioning and clear objectives so that pupils know what they have to do before proceeding to the next task with minimum difficulty. This was seen, for example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson on transformation where the teacher used a range of activities and resources with potentially challenging pupils to engage and motivate them throughout the 60-minute period. Pupils made good progress because the teacher involved them in discussion to clarify their understanding of symmetry. This was followed by a practical activity using mirrors to extend their understanding before they demonstrated their newly acquired skills on the board. Art and design teachers constantly use their very good subject expertise to reinforce high expectations of behaviour and work. This leads to pupils making good progress towards their learning objectives. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils made very good progress in their project work because of the very good support the teacher provided and the way in which assessment was used to challenge and refine pupils' creative ideas. Similarly, in a very good Year 7 hockey lesson, lower-attaining pupils made rapid progress in refining their tackling and dribbling techniques because of the teacher's high expectations and her timely interventions to offer guidance and support. The teacher used her specialist skills very effectively to increase pupils' understanding of control, the use of space and defensive strategies.
30. The teaching of basic skills is unsatisfactory, overall. The English department is in the process of implementing the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 and a school training day has been devoted to the development of literacy skills. This has been followed by an audit of provision for the development of literacy in all subjects. However, owing to the high level of teacher turnover, it has not yet been possible to develop a consistent approach to the development of these skills in all subjects. This is impeding pupils' progress and achievement in most subjects. The situation is similar with regard to the teaching of numeracy skills. Although these skills are developed in mathematics and through activities such as measuring and judging proportion in art and design and design and technology, and in interpreting data in geography, business studies and science, there is as yet no co-ordinated school numeracy strategy. As a result, pupils' numerical skills are not being developed in a systematic way in all subjects. The development of pupils' computing skills is underpinned by the work done in ICT lessons. However, pupils' skills in the use of ICT to enhance their work are below expectations and there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to apply and develop these skills in most subjects.
31. In the majority of lessons (around 82 per cent), pupils are managed effectively, enabling them to progress: this was nearly always the case in lessons taught by qualified, permanent teachers. In many lessons, effective class management enables pupils to work collaboratively, retain positive attitudes and contribute helpfully to class discussions; as, for example, in a Year 8 art and design lesson where pupils made comparisons between their own work and that of Matisse. Similarly, in a Year 10 geography lesson, the teachers' good class management skills helped pupils to understand the structure and function of a tropical rain forest. However, in most subjects one or two lessons were observed in which teaching and learning were less effective because:
- some teachers, mainly temporary or unqualified, lacked the skills necessary to manage pupils' behaviour effectively;
 - expectations were too low and lesson planning did not take enough account of the differing attainment levels of pupils. As a result, pupils' interest was not captured and distracting behaviour slowed learning;
 - some pupils have had a succession of temporary teachers and have become demotivated and easily distracted as a result;
 - there is a small, hard core of pupils in years 10 and 11 (mainly boys) who make clear that they find learning tedious and who lack the necessary study skills to apply themselves to the set work. Despite the best efforts of teachers, these pupils enjoy playing to an audience and even the most established and experienced teachers have to work extremely hard to counteract their negative influence in lessons.

32. Lesson planning is generally satisfactory in most subjects. In the best lessons, activities are carefully structured to ensure that all pupils are fully stretched. This was seen in a Year 11 history lesson, for example, where the carefully planned use of a series of assessment activities led to pupils gaining a greater understanding of the historical skills necessary for success in the GCSE examination. In modern languages, brisk starter activities and energetic teaching enabled Year 8 pupils to make good gains in developing their French vocabulary. In physical education, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently as, for example, in planning their warm-up activities and movement sequences. However, when not enough attention is given to lesson planning, the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils rapidly lose interest. This was seen in an unplanned Year 11 ICT lesson, where teaching and learning were very poor because pupils were largely left to their own devices.
33. In many lessons, teachers use a range of strategies that allow pupils to take an active part in lessons. Examples of the skilful use of questioning to extend pupils' understanding were seen in music, history, English and mathematics. A range of group and whole-class activities and modelling are used effectively in drama, English and French to increase pupils' understanding of set tasks. However, in less effective lessons, teachers do not explain tasks clearly, group work is limited, teaching strategies are not engaging, explanations are over-long and pupils are not given the opportunity to offer opinions. Time and resources are well used in most lessons, although some teaching time is occasionally lost when teachers have to move between the upper and lower schools.
34. In order to improve results in the GCSE examination the school ensures that effective use is made in Years 10 and 11 of ongoing assessment so that teachers and pupils have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work. This has made a significant contribution to the improvement seen in the 2002 GCSE results. However, not enough use is made of ongoing assessment in Years 7 to 9. Marking in many subjects is not thorough or consistent and does not provide pupils with clear information on how well they are doing. Teachers are not making explicit what pupils need to do in order to improve their work. Although homework is set regularly in most subjects and generally used to consolidate and extend pupils' learning this is not so in subjects where there is a particularly heavy reliance on temporary teachers.
35. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. It is good when pupils are taught in withdrawn groups. Learning support assistants provide effective in-class support for those who have statements and for other pupils with special needs who are in the same lessons. A particularly strong feature of the teaching of pupils with special needs is the effective involvement of learning support assistants in lesson planning. This helps to ensure that the learning and behaviour targets in pupils' Individual Education Plans are reflected in lesson planning. Learning support assistants keep detailed notes on how the pupils are progressing towards their targets and these are monitored by the special needs co-ordinator. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) receive good support from the EAL co-ordinator. The advice the co-ordinator provides for subject teachers also helps to ensure that these pupils make good progress in lessons.
36. The school is very aware of the weaknesses in teaching, and improving the quality of teaching and learning is a key priority in the school improvement plan. However, progress towards achieving this goal is affected by the high staff turnover and the constant need to train the steady flow of new staff, many of whom require additional support because they are unfamiliar with the British education system.

Sixth Form

37. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Experienced and permanent teachers mostly teach the sixth form but some newly qualified teachers also teach on the advanced courses in history, media studies and business studies. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all of the lessons observed. It was good or very good in 66 per cent of lessons. With regard to the nine subjects inspected in depth, teaching was good in chemistry, physical

education, health and social care, media studies, geography, English language and mathematics and satisfactory in design and technology (textiles) and business studies. There was one excellent lesson in design and technology (textiles). Because of staffing difficulties, the A-level course in history has been taught by a series of temporary, non-specialist teachers and this is having an adverse effect on teaching and learning in the subject. Teaching and learning in A-level biology lessons have also been adversely affected by frequent changes in teachers.

38. Good quality relationships are a key feature in most lessons and are important in helping students achieve well. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to consolidate and extend students' learning. In the best lessons teachers challenge students to undertake imaginative research work which tests the application of their skills. This was a distinctive feature of the excellent Year 12 textiles lesson where students made exceptionally good progress in designing original pieces of work because they were encouraged to take risks in applying their creative skills to their design ideas. Similarly, the best teaching in art and design, media studies and physical education is characterised by very good subject knowledge and active teaching methods, which aim to increase students' independence in learning. However, one of the general features of many lessons was the teacher-centred nature of the learning activities. Not enough use is made of teaching strategies that require students to engage in independent research and enquiry. Amongst the factors that contribute to this are the very small teaching groups, particularly in Year 13, which restrict class discussion and lead to too much dependence on interventions from teachers. Because of this students, in both Year 12 and Year 13, do not engage in the expression and challenging of views necessary to develop their critical faculties.
39. Another factor that is adversely affecting students' learning is that not enough attention is given to the development of students' skills in communication, application of number and ICT. Although the range of students' competence in these skills is wide, the competence of most students is below average. However, there is no co-ordinated approach to the teaching of these skills and this is having an adverse effect on achievement.
40. Homework is used to extend class work and marking is thorough, with detailed comments indicating how students can improve their work. However, many students have not developed good study habits and do not take enough responsibility for their learning. As a result, teachers have to spend too much time chasing students for their homework and coursework. Nevertheless, students are appreciative of the support they receive from their teachers and relationships are very good.

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

41. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good for pupils in Year 7 to 9, and satisfactory for those in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum provides a sufficiently wide and balanced range of learning opportunities to suit the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. The curriculum is inclusive and the school offers a good alternative education programme for those pupils who would benefit from a reduced National Curriculum, and a limited programme that offers other pupils a vocational placement and training. This range of opportunities provides pupils with equal access and with opportunities to learn. The school has made good progress in improving its curriculum since opening in September 2000. The teaching time of 25 hours a week meets government recommendations. A 60-minute lesson has been adopted and over a two-week cycle there is enough time allocated to subjects in Years 7 to 11. However, the current timetable has created an imbalance in the distribution of lessons for some subjects over the two weeks. The absence of regular contact between pupils and their subject teachers is adversely affecting the continuity of learning in, for example, modern languages and geography. The time allocated to religious education is adequate. The school does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. The school is in the process of compiling a register of gifted and talented pupils. The highest-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 are placed in 'fast track' groups, where they study both French and Spanish. All pupils are encouraged to take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides.
42. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 builds on the strengthening links with the primary schools, in particular through the exchange of information about pupils and about their achievement in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6. All National Curriculum subjects are taught together with religious education and citizenship education. These subjects provide a

good range of appropriate and stimulating activities. French or Spanish is the core foreign language in Year 7, depending on which half of the population a pupil is allocated to at the beginning of the year. The programme for citizenship education includes all aspects of PSHE.

43. The school has created a broad curriculum that offers pupils a wide range of choices in Years 10 and 11. Additional and vocational GCSE subjects, together with a specifically designed programme for some pupils, enhance the breadth and relevance of the curriculum for this age group. Pupils follow a common core of subjects: English language and literature, mathematics, double or single award science, physical education, religious education and ICT. Religious education and citizenship form part of a general studies programme for pupils in Year 10. In Year 11 all pupils work towards a half GCSE in religious education and a half GCSE in ICT. However, the provision for ICT in Year 10 is unsatisfactory, as around 40 per cent of pupils do not receive their entitlement.
44. The range of options is designed to meet the needs of all pupils and to place an increasing emphasis on the vocational contexts of learning. To this effect the school currently offers General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Foundation and Intermediate courses in leisure and tourism, and a vocational GCSE in ICT. There is no provision at present for pupils to undertake work experience in Year 10. The school has deliberately delayed introducing this into the Year 10 curriculum because of the overwhelming complexity of finding work placements for such large numbers of pupils in the immediate area. However, there are plans to introduce work experience as part of a wider work-related programme for specific pupils in the near future.
45. Not all pupils study a modern foreign language or design and technology, and for particular pupils this can mean following another subject of their choice or an alternative programme. The school has had difficulties in establishing a work-related programme for low-attaining and disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11. The original programme was discontinued in 2002 mainly because of difficulties in obtaining local work experience, a major element of the programme. In 2002, a new programme for pupils in the lowest set in Year 11 was introduced in partnership with the local college of further education. However, this programme also proved unsuccessful. Pupils' attendance and behaviour have been very poor and the GCSE proved too difficult. Nevertheless, there are plans to extend the provision in September 2003. Various pathways have been designed that will allow considerable flexibility for all pupils. In partnership with the local Oaklands College of Further Education, twenty-four pupils will be offered courses leading to Level 1 awards in animal care, construction, exercise studies, horticulture, motor vehicle electronics, retail, travel and working with children. This increased range of achievement opportunities, particularly for lower-attaining pupils and for those who are underachieving, should offer them the best possible chance of success. Good achievement opportunities are also provided for higher-attaining pupils and those seeking to specialise in particular areas. However, the reduced number of pupils studying a modern language and design and technology in Years 10 and 11, seriously weakens the prospect of providing sustainable teaching groups in the sixth form.
46. The introduction of citizenship into the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has been well managed and is well supported by senior staff. The curriculum is relevant to the needs of pupils and to the local community. Relevant schemes of work have been developed and these are enhanced by visits from external speakers. Good use is made of topical and local issues. In Year 10, the general studies programme builds upon this solid foundation. The programme covers a wide range of relevant issues, including citizenship, drug education and sex education, and covers the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
47. Careers guidance is satisfactory and is provided for pupils of all ages. The programme begins in Year 7, when pupils undertake a day's activity on the theme 'what people do at work'. It is intended that some pupils will also spend a day at work with a relative. The programme continues through Years 8 and 9 and includes a day's activity in which pupils learn 'how employees got where they are'. Learning about careers continues in Years 10 and 11 as part of the citizenship programme.

48. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. There are links with a good range of sports and other adult clubs and societies. Relationships and links with partner institutions are satisfactory and strengthening. There are effective links with the main primary schools from which pupils are drawn and the school is beginning to develop links with other post-16 education providers.
49. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have equal access to the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and support is given through a range of activities including individual and small group support, setting and accelerated learning groups for literacy, numeracy, behaviour and social skills development. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have full opportunities to take GCSE courses. However, there are at present not enough opportunities for these pupils to follow work-related courses. A few disaffected pupils attend college on two days a week in Year 10. A few pupils in Year 10 and 11 have the opportunity to attend social skills courses held at the lower site, with successful outcomes. The use of specialist support from outside agencies is well managed within the school. The school fully meets statutory requirements related to pupils with statements and other SEN pupils.
50. After a delayed start the school is introducing strategies for teaching literacy across the curriculum. The adoption of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy by the English department is beginning to have an impact on pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening, but there is still much to do. There is increasing awareness of the importance of raising standards of literacy in all subjects in order to raise standards overall. Most classrooms have displays of key words and reference is made to these in lessons. Teachers are aware of the importance of focusing on language and spelling in their marking. However, not enough attention is given to the development of these skills in a systematic way in all subjects. Within mathematics the recommendations of the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy are being implemented, but the school has yet to introduce a strategy for the development of pupils' numeracy skills in all subjects. The appointment of an assistant headteacher to promote, support and monitor the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy signals the high priority the school has given to raising standards in Years 7 to 9.
51. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good and a strength of the school. The numbers of teachers and peripatetic staff involved, as well as the participation rate of pupils, are high. Within the expressive arts, there are choirs, a school band, instrumental groups and concerts. Drama and dance offer a variety of opportunities through clubs, workshops and whole-school productions. Lunchtime and after-school clubs include computing, writing, art, natural science, sociology, Italian, food, graphics and chess. GCSE examination revision classes are held during lunchtimes, after school and during the spring half-term and the Easter holidays. Sporting activities are extensive, with clubs operating every day. The school regularly fields over 40 different sports teams in various competitions. Pupils participate in a range of educational visits. The modern languages' annual visit to Barcelona caters for 135 pupils and the ski trips to Italy are well supported. The curriculum is enhanced by field trips and visits to museums, art galleries and places of worship. Year 7 and 8 pupils' residential camps provide good opportunities for team building. The school has strategies in place to improve business and community links and plans to appoint a co-ordinator of the extra-curricular programme.
52. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory overall. Assemblies take place once each week, but they are not used to enhance spiritual development. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. There is no evidence of planning for spiritual development in subject departments. In some subjects, opportunities for spiritual development are evident in the curriculum but these are not exploited in lessons. As a consequence, opportunities in most subjects are missed to enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development.
53. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Teaching strategies that allow pupils to express their views, explore moral dilemmas and form judgements were evident in some lessons. In one assembly, pupils were encouraged to think about how some people achieve well in spite of personal difficulties. This enabled them to think about their own circumstances and attitudes.

The school has clear expectations of pupils knowing right from wrong and pupils respond well when they are corrected. The senior management team and staff provide good role models for pupils. The curriculum in several subjects provides opportunities for pupils to explore moral dilemmas. For example, the study of literary texts in English invites pupils to explore their own attitudes and to make moral judgments.

54. Provision for social development is satisfactory. The school provides opportunities to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The prefect system, participation in School Council meetings and participation in community service enable pupils to exercise social responsibility and develop communication skills. Pupils also take an active part in providing help to the local community. All subjects contribute well towards pupils' social development through the use of group work and presentation. However, the lack of social skills of a significant number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is a major contributory factor to inappropriate behaviour in classrooms and public areas in the upper school. The split site makes it difficult for sixth form students to act as good role models for the majority of pupils.
55. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are several opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities that extend their cultural development. The school's curriculum, however, does not provide planned opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country, although there are aspects of religious education that make a significant contribution. The wide range of well-supported trips and visits to theatres, art galleries and museums, together with visits to European countries, all provide opportunities for pupils to develop cultural awareness. Some subjects do make a significant contribution to the cultural development of pupils. For example, in art and design the study of artists from other cultures forms an important part of the curriculum. In English, there is good exposure to the English literary tradition. In music, listening and playing music from different cultures enables pupils to discuss the circumstances behind the writing of certain pieces.

Sixth form

56. The sixth form has developed well since opening in September 2000. It is an inclusive sixth form and one in which curriculum provision is good. The school offers 21 GCE AS and A-level courses, with the addition of an extensive range of vocational courses offered to Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) level and to GNVQ Intermediate level in art and design, business, health and social care, ICT and leisure and recreation. This range of courses offers a considerable number of opportunities to students, particularly those with lower GCSE examination grades, who might otherwise not continue with their education. The school stipulates that students should have obtained a minimum of four A or B grades in the GCSE examination in order to embark upon an AS-level course. Numbers in the sixth form are increasing significantly with about 60 per cent of the students from Year 11 returning to Year 12 in 2002. The retention rate from Year 12 to 13 is lower than the national average of around 75 per cent, mainly due to the large number of students who stay for one-year courses. Retention to Year 13 A-level courses is improving. Students with special educational needs have good access to a range of vocational and academic courses and the quality of learning and range of learning opportunities are very good.
57. The timetable is carefully constructed and virtually every student in the present Year 12 was able to obtain his or her first choice of AS-level courses. A good range of enhancement courses is available for students outside the school day. However, there is no provision for students to improve their skills in communication, application of number and ICT, and this is having an adverse effect on their achievement. A good number of students are successful in improving their GCSE grades by re-taking mathematics and English.
58. The amount of teaching time allocated for all AS, A-level and Vocational courses is adequate for coverage of the course programmes. All students are expected to give additional time to subjects through independent study, but the irregular attendance of some students and inadequate time many students spend on their studies between lessons reduce teaching time because of the need for extensive revisiting of earlier topics. This is having a negative impact on achievement.

59. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. All students are encouraged to seek an interview with the careers staff to explore possible avenues after leaving school, but the onus is on students to request it. If they take the initiative, they can have individual careers interviews and are able to access information relevant to their potential careers. Few opportunities exist for work experience and work shadowing, but work experience is an integral part of the vocational course programmes. Appropriate advice and guidance are available for students intending to continue into higher education. Students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language are supported well.
60. Sixth form students are expected to take an active part in the life of the school. Community service occupies up to four hours over the two-week cycle. Many students support younger pupils with their learning, undertake school duties and manage the School Council. Most of the features of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development apply also to the sixth form. However, in addition to the lack of a daily act of collective worship there is no provision for religious education. Statutory requirements are therefore not met. The lack of a religious education programme in the sixth form limits the opportunities available for students to discuss spiritual and moral issues. A series of day conferences provide opportunities for students' personal development when such matters as personal health, drug awareness and current affairs are covered.
61. Overall, the range of enrichment opportunities provided in the sixth form is good. Music, drama and dance activities provide regular opportunities for students to practise and improve their skills in informal settings, as well as through major productions. Visits abroad enable students to improve their skills and extend their knowledge - for example, in modern languages, art and textiles. Provision is strong in sport, particularly in football and basketball; as part of community service, some students coach Year 7 and primary school pupils. Regular visits are made to theatres, art galleries, museums, field study centres and other institutions that support learning. Students are given support with their learning through the provision of regular revision classes and study skills talks from outside agencies. Students are given an insight into university life through a higher education day and visits to university campuses. The school is focusing on work experience and careers as areas for further development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

62. Procedures to promote and ensure pupils' well-being are good. The school has good induction arrangements for pupils entering the school in Year 7, with the result that they receive good support in their first year of secondary education. Child protection procedures are good. The designated child protection officer and his deputy oversee issues relating to child protection and care is taken to ensure that all adults in the school know the procedures. Appropriate records are kept of pupils on the 'at risk' register and 'looked after' children. Liaison with external agencies is good and referred cases are monitored and followed up well. The school has good arrangements for first aid. An appropriate number of staff hold first aid certificates. Records of accidents are kept but these records do not show the name of the person giving treatment and administering medicines. Pupils are made aware of the support available to them and they confirm that they are well cared for when they are ill or otherwise distressed. However, there are weaknesses in the overall procedures for ensuring the health and safety of staff and pupils. Several items of concern noted in a health and safety audit of the lower school site, carried out in 2001, have yet to be rectified. A full health and safety audit of the upper site has yet to be carried out. Some subject departments are fully aware of their responsibilities for health and safety: pupils in science and physical education, for example, are given clear guidance on safe procedures for using and moving equipment. However, risk assessments are not carried out in design and technology. The health and safety officer is unclear as to her role with regard to the initiation and monitoring of health and safety reviews.
63. The school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Both teaching and support staff feel that they are well supported by the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team in managing pupils' behaviour. The behaviour policy is

clear and supported by a system of commendations and awards to promote good behaviour and an escalating series of sanctions to deter inappropriate behaviour. However, the behaviour strategy is less effective than it should be because:

- not all teachers implement the behaviour policy consistently. Some teachers always challenge behaviour that contravenes school rules, while others do not. This encourages some pupils to constantly test the boundaries of unacceptable behaviour;
- there is a lack of consistency in the application of sanctions. This arises as a result of teachers moving between sites and not being able to follow up instances of inappropriate behaviour at the end of the school day;
- the weak classroom management skills of many temporary and unqualified teachers leads in some lessons to inappropriate behaviour escalating and involving too many pupils to be adequately dealt with by the sanctions outlined in the behaviour policy.

64. The school recognises the importance of an effective pastoral system to provide pupils with good academic and personal support and raise achievement. Pupils are well known to their form tutors and relate well to them. Form tutors, subject leaders and subject teachers meet regularly to discuss the progress and attainment of individual pupils and any difficulties or achievements are recorded and monitored well. Pupils interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that they feel well cared for and appreciate the pastoral and academic support they receive. However, continuity in pastoral support is difficult to achieve because it is not possible to ensure that tutors are based predominantly on the same site in successive years. Because of this it is not possible to establish a system in which tutors remain with their tutor groups for several years. This is a real disadvantage as pupils in this school have a particular need for stability.
65. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. The school has appointed a full-time attendance officer who takes responsibility for contacting parents on the first day of absence. The electronic registration system is well used to record pupils' attendance at every lesson and parents are contacted by telephone or letter if the school has any concerns. The school promotes good attendance by the awarding of certificates and small prizes. As a result, attendance is improving.

Assessment

66. Overall, procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are satisfactory. Strategies are clearly laid down in the school's teaching and learning policy. These include the use of formative assessment to support learning within lessons and of summative assessment to be used at the end of a unit, module or course. The use of assessment has been particularly effective in Years 10 and 11 and contributed significantly to the much improved 2002 GCSE results. Early in Year 10, pupils' Year 9 National Curriculum test results are used to set GCSE target grades. Pupils' progress towards targets is then carefully monitored and regular assessments are made to compare performance with predicted grades. This monitoring enables any underachievement to be highlighted and prompt action to be taken by teachers. This process, known as the MISP (monitoring individual student progress) process, which is part of the school's raising achievement programme, also includes interviews with pupils and parents. It is proving successful in raising standards and aspirations. The process is now being extended to include Years 7 to 9, where end-of-Year 6 National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science are being used to set targets for pupils at the end of Year 9. However, assessments in most other subjects are unreliable and do not provide accurate information on the levels at which pupils are working.
67. Overall, the use of assessment to guide planning is satisfactory overall. There is evidence of developing good practice in English, mathematics and science, where there are extensive test data available, and in art and design, geography and physical education, where Teacher Assessments are reliable. However, assessment procedures in design and technology and ICT are unsatisfactory. There is an urgent need for the systematic identification and sharing of good assessment practice in order to raise standards. The school meets statutory requirements for reporting pupils' assessments at the end of Year 9.

68. There is at present no school guidance on the use of marking to raise standards and the quality of marking varies, both within and between subjects. Marking is good in geography and religious education where teachers write perceptive comments that help pupils improve their knowledge and understanding. Some teachers in other subjects provide examples of good practice that could be used as models for others. For instance, a mathematics teacher provides 'action points' for pupils to pursue after marking their work. However, there is a need for greater consistency in order to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to improve the standard of their work.
69. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are very good. Literacy levels are assessed regularly, using standardised testing procedures. Teachers are provided with up-dated information by the special needs co-ordinator and most make effective use of this to set targets and plan individual programmes. IEP's are written for all pupils with special needs and progress towards targets is reviewed regularly. Learning support assistants use their expertise to assess when pupils' targets have been met. The monitoring and recording of the progress of pupils with statements are exemplary. Annual reviews include useful information for parents and outside agencies and fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. The department has very good links with outside specialists and effective use is made of them to support the needs of pupils. Very good use is made of specialist advice to ensure that the needs of pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language are properly identified.

Sixth form

Advice, support and guidance

70. The care and support for students in the sixth form are satisfactory. Sixth form tutors meet with their students regularly and ensure that students are aware of help that is available if they have difficulties. The school makes good efforts to prepare Year 11 pupils for sixth form life. A special open evening is arranged for Year 11 pupils and parents, and the school has produced an excellent sixth form prospectus for students, which provides comprehensive information on life within the sixth form and the courses on offer. Each member of the sixth form is allocated to a personal tutor, who acts as a mentor and guide. Careers advice and guidance are good. In A-level history students do not receive the advice and support they require to enable them to have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and to obtain their desired grades.
71. Form tutors regularly check and update the attendance record of each student and ensure that students are well aware of the need for regular attendance in order to succeed in the sixth form. These procedures are effective for most students, who attend regularly. However, the irregular attendance of a small number of students makes the overall attendance rate well below average.

Assessment

72. The procedures for assessing and monitoring students' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. Individual interviews in Year 11, and again at the start of Year 12, help students select appropriate sixth form courses. The Year 12 progress check at the end of the 2002 autumn term proved to be too late to enable some students to make necessary adjustments to their choice of subject. It is planned to rectify this next year by carrying out the check earlier in the term. In Year 13 a more flexible scheme is in place befitting the much smaller number of students presently on roll. GCSE point scores are used for target setting and the MISP system, which is being used very successfully in Years 10 and 11, has been introduced to monitor students' progress. The arrangements for the verification of vocational courses are satisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

73. A small number of parents, five per cent only, responded to the questionnaire and only 30 attended the pre-inspection meeting. Nevertheless, the views expressed through these channels

show that despite some strong reservations about the reorganisation of schools in Borehamwood, parents are supportive and want the school to succeed. They would feel comfortable about approaching the school if they had any problems or concerns. They also feel that the school expects their children to do their best and that on the whole their children like school. The inspection supports these positive views. The inspection also supports several of the concerns expressed by parents. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents pointed to the problems caused by the difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers. They expressed the view that in lessons taken by regular teachers standards are high, but that where a series of temporary teachers takes lessons, there is a lack of continuity and consequent deterioration in standards. Inspectors agree. Parents also feel that behaviour is not good enough, they are not kept well informed about their children's progress and the school does not work closely with them. The inspection supports parents' views with regard to behaviour in the upper school, but notes the marked improvement in behaviour in the lower school since the LEA review in 2001. In Years 10 and 11 there is a core of pupils with negative attitudes and poorly developed social skills who are very resistant to change. These pupils are having an undue influence on the general ethos of the upper school site.

74. Inspection evidence does not support parents' concerns about the information the school provides. The school makes considerable efforts to provide good quality information for parents about the school and their children's progress. The school has produced a high quality professionally prepared prospectus, which meets statutory requirements and contains a good deal of information on the school's aims, the curriculum and other activities. Regular newsletters are sent to parents giving additional information about school events and activities being organised by the school. Annual reports contain enough information for parents to understand what their children can do and where they need to improve in most subjects. Each year group holds at least one consultation evening for parents to discuss their children's progress. The school tries hard to secure the support and involvement of parents. The school makes strenuous efforts to encourage parents to attend parents' meetings and staff are always willing to arrange alternative times for those who cannot attend. The school planner provides a good channel for parents to communicate with the school but relatively few parents take the opportunity to do so. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator regularly liaises with parents, and they are invited to participate in annual reviews of pupils' progress to discuss the options available to them in pupils' IEPs. The governors' annual report is informative and presented in an informal 'reader friendly' way. However, the report does not fully comply with statutory requirements as it does not give details of the school's annual income and expenditure.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

75. The headteacher and senior staff were presented with a number of significant challenges when the school opened in September 2000 as the result of the amalgamation of two upper schools and three middle schools. Amongst these challenges were:
- the very low achievement of pupils in the schools that were merged to form Hertswood School. For example, only 23 per cent of pupils in the two upper schools attained five or more A*-C grades in the 2000 GCSE examination;
 - the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs: for example, 69 per cent of the Year 7 entry in September 2001 were identified as having special educational needs;
 - the disaffection of a significant number of pupils caused by the upheaval of reorganization and the low morale of staff in the schools being closed;
 - the split site nature of the school - at the time of opening the upper school was located about two miles from the lower school;
 - the further disaffection and disruption caused by unfinished building work on the lower school site – described in the 2001 LEA review as a 'building site' with a lack of a feel of permanency because of 'unfinished areas, corners that have building site materials left in them and fields that are ill kept and difficult to maintain';

- over a thousand pupils arriving on the day the school opened with an almost completely new teaching staff.
76. The headteacher brought to the school extensive and successful experience of headship in challenging circumstances and is providing the strong leadership necessary to establish the school and take it forward. He has brought to the school clarity of purpose, high expectations and a well-conceived strategy for improvement. The many challenges facing the school have been prioritized and the overriding aim is to raise achievement. This has been successfully communicated to all who are associated with the school and has been instrumental in driving the progress the school has made since opening. The headteacher has high expectations of the staff and continually challenges them to reflect on their performance and practice, with the aim of improving teaching and raising standards. Challenging targets have been set and used successfully to drive up results in the 2002 GCSE examination. As a result, the school is gaining greater acceptance among parents and the local community.
 77. Senior managers work effectively as a team, sharing the headteacher's drive to improve the school. They carry out their individual roles well. Line management responsibilities are clear and are used effectively to support colleagues and maintain the momentum for improvement.
 78. One of the features of the school is the rapid promotion to management positions of those with competence, a commitment to the school and a willingness to take on additional responsibilities. As a result, the senior management team is younger than in most schools. This does provide the school with a real strength in that senior managers show a remarkable openness to new ideas and this encourages all staff to show initiative and feel they have a real stake in decisions that affect the school and its development.
 79. The senior leadership team understand well the importance of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in order to raise standards. Through a well-structured programme of subject reviews and lesson observations, senior managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas in which improvement is needed. All teachers are subject to appraisal. This is carried out every year and leads to the setting of performance targets.
 80. The school makes very good use of new technology to store and retrieve essential management information. A comprehensive assessment database has been established and good use is being made of this information to raise standards through target setting and the close monitoring of pupils' progress. Detailed analyses of pupils' performance are undertaken and closely scrutinised as part of the review process with heads of department. There is now a need to ensure that all subject leaders and co-ordinators are equally effective in monitoring and evaluating work in their areas and in making use of assessment information to guide planning. The school recognises this and has plans to develop these aspects of the work of middle managers.
 81. Middle managers, such as heads of faculties, heads of department and heads of year, are held accountable to senior management. Like the senior managers, many of those with middle management responsibilities have achieved rapid promotion and most are leading their areas well. Most have responded well to the challenges presented and are helping to achieve improvements throughout the school. This is evident in art, modern languages, religious education, citizenship, geography, music and physical education. Leadership in English, mathematics and science receives much support from senior managers and is satisfactory. Leadership is improving in ICT. However, there are weaknesses in leadership in design and technology and in the arrangements for managing history.
 82. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The commitment of all staff to providing a secure learning environment is strong. The Code of Practice is now well established and, through effective training and the good quality information provided by the special needs co-ordinator, staff are familiar with the requirements. Learning support assistants are well deployed and provide very good support both to pupils and also to the management of special needs on the two school sites. The quality of administration to support the monitoring, evaluation and development of the new Code of Practice is very good. Support for new learning support

assistants is very good. The element of funding devolved to the school for special educational needs in the classroom is used effectively to enable pupils to make satisfactory progress. However, there is no behaviour support co-ordinator in the upper school and this impacts adversely on attitudes and behaviour in lessons, particularly in Year 10.

83. There is a high level of awareness of the needs of pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The senior management team has drawn up plans to ensure that future provision fully meets the needs of these pupils. A well-qualified co-ordinator supports pupils in the early stages of learning English. However, the school does not receive sufficient

funding to provide enough support for pupils who might be capable of attaining higher GCSE grades because the resources have to be directed towards pupils in the earliest stages of learning English.

84. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory requirements. The exceptions are the provision of a daily act of worship and of religious education in the sixth form, together with some aspects of health and safety requirements and of the governors' annual report. The governors are knowledgeable and are making a significant contribution to the school in its formative years. They are well aware of the scope of their responsibilities. They receive regular reports on results and expenditure, take part in training events and make regular visits to the school in order that they may perform the role of 'critical friends' most effectively. Relationships with the headteacher and senior staff are supportive and professional; governors effectively delegate many of their responsibilities to them and contribute to performance management arrangements. Overall, the governing body is very effective.

85. The quality of financial management and planning is very good. Governors are actively involved with the headteacher and the senior management team in financial planning and monitoring and are given very good support by the school bursar and secretarial staff. All school plans are carefully costed and directly linked to educational outcomes. The school is in receipt of a number of additional grants and these contribute to what appears to be a high income per pupil. However, all expenditure is aimed at improving standards. The school has very good procedures to ensure that they get the best value for money in the use of its resources, and all additional funding received by the school is used for the intended purposes. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Resourcing

86. The match of teachers in terms of subject expertise to the needs of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school, in common with many in the Greater London area, experiences difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers: fifty-four teachers left the school in the last two years. The headteacher conducts exit interviews with teachers to determine the reasons why they have decided to leave the school. The reasons given most frequently are:

- the school's close proximity to the Inner London area, where teachers receive a higher cost-of-living allowance;
- the many opportunities for promotion in the Greater London area, even for teachers with very little teaching experience;
- the added stress and anxiety caused by the split site.

87. The headteacher, senior management and governors work extremely hard in trying to fill all teaching posts with permanent staff and they offer an imaginative range of incentives to retain staff. Strengths of the school are the induction and support given to new staff. New teachers speak highly of the lively and carefully structured induction programme, and of the very good support they receive. This is essential as, with about a third of the teaching staff in their first year of teaching, the school relies heavily on newly qualified teachers. The enthusiasm and high level of commitment of these teachers are noticeable.

88. A strength of the school is its involvement in teacher training. It is involved with the Graduate Teacher Programme and six universities approve the school for training teachers. School staff provide very good mentors for trainee teachers and several trainee teachers have chosen to seek permanent posts in the school. Nevertheless, because of the difficulties the school faces in recruiting and retaining teachers there is an undue reliance on temporary and unqualified teachers. This is disruptive to teaching and learning and has an adverse effect on pupils' progress and achievement. Subjects particularly affected include English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, and ICT. It is notable that in those subjects where there is a stable and well qualified staff, such as art and design, physical education, geography, business studies, psychology and special educational needs, standards are higher.

89. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good. All staff development activities link with the school and subject improvement plans, with the clear aim of raising achievement. The professional development co-ordinator organises a very good programme of meetings for staff and support is given to staff studying for higher degrees. The professional development budget invests significantly in raising the quality of teachers' skills. This enables many staff to obtain promotion.
90. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school library provides a good range of texts to support pupils' work across the curriculum. Patterns of borrowing are monitored in order to gauge reading habits and provide the most appropriate reading materials for pupils and staff. The overall provision of computers is satisfactory, but some subjects, including mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, and physical education, do not have easy access or make too little use of them.

Accommodation

91. The accommodation in the upper and lower schools has many good features. Both the general teaching rooms and the specialist teaching rooms on both sites are good and well used. The accommodation for science and religious education, for example, is very good. Both libraries provide satisfactory accommodation and are mostly well used by pupils. However, the split site nature of the school has an adverse impact on teaching and learning, and the general ethos of the school. This makes the school accommodation unsatisfactory overall. The difficulties caused by the split site are exacerbated by the many other challenges the school faces at this stage of its development. The main reasons for this are as follows:

- there is added stress caused to teachers, who are already working in challenging circumstances, by having to travel between sites;
- teachers are occasionally and unavoidably late for the start of a lesson after travelling from one site to the other and this can have an adverse effect on pupils' behaviour;
- although teachers have one main teaching room, most teach in several different rooms when on the other site. When this occurs neither the teacher nor the pupils have the benefit of working in a specialist room;
- an extra burden is placed on teachers as they have to ensure that appropriate resources are available in the different teaching rooms they may be using on each site;
- it is difficult for faculty heads and subject leaders to monitor and support teachers effectively when they are teaching on a different site or when teaching rooms are not grouped together;
- where teaching rooms are not grouped together, it is difficult to define areas where teams of teachers have clear responsibility for ensuring orderly behaviour;
- communication is made more difficult: for example, it is not possible to have a daily staff briefing before the start of morning school;
- the two locations create difficulties in arranging lunchtime and after school extra-curricular activities.

92. The school grounds are pleasant and there are many areas for pupils to use in good weather. The site manager and his team maintain the school premises to a good state of cleanliness and this makes a positive contribution to the ethos of the school. However, an ongoing problem for the school is the amount of vandalism caused by intruders out of school hours. The cost of repairs is a continual drain on the school budget: approximately £20,000 was spent in the last school year on the replacement of broken windows.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

93. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The priorities for the sixth form are clearly identified as a result of effective planning by the school leadership team and the

governing body. The sixth form is seen as the major provider of post-16 education in Borehamwood and closely follows the principle of matching provision to the needs of students and the local community. The sixth form is growing rapidly, as increasing numbers of Year 11 pupils seek to continue their education beyond the age of 16. Students of differing abilities are integrated well and considerable effort is made to ensure that this is an inclusive sixth form. The sixth form management team have clear roles and responsibilities and ensure that day-to-day administration is efficient. In response to the diverse requirements of students the school has appointed an assistant headteacher with responsibility for curriculum development for the full 14 to 19 age range, including building curricular links with local colleges of further education. The development of alternative courses and close links with further education will considerably increase achievement opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 as well as students in the sixth form. Subject leadership in the nine subjects reported on in depth is good in business, health and social care, physical education and English, and satisfactory in chemistry and media studies. Subject leadership in mathematics, design and technology (textiles) and geography is considerably strengthened by the very good support of members of the senior leadership team.

94. The school has identified the need to strengthen the mentorship roles of sixth form tutors in order to improve attendance and more closely monitor students' progress. The sixth form is distinct yet also an important part of the whole school. Sixth formers are known well individually and benefit from responsibilities they undertake. Many contribute effectively to the school as a whole through community service, but the split site diminishes the overall impact of the sixth form on the ethos of the school. The school strives hard to encourage pupils to continue their education beyond the age of 16. The range of courses offered suits the abilities of most students. Expenditure on the sixth form is slightly greater than the income it receives. This is because of the need to subsidise some very small teaching groups while the sixth form is developing. Senior managers and governors are fully aware of the costs of the sixth form and the strategic plan indicates that the sixth form should be fully cost-effective in the next two years.

Resources

95. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is better in the sixth form than in the main school and is satisfactory overall. However, there are some serious gaps. At the time of the inspection there was no permanent teacher for the A-level history course and no subject leader in biology and many teachers lack the full range of specialist skills needed in design and technology. Arrangements for monitoring sixth form teaching are systematic, as there are for the school as a whole. Overall, the sixth form is adequately resourced. However, there is a need for more library based resource material in mathematics, basic learning resources in design and technology, and access to and use of ICT in physical education, health and social care, media studies and geography.

Accommodation

96. The accommodation for subject areas is mostly good. Most subject teaching rooms are grouped together and this facilitates access to resources and the monitoring and support of teaching by subject leaders. However, sixth form mathematics lessons are spread throughout the upper school and this does not encourage students to develop strong links with the department. Students are provided with a large and well-furnished independent study area and there is suitable accommodation for recreational activities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97. In order to raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governors, senior management and staff of Hertswood School, with the help of the local education authority, should:

Main school

(1) Raise attainment in Years 7 to 9 by:

- ensuring that raising achievement, and in particular the achievement of boys, has the highest priority in all school and subject development planning;
- strengthening curriculum links with primary schools in order to ensure continuity and progress in pupils' learning when they transfer to Hertswood;
- ensuring that the literacy strategy is implemented effectively and monitored closely so that the best practice can be identified and shared;
- developing a school numeracy strategy, ensuring that it is fully implemented in all subjects and that the effects of the strategy on improving pupils' standards of numeracy are carefully evaluated.

(paragraphs: 1-3, 5, 8, 30, 49, 71, 93, 96-98, 100, 102-103, 108, 110, 116-118, 124, 133-134, 166-167, 183)

(2) Improve the quality of provision and standards of attainment in history, design and technology and ICT.

(paragraphs: 30, 42, 44, 63, 76, 137, 138-144, 151-160, 162-164)

(3) Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:

- lesson activities are carefully planned to match more closely the attainment levels of pupils;
- teachers' expectations are high enough and that lesson activities provide pupils with appropriate levels of challenge;
- effective classroom management strategies are identified and shared;
- appropriate training is provided to ensure that the classroom management strategies of all teachers are brought up to the standard of the best;
- middle managers are given appropriate training to enable them to monitor and support behaviour management strategies in the classroom;
- all teachers mark pupils' work regularly and consistently, and that the marking provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve the standard of their work.

(paragraphs: 2, 16-19, 27, 30-34, 61,64, 69, 113, 122, 130, 134, 139, 141, 143, 148, 162, 169, 176, 186)

(4) Improve the use of assessment information to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 by ensuring that:

- the assessment of pupils' attainment levels is accurate and reliable in all subjects;
- there are clear expectations about how subject leaders should use assessment information with their subject teams;
- assessment information is used by teachers to set attainment targets at the beginning of each year, and that these are shared with pupils and clearly understood by them;
- there are procedures and timetables for monitoring pupils' progress and attainment in all subjects, and for making judgements about whether pupils are doing well enough.

(paragraphs: 4, 63, 136, 172, 179)

(5) Improve provision for pupils' personal development and the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils by ensuring that:

- there is a more systematic and co-ordinated approach to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development;
- the schemes of work in all subjects reflect the importance of these aspects of pupils' personal development;
- teachers are provided with appropriate training so that the need for consistency in implementing the school behaviour policy is fully understood in order to promote an unswerving response to inappropriate behaviour.

(paragraphs: 2, 10, 16-19, 21, 26-27, 31, 51, 61, 69, 71, 77, 99, 113, 122, 135, 169)

- (6) Ensure that all school organization and administrative systems take account of the need to minimise the amount of travel by teachers between the upper and lower school sites.
(*paragraphs: 13, 63, 81, 86, 105, 141, 178*)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve provision in history by ensuring that the A-level course is taught by suitably qualified and experienced teachers.
(paragraphs: 27, 36)
- (2) Fulfil statutory requirements by providing a course in religious education.
(paragraphs: 56, 77)
- (3) Maintain the drive to improve the poor attendance of some students.
(paragraphs: 13, 24)
- (4) Ensure that curriculum planning gives a high priority to the development of students' skills in communication, application of number and ICT, and that account is taken of the need to develop these skills in all subjects.
(paragraphs: 13, 202, 207, 212, 227, 229-230, 234, 236-237, 240, 243, 246, 255, 258-259)
- (5) Develop and implement a strategy to promote the independent study and learning skills of all students.
(paragraphs: 13, 25, 37, 204, 212, 216, 229, 247, 258, 260-261)
- (6) Develop more effective means of discovering the views of students and of reassuring them that their views are taken into account in decision-making.
(paragraph: 26)

In addition to the preceding areas for improvement the following less significant weaknesses need attention:

Main school

- The adverse impact of the two-week timetable on teaching and learning in some subjects *(paragraphs: 2, 40, 141)*; the provision of collective worship *(paragraphs: 40, 77)*; regular reviews of health and safety arrangements *(paragraphs: 61, 79, 143)*; financial information in the governors' annual report *(paragraph: 79)*.

Sixth form

- Teaching and learning in biology *(paragraphs: 37, 202)*; the adverse impact of the split-site *(paragraphs: 13, 249)*; the development of a sixth form ethos *(paragraph: 26)*; the provision of collective worship *(paragraphs: 56, 77)*; the marking of students' work *(paragraphs: 208, 214, 236, 248)*.

Objectives related to: raising achievement; improving the quality of teaching and learning; improving the collection and use of assessment information; and improving attendance, are included in the school improvement plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	135
	Sixth form	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	2	22	55	44	9	2	1
Percentage	1	16	41	33	7	1	1
Sixth form							
Number	1	13	18	15	0	0	0
Percentage	2	28	38	32	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1259	175
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	207	16

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	394	44

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	83

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	101

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	136	121	257

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29	67	63
	Girls	54	74	65
	Total	83	141	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	32 (36)	55 (53)	50 (61)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	5 (10)	26 (23)	10 (21)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	69	49
	Girls	91	78	55
	Total	151	147	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (50)	58 (58)	40 (51)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (15)	25 (22)	7 (16)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	119	133	252

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	40	111	117
	Girls	53	120	133
	Total	93	231	250
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	37 (26)	92 (83)	99 (93)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.2
	National	39.8

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

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	Male	Female	Total
	2002	25	13	38

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	24	12	36
	Average point score per candidate	63.9 (9.8)	67.5 (10.5)	65.1 (10.3)
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	24	12	36	7	0	7
	Average point score per candidate	63.9 (9.9)	67.5 (10.7)	65.1 (10.4)	122.8 (9.0)	0 (9.))	122.8 (.0)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (17.7)	* (17.4)	* (9.8)	* (11.4)	* (10.6)

*National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available. Due to changes to the structure of A/AS levels in 2002, the points system has been modified using a new UCAS tariff. The 2002 average point scores are not therefore comparable to the 2001 scores. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

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
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1264	165	12
6	0	0
28	0	0
12	0	0
1	1	0
6	0	0
14	3	0
13	0	0
2	0	0
13	0	0
4	0	0
26	0	0
1	0	0
6	0	0
5	0	0
33	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	674

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	64
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.8
Key Stage 4	22.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	4,744,741
Total expenditure	4,914,689
Expenditure per pupil	4065
Balance brought forward from previous year	184,033
Balance carried forward to next year	14,085

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	54
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	150

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	5
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1434
Number of questionnaires returned	74

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	22	66	9	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	54	12	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	46	26	8	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	46	28	14	1
The teaching is good.	14	61	14	4	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	42	22	11	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	43	14	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	51	5	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	15	38	31	14	3
The school is well led and managed.	16	49	11	15	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	18	53	23	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	46	18	3	11

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The good subject knowledge of most teachers.
- Provision for lower-attaining pupils is good and learning support assistants are used effectively.
- Good opportunities for pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in all years.
- The marking of pupils' work.
- Opportunities for pupils to engage in extended pieces of writing and paired and small group work.

98. Results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in English in 2002 were very low both in relation to all schools and to similar schools. Results in the 2002 tests were below those obtained in 2001. The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 9 was well below expectations. Girls achieved better results than boys.
99. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations in both English and English literature were well below the national averages. The English results were slightly lower in 2002 than in 2001. Results in English literature were considerably lower in 2002 than in 2001. This was due to the decision to enter almost all pupils for the subject. Both boys and girls performed better in English than in other subjects taken but they both performed less well in English literature than in other subjects. Achievement at the end of Year 11 was below expectations. In 2002, girls performed better than boys in both English and English literature. Results in both National Curriculum tests and the GCSE examinations have been affected by the well below average standards of attainment of pupils in English on entry to the school and the high levels of teacher turnover experienced by the department over the last two years.
100. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by pupils in all years are below expectations. However, as a result of improvements in teaching and learning, standards are above those indicated by recent test and examination results. Achievement is overall below expectations because of frequent teacher changes, low standards of literacy and the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some pupils.
101. Attainment in speaking and listening is below national expectations in all years. In most lessons pupils respond to questions when asked by teachers and contribute when encouraged to do so. Pupils are able to co-operate in pair and group work, for example, when discussing the issue of school uniform in a Year 9 lesson or when debating the case for and against battery farming in a lively Year 8 lesson. In a Year 9 lesson on an extract from Mary Shelley's novel, pupils were able to discuss the moral issues involved in Dr Frankenstein's attempt to create a perfect human being. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were able to discuss the ambivalent feelings of the narrator of the poem 'Present from My Aunts in Pakistan' about her Pakistani heritage. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills by making extended oral contributions or engaging in small-group discussion.
102. Attainment in reading is below national expectations in all years. Pupils read a range of novels, plays and poetry, including work on Beowulf and Grendel and Shakespeare texts in Years 7 to 9, and on texts such as 'Of Mice and Men' and poetry from the GCSE anthology in Years 10 and 11. In some lessons teachers emphasise the range of different reading skills, such as skim reading. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson that focused on a text about Madame Tussaud's. By the end of Year 11 pupils are able to read for meaning and to identify perspectives on individuals, community and society. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson where key points about loneliness

and responsibility were brought out in a study of Elizabeth Jennings' poem 'My Grandmother'. Separate library lessons have recently been discontinued. This restricts pupils' opportunities to access books. However, a new emphasis on horror and fantasy genres is planned with the assistance of the librarian. This is part of a strategy to improve boys' reading skills and their enthusiasm for reading.

103. Attainment in writing is below expectations in all years. Pupils in Year 7 can draw spider diagrams to plan their work and Year 9 pupils are able to describe and use grammatical terms such as connectives. Although many Year 11 pupils have difficulty in producing extended pieces of writing, some higher-attaining pupils are able to write at length to describe the structure of 'Of Mice and Men' and to produce extended autobiographies for coursework. Year 11 pupils are also able to evaluate each other's writing. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are given work appropriate to their attainment levels and are provided with appropriate additional support in all years. There is at present no strategy for providing extended work for gifted and talented pupils.
104. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are unsatisfactory overall. This is largely because of the unsatisfactory behaviour of a core of pupils in Years 7 and 11. Most pupils take care in the presentation of their work but the negative attitudes of a small number of mainly lower-attaining pupils is seen in the lack of care in their work. Relationships between pupils and teachers are mostly good in all years.
105. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. Most teachers in the department have good subject knowledge but non-specialist teachers are in need of additional training in the four-part lesson structure in the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers plan their lessons effectively, have appropriate expectations of pupils and use a variety of teaching methods, including the use of visual aids and starter and plenary activities. However, not enough use is made of paired and small group work. Pupils were given opportunities to consider moral issues in relation to texts such as 'Animal Farm' in a Year 8 lesson and considered cultural issues when discussing the experiences of children from other cultures in Year 10. The quality of ongoing marking is unsatisfactory as it does not enable pupils to gain a clear understanding of the level at which they are working and how they can improve their work. Teaching does not focus enough on the retention of key literary terms such as alliteration. Homework is used effectively to extend work in lessons. Learning support assistants are used effectively and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Similarly, careful attention is paid to the needs of pupils with English as an additional language, who also make good progress in the subject.
106. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department has received good support from senior management and changes are being made to ensure that literacy is fully incorporated into revised schemes of work. Senior managers have reviewed teaching and learning in the subject and the head of department is monitoring effectively the work of other English teachers. The department's plan for improvement is appropriate and there is a shared commitment to raising achievement. Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Non-specialists in the department need further training. Accommodation is good, with dedicated classrooms on both sites and attractive subject displays focusing on literacy on the walls. Learning resources in the department are good and there are opportunities for theatre visits by pupils.

Literacy across the curriculum

107. Strategies for teaching literacy throughout the school are unsatisfactory. Low levels of literacy impede pupils' ability to make progress. The school is in the process of implementing the National Literacy Strategy. The co-ordinator with responsibility for literacy has completed an audit of methods being used to develop pupils' literacy skills in all subjects, in order to identify and share the best practice. Good examples of the development of literacy skills are seen in art and design, geography and religious education. In these subjects, attention is paid in the marking of pupils' work to the correction of spelling and grammatical errors. Key words are displayed and this helps pupils to develop a better understanding of their meanings. However, the

development of pupils' literacy skills is not given a high enough priority in other subjects. The school intends to ensure that attention to the development of literacy skills is included in the schemes of work in all subjects.

Drama

108. Drama is taught as a separate subject and forms part of the expressive arts curriculum area. Teachers' Assessments show that standards in drama in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were well below average and achievement was below expectations. There was little difference in the standards attained by boys and girls. The GCSE results in 2002 were well below average and achievement was below expectations. Boys and girls attained similar results. Both boys and girls performed less well in drama than in other subjects in 2002.
109. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by pupils presently in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 are above those attained in 2002 and close to national expectations. The good quality of teaching enables pupils to understand and apply a variety of dramatic techniques and this has contributed to improved standards. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are able to work effectively in teams, use improvisation techniques and act in role, and are beginning to understand the use of space and audience. In a Year 9 lesson, lower-attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, were able to identify high status characters in an exercise on leadership. Higher-attaining pupils were able to recollect key points from earlier lessons but middle-attaining pupils lacked the confidence necessary to contribute to class discussion. In Year 11, pupils are able to demonstrate a wide range of dramatic techniques including forum theatre, improvisations and hot seating. In a Year 10 lesson pupils used music effectively in a mime designed to demonstrate a gangster theme. Pupils of all attainment levels are able to evaluate their own and each other's performances. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to develop the ability to edit performances.
110. Attitudes and behaviour are good in almost all drama lessons. In Years 7 to 9 pupils co-operate effectively when working in teams. In Years 10 and 11 pupils gain considerably in confidence and consolidate their drama skills. They are committed to the subject, take part enthusiastically in activities, listen to each other's ideas and work effectively as a team. Pupils' attitudes have a positive effect on both planning and performance in drama lessons. However, the attitudes and behaviour of a small number of Year 10 pupils are adversely affected by the delays caused by the movement of teachers between the upper and the lower schools.
111. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. All teachers in the department are well qualified in drama and have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully and use a variety of teaching methods effectively. Homework is used to reinforce learning in Years 10 and 11, but not enough use is made of written work either in lessons or as homework in Years 7 to 9. The department runs clubs for the upper and lower schools and there are opportunities for both cross-curricular work, such as the teaching of *commedia dell'arte* concepts in the dance department, and also for annual productions and theatre visits.
112. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department provides effective leadership and is currently incorporating literacy into schemes of work. Accommodation and resources for drama are good, with the use of two drama studios in the lower school and a drama studio and a hall in the upper school, but there is scope for the increased use of ICT in the department.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The strong commitment to raising achievement.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9.
- Provision of extra-curricular activities.
- Assessment procedures.
- Displays of pupils' work and of curriculum information.

Areas for improvement

- There are pockets of unsatisfactory teaching and learning.
- The sharing of good practice in teaching and learning.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a significant number of pupils.
- The implementation of a school numeracy strategy.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

113. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well below average in comparison with all schools and below average in comparison with similar schools. Achievement was adversely affected by school reorganisation and staff turnover and, as a result, was below expectations. Girls performed better than boys in 2002 but less well in 2001. Mathematics test results in 2002 were better than those obtained in English and similar to those obtained in science.
114. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination, although well below average, were considerably better than the results obtained in 2001. The percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-C was well below the national average but the percentage attaining grades A*-G was average. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory, when standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are taken into account. Girls performed better than boys and they also gained significantly better results in mathematics than in their other subjects.
115. Inspection evidence shows the standards attained by pupils presently in all years to be below average in relation to national expectations. The impact of the school's initiative to raise achievement is having a beneficial effect in all years so that standards are beginning to improve and are better than in 2002. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve similar standards to other pupils.
116. By the end of Year 9 higher-attaining pupils are able to determine the N^{th} term of simple sequences, construct a triangle using a ruler and a pair of compasses and find the probability that two independent events will occur. They have difficulty interpreting cumulative frequency graphs. Middle-attaining pupils are able to find suitable approximations of various calculations, convert percentages to decimals and determine the perimeters of compound shapes. Lower-attaining pupils are able to find simple equivalent fractions, are developing their understanding of basic probability concepts and can complete a tallying chart. They make errors when determining lines of symmetry. Many of these pupils have special educational needs. Their very limited literacy skills prevent them from making sense of text-book questions without help.
117. By the end of Year 11 higher-attaining pupils are able to solve equations, make use of circle theorems to determine unknown angles and can find the mean of grouped data. A significant number have limited algebraic skills and lack the confidence to solve any simultaneous equations other than the most routine. Middle-attaining pupils understand and use standard index form to represent numbers and draw straight-line graphs. They are inconsistent in completing scatter diagrams from grouped data. Lower-attaining pupils are able to convert simple percentages to fractions. They make careless errors in calculations and do not check their answers routinely.
118. Attitudes and behaviour are mostly satisfactory or better but are unsatisfactory on too many occasions, notably in lower sets in Years 7, 10 and 11. In the best classes pupils behave well, contribute thoughtful answers and help each other make sense of the work set. A significant number of pupils, even in these classes, lack concentration so that the pace of working is patchy, especially towards the end of a lesson. Over and above this, the characteristics of pupils'

unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour are talking out of turn, showing little interest in the subject and lacking any motivation.

119. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The best lessons occur where the teacher has secure subject knowledge, involves pupils effectively through questions and discussion and manages pupils' behaviour firmly and fairly. For example, in a very good Year 11 lower set lesson on simultaneous equations the teacher directed questions at named pupils, presented well-chosen examples clearly on the whiteboard, stressing the need to check answers, and encouraged pupils by using their responses to extend the work covered. This approach succeeded in creating a busy working atmosphere with pupils making significant gains in their knowledge and understanding. Other positive features occurred in a well-taught Year 7 lesson on symmetry. The teacher made sure the aim of the lesson and key words were on the whiteboard, provided mirrors and tracing paper to give pupils practical experience and, towards the end, encouraged individuals to come to the front to draw lines of symmetry. Despite their occasional low attention span, pupils improved their understanding of symmetry markedly. A good Year 8 lesson on interpreting graphs was enhanced by careful planning, based on marking pupils' previous homework, so that key points of difficulty were suitably highlighted. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when a support assistant is available to give individual help.
120. The teaching of basic skills is unsatisfactory overall. The necessary emphasis on establishing literacy skills is patchy and at an early stage. Teachers are introducing starter numeracy activities but there is too little variety at present and not enough whole-class involvement. Other areas, observed in some lessons, where teachers need guidance to improve their skills are over-directive methods, inadequate management of unsatisfactory behaviour and insufficient provision of suitably challenging tasks for all pupils in the class. Most teachers set and mark homework regularly and effectively but some are less proficient in this respect.
121. The subject receives effective support from senior managers and the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Senior managers are closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the department and there is a need for the head of department to take greater responsibility for this. In particular, there is a need to improve the quality of weaker teaching in the department. Teachers share a commitment to raising the achievement of all pupils. There has been an encouraging start to implementing the National Numeracy Strategy in mathematics lessons but work is still needed on starter activities, plenary sessions and a 'catch-up' programme. The department is receiving very good support from the local education authority to improve these aspects. The development of pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum is behind schedule because the school is currently concentrating on literacy. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics are good. As a result of teachers' efforts, pupils' standards of attainment are beginning to rise from the low base caused by frequent staff changes and consequent lack of continuity. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good, ranging from early morning sessions for Year 7 and 8 pupils with special needs to revision classes after school for Year 9 and 11 pupils. The display of pupils' work and of helpful National Curriculum information in classrooms is good. Not enough use is made of ICT, for example, in enabling pupils to present their data in graphical form more effectively.

Numeracy

122. Overall standards of numeracy are well below expectations. There is no policy for numeracy across the curriculum to provide guidance on common approaches or on the aspects of numeracy that might be required in particular subjects. The school has not yet arranged a training day for staff on numeracy across the curriculum because a greater priority is being given to the development of literacy. In work seen during the inspection aspects of numeracy were seen in a number of subjects. In geography pupils produce tables, draw graphs and analyse data. In science pupils use and interpret formulae. Their graphical skills are at a low level and they need reminding to use appropriate units consistently. In design and technology there is not enough scope for pupils to use calculations and measurement to support the subject. In information and communication technology pupils employ numeracy skills to produce and interpret spreadsheets. In citizenship pupils represent data in appropriate graphical form. The consistent development of

pupils' numeracy skills is impeded by the current lack of a school strategy for the development of these skills in all subjects.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good laboratories.
- Improving standards at the end of Year 11.
- The collection of assessment information.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in some lessons.
- Strategies to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

123. Pupils entering the school have a lower than average attainment in the subject. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below average in comparison with all and similar schools. The results were similar to those in mathematics but above those in English. The 2002 test results were below the 2001 results. Achievement at the end of Year 9 was below expectations. This was largely because of pupil disaffection caused by the reorganisation of schools and instability in staffing. Inspection evidence shows standards of attainment of pupils in Year 9, although below expectations, to be above those indicated in the most recent national tests.
124. GCSE A*-C grades in 2002 were just above the national average in double award science and significantly above the national figure for single award science. Overall, pupils' attainment in science in the school is not significantly different from that in other subjects. Boys' attainment is a little higher than that of girls in double award science but girls do a little better than boys in the single award. Attainment in 2002 shows a significant rise on that in 2001. When standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are taken into account, achievement at the end of Year 11 in 2002 was good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and also show a rise in attainment from 2001 to 2002 in A*-C grades. Inspection evidence shows that the improvement shown in 2002 has been maintained and the standards of pupils presently in Year 11 are close to expectations.
125. Pupils in Year 7 are able to explain about pH and acids and some easily read the name hydrochloric acid from a bottle, while others find this difficult. Pupils know mammals have live young but some found difficulty identifying fur as a key distinguishing feature. Year 8 pupils know about food chains and energy flow and about basic ideas of human gut structure. Older pupils know the symbols for common chemical elements but some are unsure what an element is. This indicates below average levels of recall, reflected in the below average attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9. Pupils' written work is of a slightly higher standard than their oral work. Some practical work is incomplete and concept development is not well sequenced in pupils' exercise books, making it more difficult for them to develop a sound grasp of fundamental principles. Pupils may, for example, know 'that' things happen but show limited skills in explaining 'how' or 'why'.
126. The coursework of pupils in Years 10 and 11 ranges from average to below average standard. Pupils show weaknesses in drawing on scientific knowledge in planning and analysing skills. Pupils in Year 10 can use electrical terms correctly but show confused understanding of cell division by meiosis and mitosis whilst studying the topic. Pupils in Year 11 can readily identify different forms of energy. They know that Fleming's left hand rule can be used to identify magnetic field direction and about the pH scale. Others find difficulty in recalling photosynthesis. The recall and understanding of many pupils are below what is expected of GCSE candidates. This is mainly because of the high turnover of teachers in the last two years. Many students have had several teachers of variable expertise during their course. This has resulted in inconsistent progress. This lack of continuity has given those students affected a disillusioned view of science and a significant problem in their ability to gain success in GCSE examinations.

127. Overall, the attitudes of the majority of pupils to their work was good in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There are a number of factors that contribute to unsatisfactory attitudes. Some teaching lacks enthusiasm and the teaching strategies and materials chosen are lacking in challenge and interest. Some pupils have become disillusioned by their experience of temporary teachers and others have a poor work ethic. Some teachers have weak classroom management skills and this exacerbates challenging situations.
128. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Where teaching is at its best, as in a Year 8 lesson on digestion, lessons start with a class brainstorm of ideas that gets all pupils involved. The lesson then moves on to a well-structured practical activity followed by observations and discussion. Lessons such as these are challenging and interesting, and pupils learn what is intended. Equally importantly they leave having enjoyed their learning in science. Where teaching is less effective, as in a Year 10 lesson on plant structure, pupils had difficulty in understanding the topic because the resource materials did not allow them to find out the meanings of new words. This led to frustration and unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Not enough use was made of questioning to consolidate learning and the lesson lacked pace. There is a tendency for some teaching in Years 10 and 11 to lack inspiration and thought about how to make science interesting and relevant to pupils and about how to involve them in active learning. This is in contrast to a good lesson seen in Year 11 on electric motors, where the enthusiasm of the teacher fully engaged pupils' interest. The learning activity was challenging and pupils were actively involved. Pupils cleared apparatus away quickly, learning was consolidated using work sheets and the main points were reviewed at the end of the lesson.
129. Whilst key words are evident in laboratories and books, there is a need for a more consistent approach to the teaching and development of pupils' literacy skills. There is also a need for a more consistent approach to the teaching of numeracy and to the use of ICT in the department. Learning support assistants work well with pupils with special educational needs and help them to make good progress. They are aware both of pupils' needs and of the programmes they are following.
130. The leadership and management of the science department are satisfactory and improving. The new head of science has made good efforts to move the department forward but the management of temporary teachers and - although the laboratories provide good teaching accommodation - the split site working have drawn energy away from other developments. Detailed assessment information has been collected and is being used effectively for target setting and monitoring pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11. This is now being extended to Years 7 to 9. The audit for the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been carried out and areas for action have been identified. These have been translated into the department improvement plan. This is very much a working document and shows evidence of the monitoring and support given by the head of department and the strong support of the senior management team.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The above average attainment in the GCSE examination of most pupils, including many with special needs and those with English as an additional language.
- The achievement of pupils in all years.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement:

- The raising of pupils' aspirations in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of homework in Years 7 to 9.

- Opportunities for pupils to visit museums and galleries.

131. Standards in art in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were in line with expectations. Boys performed better than girls, in contrast to the national picture. Teacher Assessments have fluctuated in the last two years, but standards show an improving trend. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is good. Standards in art are below average when pupils enter the school, particularly in drawing and painting skills, but they make steady progress from year to year.
132. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were above average. Boys performed better than girls in terms of A*-C grades, but their average point scores were broadly similar. Pupils' performance in art and design was higher than in their other GCSE subjects. Overall achievement by the end of Year 11 was good, based on pupils' results by the end of Year 9. It is a strength of the department's work that pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language achieve above average results at GCSE, reflecting very good progress.
133. These standards are confirmed by work seen during the inspection. Pupils in Year 9 have a satisfactory working knowledge of a wide range of media and materials and use them successfully to explore the formal elements of art. Pupils are introduced to different artists' painting techniques in Year 7; their studies of Aboriginal art, for example, are composed with increasing confidence in mixing and controlling colour. Higher-attaining pupils build up a series of patterns using line and colour, showing average attainment. Lower and average-attaining pupils show below average attainment in the basic skills of drawing from observation. Pupils' standards of literacy in written and oral presentation are improved through the use of key words and writing frames; experimentation with a wider range of materials is helping to improve their overall visual and tactile experiences.
134. By Year 10, pupils can explain the research and investigation they carry out during their studies and projects are revisited to achieve more breadth and depth, such as using watercolour to extend painting skills with colour washes. Progress overall in Year 10 is satisfactory but achievement is not consistent in some lessons where a minority of disaffected pupils have a disruptive impact on the pace of the lesson; as a result, standards of work for average and higher achievers are lower than expected. In Year 11, ICT is successfully used to raise the standard of coursework for many pupils. Good standards of work were seen in a high-attaining GCSE art group where pupils experimented with different colour and painting techniques to focus their attention on accuracy and detail in exploring surfaces. Most of the preparation research showed gains in maturity and sophistication through consistent written evaluations as to how they think and feel about their own and artists' work.
135. Almost all pupils display positive attitudes in their lessons. They are keen to learn, enjoy art and settle to work quickly, participating well in various activities. Challenging activities and good teaching stimulate pupils' interest and enthusiasm in most lessons. Where there are instances of disaffection or unsatisfactory behaviour, pupils lack motivation, through absence and poor drawing skills.
136. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject expertise and this is used effectively to plan activities and give pupils first-hand experiences. Classroom management is good and supportive of pupils with special needs and those pupils with English as an additional language. Effective research techniques, including use of the Internet and sketchbooks, increase pupils' confidence in following up personal ideas. In a few lessons pupils are not engaged enough in talking about their work. This happens when lessons run out of time, or homework is collected without group comment. Homework is set regularly in Years 10 and 11, but not enough use is made of it to consolidate and extend pupils' learning in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is effectively focused for older pupils but is inconsistent across the younger age range. Pupils are taught to extend their numeracy skills in scaling up designs, which gives them confidence to work independently and accurately.
137. The leadership and management of the department are very good. New staff are well supported and teachers work well together and share the commitment to raise standards. Rigorous analysis is carried out following the results of GCSE examinations and there are plans to standardise Teachers' Assessments and track pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9. The department

makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through well-focused resource material, though visits to see original art are limited.

Exhibitions of students' examination work provide good links with parents and the community. However, while displays in classroom foyers and corridors are contributing positively to pupils' learning there is a lack of good quality work to enhance the overall school environment.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been planned well.
- The School Council effectively involves all pupils in a democratic process.
- The curriculum is relevant to the needs of pupils and the local community.
- Very good use is made of external speakers.
- Teaching is good in Year 10.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching team is too large and there are too many non-specialists teaching the subject.
- Procedures to monitor the progress of pupils are at an early stage of development.
- Aspects of accommodation and the split site are difficult to manage.
- The attitudes of some higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 and some boys in Year 10.

138. Overall, pupils' attainment in citizenship is below average in Years 7 to 10. The citizenship curriculum in Year 11 is taught as part of the personal, social and health education programme. Most pupils display positive attitudes towards the subject and make the most of the opportunities offered to them. In Year 7, pupils show a reasonable knowledge of drugs and their effects, and Year 8 pupils display some knowledge about the range of support available to young people through voluntary and public sector agencies. In Year 9, although the higher-attaining pupils are sceptical about the value of the course, they are learning much about budgeting and personal finance and about international issues. Year 10 pupils are engaged by the topic of crime and its effects on the individual and the community through their study of local problems. They are beginning to show an awareness of the responsibilities and rights of citizens. The School Council provides a good experience of democracy for pupils, who know how to bring their concerns to its notice and recognise that they can affect the way the school is run.
139. Pupils' attainment and achievement are impeded by low levels of literacy and by some teaching by non-specialist staff, although this is a problem that is gradually being addressed by the recent appointments of specialists. In most lessons taught by specialists, pupils make at least satisfactory progress, and in those lessons where teaching is good or better then pupils make equally good progress. For example, in one very good Year 7 lesson both higher and lower-attaining pupils, including several with special educational needs, made very good progress in their understanding of the effects of solvent and alcohol abuse. In two good Year 10 lessons, because of the relevance to them of the content of the lesson, pupils achieved well in their preparation and presentations to the class of local attitudes towards crime and possible solutions. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language make good progress when they are supported by learning support assistants. However, this good achievement in lessons is not matched by the work in pupils' notebooks, where only the highest-attaining pupils are able to explore and present their ideas and opinions in any depth. The work of some lower-attaining pupils has deteriorated since the beginning of the year and writing tasks are incomplete; the books of some pupils taught by non-specialists show too heavy a reliance on worksheets.

140. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory and in Year 10 it is good. Good lessons share some common characteristics. They are very well prepared and planned and learning objectives are displayed and shared with pupils so that they know what they are expected to learn and do. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good because the teachers manage their pupils well and provide interesting and relevant tasks. They keep lessons moving at a good pace so that pupils work at full stretch. Resources are well designed and used to support pupils' learning in small steps. In less effective, although still satisfactory, lessons higher-attaining pupils are not given hard enough work and some extension work is given to any pupil who finishes early, whether their earlier work has been completed to the teacher's satisfaction or not. In one Year 10 lesson, the challenging behaviour of two boys, even though well handled by the teacher, had a negative impact on the progress of some other pupils.
141. The department is well led and managed. The introduction of citizenship into the curriculum has been well managed and is well supported by senior staff. Relevant schemes of work have been developed and these are enhanced by visits from external speakers. Good use is made of topical and local issues. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and achievement are not as yet effective but the head of department has plans to develop and monitor these procedures. The split site impedes the monitoring of the work of such a large department with several non-specialists and no permanent base or suite of teaching rooms. However, senior staff are addressing these problems and recent appointments should improve the staffing situation. Once the department has a full complement of specialist teachers it will be well placed to make further improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' enthusiasm and their commitment to raising achievement.
- The range of subject aspects and courses.
- Good learning opportunities through visits and extra-curricular activities.
- The design and technology courses are a popular option in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- The quality of teaching and learning.
- The attitudes and behaviour of some pupils.
- Resources, to provide better learning opportunities, especially in computer-aided design and manufacture, and electronics.

142. Design and technology is a popular subject throughout the school, but pupils do not achieve as well as they do in many other subjects. The 2002 Teacher Assessments show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be well below national expectations. Attainment in lessons confirms these well below average standards. However, in most lessons pupils' work shows satisfactory achievement and progress from low levels on entry. In 2002 the proportion of pupils who obtained GCSE A*-C passes was significantly below the national average. Girls' results were better than boys', similar to the national difference, and results in food technology and textiles were better than those in resistant materials and graphics. The quality of work seen during the inspection and the school's predictions for the 2003 examinations confirm these well below average standards.
143. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 develop a satisfactory knowledge of the design process and are developing an awareness of the properties of a wide range of materials. Most pupils use hand and power tools effectively and safely. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils made a wooden desk-tidy based on a toy lorry design. Pupils' measuring and cutting skills were satisfactory and their work was carefully assembled and finished. However, there was little opportunity for pupils to vary their designs and all pupils followed the same pattern. There are more opportunities for individual creativity in the Year 9 textile project. Pupils dye fabric and shape, glue, and sew components to

form a fabric box. However, not all are able to measure and cut the shapes accurately or make consistently spaced stitches.

144. In Years 10 and 11 pupils choose which aspect of the subject they wish to study. Practical work is well integrated with theory in all aspects of the subject, but especially in food technology. For instance, pupils in Year 10 food technology learn about methods of tasting and recording results. They make diagrams and charts after tasting different types of apple and chocolate. All produce the diagrams accurately and write up the results; however, the written work is well below average and constrained by weak literacy skills. Year 11 pupils evaluate the packaging of foods. They study the three basic areas of production - batch, continuous flow, and automated manufacture - and make appropriate flow charts to illustrate the processes. Skills of measuring, cutting, creative designing and making are all below expectations. Overall, making is better than designing. This is largely because teachers do not give enough guidance on how ideas can be adapted to create design variations.
145. Pupils do not understand important areas of the design and technology curriculum, such as structures and disassembly. These areas of the subject are not covered fully enough. Computer-aided design and manufacture is currently not being taught, due to lack of adequately trained teachers and suitable resources.
146. Many pupils do not reach their full potential in the subject due to the lack of continuity and progression in the two-week time-table and the split site accommodation. Pupils' knowledge of the work of professional designers, design movements of the past, and how technology affects society is below expectations and this has an adverse effect on their research ideas. Pupils' understanding of the use of ICT to enhance work is weak. Very few use the Internet effectively, or develop original solutions to projects. Pupils are not aware enough of the shortcomings in their own and others' designs. Low literacy and numeracy skills constrain development, as do standards in design briefs and evaluations.
147. Not all pupils have positive attitudes to the subject, particularly in Years 10 and 11. For the most part, good working relationships are formed with teachers, but in a minority of cases time is wasted through unnecessary interruptions. Pupils generally take pride in their achievements and try their best to present their work well, but a minority do not show this commitment. Most of those with special needs or English as an additional language enjoy learning about the subject and make satisfactory progress, especially through practical work and problem-solving activities.
148. The quality of teaching is largely satisfactory; there is some good teaching and a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The best lessons are well planned, and schemes of work are well considered to cover the design and technology curriculum. In the best lessons, teachers' knowledge of their subject is communicated well and introductions and demonstrations set clear aims and objectives. Challenges are appropriate to the needs of most pupils. In the less successful lessons, classroom management is weak and lesson activities do not hold pupils' interest. In a minority of lessons there are low expectations of work and behaviour and misuse of tools and materials, and pupils do not comply with the requests of teachers. Basic skills and health and safety procedures are not taught effectively, and a significant number of pupils are not engaged in what they are supposed to be doing. In some cases they pose a danger to themselves and others. Ongoing assessment and the tracking of pupils' attainment and progress need improvement, with a closer matching of assessment to National Curriculum levels.
149. The leadership and management of design and technology has not brought about the improvement in standards needed, or established an appropriate work ethic in the upper school. The department runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis but improvement has not been made, largely because of the many staff changes. However, teachers are enthusiastic, and committed to helping pupils succeed, and team spirit is good. There are good learning opportunities through visits and extra-curricular activities. Learning resources need to be upgraded, especially facilities for ICT. Staff training is needed to run the computer-aided design and manufacture equipment. However, there is a trend of improvement in Years 7 to 9, from a very low base. Further improvement will largely depend upon greater staff stability.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Learning is good because teachers plan lessons for all pupils and use interesting methods
- Good achievement results from pupils' motivation to learn
- The leadership and management focus on raising achievement

Areas for improvement

- The behaviour of a small number of pupils
- Access to ICT for whole classes
- Strategies for the development of pupils' basic skills

150. Teachers' Assessments show that standards in geography in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were average. Boys' scores were above average for boys nationally, and girls' were in line with the average for girls. This was above the standards pupils attained in most other subjects. Attainment was low on entry to the school and thus pupils achieved well.
151. The 2002 GCSE results were close to average for grades A*-G, but below average for grades A*-C. Girls performed better than boys in terms of A*-C grades, but boys attained a higher proportion of A* or A grades. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls is similar to that found nationally. Because the school only opened in 2000, there is not enough information available to determine any trends over time. Pupils started with below average attainment at the end of Year 9 so their GCSE results show good achievement by the end of Year 11. Pupils did significantly better in geography than in their other subjects.
152. Inspection evidence shows that standards attained by pupils in all years are close to national expectations and achievement is good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. Year 7 pupils use geographical skills to learn more of the local area. For example, they learn how to classify shops by the value of the goods sold. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils used weather records from the school site to construct graphs of rainfall and wind direction to see patterns emerging. By Year 9 pupils understand global issues. For example, higher-attaining pupils produce good quality word-processed reports that include graphs to support their arguments about fair trade. Lower attaining pupils, including those with identified needs, write less and describe rather than explain. These pupils have weak spelling and grammar, which hinders clear communication of their geographical knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 apply their learning well in individual investigations assessed for GCSE. For example, they undertook fieldwork on the South Wales coastline to evaluate why an area of sand dunes needs protection and how this is managed. As in earlier years higher-attaining pupils know how to use skills and present work effectively. Lower-attaining pupils do not make enough use of subject terms and do not annotate sketches, photographs and computer-generated graphs to demonstrate their understanding.
153. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. The great majority of pupils are well motivated and interested in geography. They conform to classroom rules. A small number in a few classes are occasionally noisy when quiet work is expected. Experienced teachers manage them skilfully, but they sometimes challenge less experienced teachers and this impedes learning.
154. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan well by matching tasks to different learning needs. Teachers share lesson aims with pupils so they know what they will learn. Teachers and pupils define key words as the lesson progresses. Attractively displayed subject words, photographs and maps on current topics reinforce learning. Good organisation of resources and relevant topics engage pupils' interest so they work quickly. For example, the effective use of an atlas map of rainfall distribution in a Year 8 lesson helped pupils to understand the technique of colour shading. They then practised the skill themselves on a base map of England and Wales by shading amounts of rainfall by water regions. Work is regularly marked

and pupils are given targets for improvement. They know their National Curriculum levels or GCSE target grades from frequent assessment. Much work is presented using home computers but pupils have very few opportunities to use their ICT skills in geography lessons. Homework is set and marked regularly.

155. Leadership and management are good. A new head of subject has been appointed from April. Since September 2002 the former head of geography, now an assistant head, has led and managed the department effectively to raise achievement. Teaching and learning benefit from relatively stable staffing. However, there are no department strategies for the systematic development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The clear commitment of specialist staff to raising achievement.
- Specialist teachers have a good understanding of the way pupils learn, which is reflected in the quality of their lesson planning.
- Specialist teachers are working hard to produce high quality teaching materials, which promote understanding and interest in the subject.

Areas for Improvement

- Standards of attainment in all years.
- The lack of continuity and gaps in specialist staffing, which impact adversely on pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour.
- Standardisation of the marking policy.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

156. Standards in history in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were well below those expected nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 was well below the national average. The performance of girls was marginally stronger than that of the boys, but overall performance in history was amongst the weakest in the school.
157. GCSE results in 2002 were significantly below average. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 2002 was below that in 2001. Pupils did less well in history than in other subjects taken. This differential was more marked for girls than for boys.
158. Inspection evidence shows that the overall standards attained by pupils presently in Years 7 to 9 are well below those expected nationally. Pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence and can use both written and pictorial sources to answer questions about the past. Most pupils are beginning to distinguish between fact and opinion; they understand that the past has been interpreted in different ways. For the majority of pupils, work in history is hindered by poor basic skills. All but the most capable pupils have difficulty in writing at length and in analysing evidence in any depth. Pupils' speaking, listening and presentation skills are well below nationally expected levels.
159. By the end of Year 11, inspection evidence shows that overall standards are well below expectations. However, pupils' historical knowledge and understanding have deepened. Higher-attaining pupils can analyse evidence effectively to produce reasoned arguments. Lower-attaining pupils use sources to support their narratives and can draw simple conclusions. The writing and presentation skills of a significant number of pupils remain weak. Many pupils still have difficulty in concentrating during lessons and have to be prompted to participate in class discussions. Most lack effective study skills and find difficulty in settling to work, attending school regularly and

thus in organising themselves to succeed in the GCSE examinations. By the end of Year 11 the majority of pupils are still dependent on their teachers for their learning. Pupils arrive at the school with below average levels of literacy and historical skills. Their progress over time has been generally unsatisfactory largely because of interrupted learning patterns caused by a high turnover of teachers and lack of specialist staff in the history department - which for Years 10 and 11 has also combined with a history of disrupted schooling. However, in lessons taught by specialist teachers who have been in post since September, pupils are making satisfactory to good progress. These teachers are focussing on the development of much-needed basic skills and helping pupils to acquire positive attitudes to learning. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language generally corresponds to that of their peers. Higher attaining pupils have been placed in newly established accelerated teaching groups where extension activities are set.

160. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons directly reflect the quality of classroom management. A significant minority of pupils across all year groups lack motivation, social skills and a positive outlook. When teaching is weak they are reluctant to collaborate, their behaviour is poor and their levels of productivity are low. By contrast, when lessons are led by specialist teachers, who make use of effective classroom management techniques based on an excellent knowledge of individual pupils and their difficulties, the classroom environment becomes conducive to learning and attitudes improve markedly.
161. The quality of teaching by specialist teachers is good. However, specialist teachers take only a half of lessons. The provision made for other pupils is poor; they have experienced up to three different teachers since September, including non-specialist temporary teachers. The specialist teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and have appropriate expectations. Lessons are very carefully planned, clearly structured, and well paced. Learning objectives are outlined at the start of each lesson and an attempt is made to conclude with an evaluation of gains in learning. There is a good blend of exposition, practical tasks and individual consolidation through application. Pupils are appropriately challenged and skilful questioning on the part of teachers encourages them to concentrate in lessons. Good quality and imaginative resources have been produced by the specialist teachers to stimulate interest and help understanding - as was seen in a Year 8 lesson on the agricultural revolution, where worksheets provided pupils with the framework for writing an article for an eighteenth century farming magazine. Skilful interventions and a growing resource of carefully focused teaching materials help slower learners to make progress. Homework is designed to reinforce learning in lessons.
162. The department acknowledges the importance of skills development in lesson planning. Schemes of work provide good opportunities for the development of numeracy. As yet, the subject has provided few opportunities to develop ICT skills. This has been due to pressures on a limited number of school computers and the lack of dedicated workstations in the history teaching rooms. It is in the area of literacy that many pupils find their most significant challenge. Specialist teachers actively promote the use of different strategies to develop an interest in language. However, their expectations are not yet consistent in respect of the accuracy and presentation of written work. Many pupils need further guidance on improving the grammar and sense of their writing if they are to acquire the confidence to express themselves fluently.
163. Leadership of the subject has recently passed to a capable and well-organised head of humanities, as the head of history left the school in early March. From September 2003, the two specialist teachers, both currently in their first year of teaching, will share the management of the department. These teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to raising standards and improving pupils' progress. They are working exceptionally hard to produce very good quality schemes of work and are alert to the requirements of the department. For example, they recognise that assessment procedures need improvement because of the inconsistencies in the approach to correcting errors in literacy and the quality of constructive feedback given to pupils. Under the projected management of these two incumbent history specialists and with full and stable staffing, the department will have the capacity to improve.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The improved leadership and management of the subject since the summer of 2002
- Procedures to assess and monitor pupils' work

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment, particularly in Years 10 and 11
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in Years 10 and 11
- The range of learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11
- The retention of specialist teachers

164. Standards are below average overall. Standards on entry to the school are variable. In 2000, they were well below the national average but improved last year to below average. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9 standards remain below average. However, they are rising in Years 7 and 8 as a result of improved schemes of work and teaching. Girls perform better than boys. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is broadly satisfactory.
165. About six out of ten pupils opt to take the subject in Year 10. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well below the national average. In 2002, fewer than one out of five pupils obtained A* - C grades in the GCSE examination. They were taught in two secondary schools. Girls performed significantly better than boys. Achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with English as an additional language are well integrated in lessons and make the same progress as other pupils.
166. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and sometimes good or better. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. They introduce topics and demonstrate work well by using computerised overhead projectors. As a result, most pupils are eager to learn and positively motivated. They learn a satisfactory range of ICT skills including the use of word processing, graphics, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases, the Internet and web page design. In a Year 7 lesson pupils learned to publish work by entering a slogan they had devised into a text box satisfactorily. In a good lesson in Year 8 pupils developed a presentation about the school by linking images and text electronically well. The images had been taken using a digital camera in an earlier lesson. Pupils in Year 9 linked web pages they had designed in earlier lessons electronically. This topic was well introduced by requiring pupils to explore the use of hyperlinks on the BBC News web site. When lessons are less successful teachers give introductions which are too long and allow pupils to go off task. Pupils' work is assessed and monitored well.
167. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory and sometime poor. A significant number of pupils are disaffected and reluctant to engage in learning. They find the GCSE course uninteresting and too demanding. This was evident in a Year 10 lesson where low-attaining pupils created plant labels as part of their work on the examination board's set assignment. Many pupils could make progress only when individual support was given by the teacher and this made progress slow. Pupils in Year 11 were seen unsuccessfully learning about computer viruses and the Data Protection Act. Most were uninterested in the topic. The teacher was unable to motivate the students, tolerated poor behaviour and allowed them to engage in social conversation. Some low-attaining pupils have been following an alternative work-related curriculum but this has proved unsuccessful and has been discontinued. Some of these pupils continue to learn ICT skills and work towards CLAIT awards unsuccessfully. In a Year 11 lesson they were revising topics on the Internet but could make progress only with considerable help from the teacher and learning support assistant. The attendance of these pupils is poor. The range of learning opportunities needs to be extended. Many teachers have low expectations.

168. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills in other subjects. Access to the school's network is a problem. As a result, applications of word processing and publishing are mainly confined to art and design, English and drama. Spreadsheets are used in geography. ICT work across the curriculum is not assessed or co-ordinated. These arrangements do not meet statutory requirements.
169. The subject has been well led since the summer of 2002. Satisfactory progress has been made in improving schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 and procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. Developments have been hampered by the high turnover of specialist teachers. This and the fact that the pupils in Years 10 and 11 have attended two secondary schools are the main reasons for their disaffection. The school has not as yet established a culture of learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The leadership of the department is very good.
- Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress.
- Very good resources for teaching and learning.
- Very good guidance and support for pupils preparing for the GCSE examination.

Areas for improvement

- The development of pupils' speaking skills in French and Spanish.
- Provision for those pupils learning two modern languages.

170. Standards in modern languages in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were very low compared to national standards, with very few pupils reaching the expected Level 5. No pupil attained Level 6. The current Year 9 is, however, the first to have spent three years in the school. Pupils in this year have been learning Spanish from Year 7 and standards are much higher, although still below national expectations. Some higher attainers in the two accelerated classes are attaining at Level 6.
171. Only a minority of pupils continue to learn a language in Years 10 and 11. The wide variations from year to year in the percentage of pupils attaining higher A*-C grades reflect in part the small but fluctuating numbers in both French and Spanish entries. For example, at the end of Year 11 in 2002 results in French were well above national averages, with almost 60 per cent of entrants gaining a higher grade. This was a substantial improvement over 2001. In contrast, results in Spanish were below the national average and substantially below the results obtained the previous year. In both languages in 2002, however, pupils did better than in their other subjects. Moreover, fewer pupils were ungraded than is the case nationally. Current inspection evidence confirms this picture, with pupils achieving well and overall in line with national expectations.
172. Many pupils have low standards of literacy on entry to the school. However, low attainers and pupils with special educational needs develop good writing habits. They copy words and short phrases accurately and enjoy repeating French and Spanish sounds and many acquire good accents. They can match text to pictures and consolidate vocabulary through unscrambling words and through word searches. Much attention is given to the understanding of basic grammatical concepts such as gender and subject-verb agreement. Nevertheless, even some pupils in the accelerated classes in Year 9 remain unsure of how to apply these concepts. These pupils struggle to cope with the demands of learning both French and Spanish in the time normally allocated to a single language.
173. Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11. They prepare carefully for their coursework and their oral examination. Candidates for the foundation level papers are well prepared in the basic

vocabulary and structures necessary to perform role-play tasks. Higher level candidates produce written coursework with some use of different tenses and a wider range of vocabulary and structures. Generally, pupils, whilst confident in rehearsing known material, as in their oral presentations, are much less secure when having to discuss and extend this material. Overall, pupils achieve well in writing, as evidenced in their exercise books and in the richness of the attractive classroom and corridor displays. Speaking standards are satisfactory overall but pupils need more opportunities to speak at length.

174. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Generally, pupils settle to their work quickly, do the tasks expected of them and relate well to their peers and to their teachers. They react maturely and sensibly to working in pairs and when - as in a Year 11 French class - asked to test each other's knowledge of role-play dialogues. In a few instances in Years 7 to 9, however, there is a lack of concentration and of self-control, particularly amongst boys and lower attainers. This happens despite work being well planned and resourced and pitched at a level appropriate to their abilities, and impedes progress, especially in speaking.
175. The quality of teaching overall is good. In all of the observed lessons it was at least satisfactory and in two-thirds it was good or very good. In the best lessons teachers speak the foreign language clearly and confidently, making skilful use of a range of techniques to avoid the unnecessary use of English. This strongly promotes the development of effective listening skills. Teachers maintain a good pace, using a variety of tasks to maintain the interest of pupils and consolidate their knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Lessons are generally well managed. Teachers use homework well to complement work done in class. Marking is regular and accurate but there are only infrequent examples of helpful comments in exercise books to direct pupils' attention to specific features of language. To raise the quality of teaching and learning further, teachers should make fuller use of the French and Spanish assistants - for example to help introduce pair-work dialogues - should regularly challenge higher attainers to speak at greater length from memory, and should consistently use the final session of a lesson to probe pupils' understanding and thus gain important feedback for the planning of future lessons.
176. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Despite severe and persistent staffing changes the head of department has been able to maintain a well - organised and successful department. There is a strong sense of teamwork, based around a philosophy of sharing and of collective responsibility. This is well illustrated by the wealth of resource material, much of it teacher-created, centrally filed under each topic area. It is a significant support to the new teachers in the department, as are the detailed departmental handbook, a clearly set out scheme of work and a programme of regular lesson observation. A recent innovation has been a study visit to Spain soon to be followed by a similar visit to Brittany. These visits should contribute to more pupils choosing to continue learning a language beyond Year 9. Option choices currently being made by Year 9 indicate that this is now beginning to happen. To capitalise upon this and upon its many strengths the department urgently needs a period of staffing stability.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Good leadership and management by the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- Provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to use music technology for composing.

177. By the end of Year 9 attainment is below the national average. The 2002 school-based Teacher Assessment results for pupils in Year 9 were in line with the national average. These results appear to be generous when compared with inspection findings.
178. By the end of Year 11 attainment is below the national average, overall. However, a significant number of pupils show a good standard of vocal and instrumental performance. The 2002 GCSE examination results for pupils gaining A*-C grades were below the national average. In 2001 six pupils took the examination and all gained grades in the A*-C range. There is no significant difference in the examination results of boys and girls. There is a good take-up for the subject by pupils presently in Years 10 and 11.
179. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Many pupils enter Year 7 with varied musical experiences. However, pupils in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress in gaining skills as performers and in working together on composing tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons. The more musically able pupils make similar progress. Pupils in Year 7 show satisfactory rhythmic skills. They play a simple ostinato part on instruments, with many pupils playing from memory and showing an ability to keep a steady beat. In Year 8, pupils practise playing a simple chord sequence on keyboards, as an accompaniment to a Reggae melody. Several pupils, however, find difficulty in locating the notes and in playing the chords fluently. Pupils in Year 9 listen to different ways that the voice is used in a song. They make up their own versions of some lyrics and use techniques such as rapping, chanting and singing to convey their ideas. Some pupils find problems in developing their ideas and only compose very short pieces. Many Year 9 pupils have an insufficient understanding of basic musical vocabulary and make little reference to this when discussing their work. There are a few pupils, though, who show better skills in all aspects of the work.
180. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress in understanding different musical styles and in using music technology for composing. The more musically able make good progress in lessons. Pupils in Year 10 look at the structure of a pavane. They compose their own piece in the same style and add extra notes to the melody to make it more elaborate. A few pupils, however, find difficulty in understanding and using notation to record their ideas. Several Year 11 pupils are confident vocal and instrumental performers and show skill at performing in front of an audience. Pupils' composing skills are variable. Occasionally, some compositions lack an adequate overall structure and the ideas used are insufficiently developed.
181. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 show satisfactory attitudes toward the subject. Occasionally, however, a few pupils are slow to settle down and do not always respond well to instructions. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils have good attitudes. However, a few have problems in organising their time and do not always meet deadlines for coursework.
182. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan lessons well and provide effective support to individual pupils. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this to aid pupils' learning. In a good Year 11 lesson, pupils rehearsed individual and ensemble performances. The teacher provided effective guidance about the way that performances might be improved, showing a good understanding of the different instruments involved. This resulted in pupils playing with greater accuracy and improving their skills in ensemble playing. Provision is made for pupils to use music technology in Years 10 and 11 to devise and refine their compositions. In the lower school, however, there are no computers in the department for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to use. This limits the musical experience that these pupils receive. Satisfactory provision is made for developing pupils' literacy skills in lessons. Homework is used regularly to reinforce learning. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is good provision for social development in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. A number of small rehearsal groups meet on a regular basis. These groups include a wind band, a vocal group, a jazz combo and a rock band. A performance of 'Guys and Dolls' took place last Christmas. A combined arts evening is planned for this term. Forty-five pupils recently attended a concert at the Royal Albert Hall.

183. There is good leadership and management by the head of department. After a period of staff changes there is now more stability. The recently appointed head of department has already identified strategies for raising achievement. Effective assessment procedures ensure that pupils are aware of the progress they are making. Resources are satisfactory, but there are no

computers in the lower school classrooms. The accommodation is good. However, problems occur because of the split site. Extra-curricular rehearsals are difficult to organise and class and instrumental teachers have to travel between the two sites.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Good leadership of a dedicated team of specialist staff.
- The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.
- Good indoor facilities.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results, particularly in the theoretical aspects.
- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The poor drainage of the sports pitches often makes them unusable and this affects standards in games.

184. Standards in physical education in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were, according to Teachers' Assessments, well below average. From the inspection evidence, the assessments were one grade too low and should be judged as below average. The performances of boys and girls are similar.
185. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were well below average. Comparison between the performance of girls and boys cannot be made, due to the imbalance in numbers taking the examination. However, results rose in 2002 compared with 2001. Pupils achieve results in physical education similar to those in their other examination subjects. It is a strength of the department's work that pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with the majority and all gain a pass grade.
186. Inspection evidence shows that standards towards the end of Year 9 are below average. Most pupils achieve well across Years 7 to 9, given their well below average attainment on entry in Year 7. Most Year 9 pupils plan their warm-ups, understand rules and show satisfactory fitness. Their performances in gymnastics lack technical accuracy; they lack tactical awareness in games. A significant minority is performing in line with national expectations. They plan and perform well in gymnastics and are tactically aware in games. A few are achieving well below average, due to poor hand-eye co-ordination, spatial awareness and body management skills. Observations of Year 7 pupils indicate rising standards.
187. Inspection evidence shows that standards towards the end of Year 11 are below average. Most pupils are working closer to national expectations than at the end of Year 9. This represents satisfactory achievement across Years 10 and 11. Most pupils can evaluate performance and understand fitness principles. They show sound choreographic skills in dance, but lack technical accuracy in performance skills. Their extended writing skills in GCSE theory work are limited. Higher-attaining pupils use sound skills and tactics to outmanoeuvre opponents in games. They plan, analyse and correct technique, for example, in dance; some pupils perform well in extra-curricular sport at district and county levels. They understand GCSE theoretical principles and

apply them well practically. Lowest-attaining pupils lack the spatial and tactical awareness to be effective in a game. The standards of boys and girls are similar. Pupils with special educational needs and the talented achieve well.

188. Standards of literacy are well below average in GCSE theory work. Most pupils listen and are responsive to teachers' questions. Numeracy skills are below average, although pupils confidently use scoring systems. Pupils' ICT skills are below average and not enough use is made of computers to support teaching and learning.
189. Most pupils display positive attitudes in their lessons. They are co-operative, maintain good relationships with their teachers and work at a productive pace. A minority of pupils underachieve because of limited concentration. Some Year 11 pupils learn well in lessons but, because of poor attendance, their progress over time is limited.
190. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers are knowledgeable and manage pupils well. Many lessons contain a range of activities enabling pupils to build on previous learning. Work is planned to suit all pupils, and those with special educational needs make good progress. In a Year 7 football lesson, lower-attaining pupils progressed well because the teacher modified tasks, simplified instructions and used demonstrations. The learning of higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and the extensive extra-curricular sports programme.
191. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn independently in most lessons. In a Year 10 trampolining lesson, pupils planned and performed work, evaluated peer performance and suggested improvements. They made good progress. However, in the two lessons in which teaching was satisfactory (one in Year 9 and one in Year 11), teachers were more prescriptive and pupils were given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. The pace dropped and some pupils became restless. The subject contributes well to the improvement of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of pupils across the attainment levels. Most pupils, across all years, improve their numerical skills through opportunities to score, measure and record performance. The subject makes limited provision for pupils to develop their ICT skills.
192. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a team of dedicated specialists. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment procedures, although lacking baseline assessments in Year 7, are good overall and are used well to monitor pupils' progress. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Indoor facilities are good, but pupils' progress in games is affected by poor drainage to the playing fields, often making them unusable.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, and occasionally excellent, enabling pupils to achieve well.
- Pupil management is very good, contributing very well to a good climate for learning.
- Excellent leadership and very good management.
- Very good contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Very good monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of religious education for most Year 10 pupils.
- Provide greater opportunities for pupils to reflect on religious principles and concepts.

193. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are just below expectations in relation to the Hertfordshire LEA Agreed Syllabus. In 2002, standards in the GCSE short course were below the national average. Thirty-three per cent of pupils gained A* - C grades. All pupils were entered for the examination and, whilst the results were below the national average, they represented a significant improvement on previous years. When standards of attainment on entry to the school are taken into account these results represented good achievement.
194. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 to 9, although just below average, is rising. There are many examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts such as justice, resurrection and forgiveness. In Year 7, they develop good attitudes towards the teaching of Jesus on justice. As a result of a well-prepared task, pupils showed a clear understanding of the role of Christian aid agencies in helping those in need. In Year 8, pupils developed a good understanding of the concepts of new life and hope as a result of an excellent lesson on the resurrection of Jesus. In Year 9, pupils understood and empathised with the need to apply forgiveness in their own lives as a result of a well-planned and taught lesson on the story of Myra Hindley. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on religious and moral issues in ways that would enable them to apply religious principles to their own lives. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work provides very useful aids to improve speaking and listening skills. Overall, learning is very good.
195. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 10 and 11 is in line with national expectations. In the Year 10 GCSE class, pupils achieve well and their attainment is in line with national expectations, and in some cases exceeds these. They showed a clear understanding of the stages of life reflected in rites of passage in a very good lesson on Christian marriage. The excellent knowledge of the teacher enabled pupils to make very good links between Christian principles and their own experiences. They were able to make clear judgement and develop very good attitudes. However, the limited time for religious education in Year 10 for the majority of pupils means that they do not receive their full entitlement to religious education. The limited amount of time given to the subject means that most pupils do not have the opportunity to apply the knowledge they gain to their everyday experiences. This limits their ability to develop their reflective skills and means that they do not 'learn from' religion as well as they might. In Year 11, attainment is also in line with expectations and achievement is very good. As a result of a very good question and answer session by the teacher, pupils understood the importance of the media in developing religious attitudes and values.
196. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls or by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those who are gifted or talented make very good progress.
197. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave very well, are generally well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and teachers effectively support individuals both academically and personally. Pupils' good behaviour helps them to achieve and make progress.
198. Teaching is very good with excellent features. It has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Planning is very good, and this assists pupils to focus on information gained in previous lessons. Learning aims are shared with pupils in all lessons. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. Teachers use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to learn from as well as learn about religion. This helps pupils to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. However, more opportunities should be provided for pupils to reflect on the knowledge they acquire and this will enable standards to rise even further. Resources are well used, especially worksheets. These enable pupils with different needs to learn well. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well, contributing to a very good climate for learning.

199. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed. The assessment of pupils' work is generally good, and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. The department sets targets for levels of attainment. Pupils are provided with helpful information that allows them to know where they are and what they need to do to improve.
200. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, so providing opportunities for pupils to explore issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages pupils to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues, and work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, so preparing pupils for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.
201. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The excellent leadership of the head of department ensures that pupils make very good progress. Pupils are provided with a very rich diet of religious education, especially in Years 7 to 9. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and deep commitment to the pupils. There is excellent support from other departmental staff. The monitoring of the work of the department through observing teachers and regular examination of pupils' work is very well established. The quality of display that celebrates pupils' achievement is very high.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. National comparative data for 2002 are not yet available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Biology	2	50	n/a	100	n/a	35	n/a
Chemistry	2	0	n/a	50	n/a	15	n/a
Physics	1	0	n/a	100	n/a	23	n/a
Business studies	6	17	n/a	100	n/a	35	n/a
Information and communication technology	2	0	n/a	100	n/a	25	n/a
History	1	0	n/a	100	n/a	30	n/a
Sociology	3	0	n/a	100	n/a	23	n/a
English	5	40	n/a	100	n/a	38	n/a
English literature	1	0	n/a	100	n/a	20	n/a
Psychology	1	0	n/a	100	n/a	20	n/a
General studies	2	0	n/a	100	n/a	30	n/a

GCE A- level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	120	n/a
Biology	7	29	n/a	86	n/a	71	n/a
Chemistry	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	100	n/a
Physics	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	100	n/a
Business studies	4	50	n/a	100	n/a	85	n/a
Information and communication technology	13	0	n/a	92	n/a	51	n/a
Art and design	7	14	n/a	100	n/a	66	n/a
Geography	4	25	n/a	100	n/a	75	n/a
History	14	0	n/a	100	n/a	59	n/a

Psychology	5	20	n/a	80	n/a	64	n/a
Sociology	3	33	n/a	100	n/a	73	n/a
English	4	50	n/a	100	n/a	85	n/a
English literature	4	25	n/a	100	n/a	60	n/a
Media studies	11	27	n/a	100	n/a	77	n/a
Spanish	1	0	n/a	100	n/a	80	n/a
Design (textiles)	2	0	n/a	100	n/a	60	n/a
Business (AVCE)	7	0	n/a	100	n/a	63	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

202. The focus was on mathematics and chemistry but biology and physics were also sampled. Although teaching in the lesson observed in biology was satisfactory, there were weaknesses. The learning activities did not sufficiently engage students and the level of work was below that expected of Year 13 A-level students. The class has an unsatisfactory teaching history due to frequent changes in teachers. In the Year 13 physics lesson observed teaching was good. A lesson about special relativity was taught in a challenging manner with students fully involved. Simple examples of a complex issue were used to illustrate points and definitions of terms were derived through discussion with pupils. Learning was consolidated by a review of the main points at the end of the lesson.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Experienced teachers who have good subject knowledge.
- Students gain confidence because teachers know students well.
- Increasing student numbers.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for independent study.
- The use of ICT to support students' learning.
- The marking of students' work to inform them on their progress.
- The sharing of good practice.

203. All students entered for the 2001 A-level examination achieved a pass grade. Three of the four students entered achieved a C grade. The only student – a male – entered for the A-level examination in 2002 gained an A grade. This represented very good achievement.

204. Only one of the three students entered for the 2001 AS-level examination obtained a pass grade. This represented a degree of underachievement in comparison with their estimated grades. In 2002 the only student entered for the AS level examination obtained an A grade. Just under half of the students who took AS-level in Year 12 have returned to continue with their mathematical studies. A good number of students take the opportunity to re-sit GCSE mathematics in Year 12 to improve their grades. Virtually all are successful.

205. The one student currently studying A-level mathematics is achieving well in lessons. Through discussion he is able to demonstrate his understanding of topics because he has developed good

independent learning skills. For example, he confidently makes good use of his prior knowledge of trigonometrical identities to increase his skills in calculus. Students in Year 12 have made a most encouraging beginning to their AS-level studies. This is because teachers are taking into account students' prior attainment in their planning. They are set tasks that build their confidence to tackle more advanced work. However, there are too few occasions for students to learn independently of their teacher. The teaching of mathematical methods is evident in students' work and is underpinned by a range of completed examples. This aids their learning. Evidence collected during the inspection confirms that students are likely to achieve their expected grades and, therefore, overall achievement is satisfactory.

206. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and experience most effectively in the teaching of the methods and techniques needed to approach standard problems in each of the modules studied. For example, skilled questioning by the teacher enabled a group of Year 13 students to be more confident in selecting the appropriate equations to solve problems of motion. Where students' prior knowledge is insecure, in the very good lessons teachers ensure that students understand before moving on to new work.
207. Teachers make every effort to involve students in discussion. Further involvement, through class presentations, for example, would improve their confidence and their ability to explain their mathematics. This would directly result in students challenging assumptions about why methods chosen work, as was seen in a Year 13 lesson on aspects of calculus.
208. Not enough use is made of ICT to enhance students' learning and deepen their knowledge of particular topics. In all lessons, students receive effective individual support, praise and encouragement. This enables them to consolidate their learning and move on with greater confidence. Teachers currently do not make as much use of open-ended tasks as they could do, so that students are encouraged to think more widely about what they are studying and thereby develop independent research skills. These aspects of students' mathematics are thus less well developed.
209. Not all teachers mark students' work consistently and in depth. There are too few written comments to guide students on ways in which they could improve their work and therefore they are less well informed than they should be about their overall progress. However, discussion in class does much to give students pointers about how well they are doing and what needs to be improved. The department assesses students' achievement regularly and is able to predict closely their likely outcome in forthcoming examinations.
210. Students are attentive and work well together, giving mutual help when necessary. The atmosphere in lessons reflects the positive relationships that have been built in a short while between students and their teachers. Teachers provide considerable support to students outside their lessons. Expectations of what students will achieve are realistic but are not high enough in terms of work to be completed.
211. The leadership and management of mathematics in the sixth form are satisfactory. Teachers seek to improve their own knowledge and understanding of the subject but do not regularly share good practice. There are no schemes of work setting out clearly what is to be taught and there has been no formal monitoring of teaching and learning at this level. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the requirements of the examination courses and use their knowledge effectively to plan lessons. Resources for the teaching of sixth form lessons are good and are used well, although additional research material in the library is very poor. Sixth form teaching is scattered about the building and this does not encourage greater links between students and the department. There is considerable capacity within the department for it to improve further.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Well qualified teaching staff.
- Very good accommodation.
- The use of assessment information to monitor students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- More regular and consistent feedback to students indicating what they should do in order to improve the standard of their work.
- The development of independent learning skills.
- The frequency of department meetings.

212. The attainment of students beginning their study of A-level chemistry is below that usually seen; the minimum target grades predicted for students reflect the intake. One student took A-level chemistry in 2002 and gained a B grade. This was two grades above the grade predicted and represented good achievement. In 2001 one student took A-level chemistry gaining an A grade. This again was above predictions on entry to the course and represented good achievement. In their recent AS module examinations students' achievement was below expectations. The majority of candidates failed to reach their minimum target grades. This indicates unsatisfactory progress from the end of Year 11 to the end of Year 12. Similar results were obtained in 2001.
214. The chemistry department was newly staffed in September 2002 and the work seen overall during the inspection was good. Overall, the standards of work seen in Year 12 during the inspection are better than indicated by the 2001 and 2002 AS-level examination results. Students' folders have clear notes which show the logical development of ideas at an appropriate standard for AS level. Students' work on enthalpy showed logical development from simple first principles of heat change in reactions to the use of bond energies in the calculation of theoretical energy changes based on Hess' law. Folders show developing skills of balancing equations and using empirical and molecular formulae. Practical work is integrated well into the theory work. However, some practical work conclusions are incomplete or are not well enough developed and folders show little evidence of the use of ICT. In lessons higher-attaining students could clearly explain the structure of alkanes and alkenes and chemical tests for these. Girls showed some insecurity in recalling basic scientific facts related to course materials such as names of hydrocarbons and the numbers of carbons in their chains.
215. The teaching observed during the inspection was good. In a Year 12 lesson about alcohols the aims were outlined at the start. A starter activity reviewed the names and categories of alcohols and students' ideas were discussed effectively to consolidate learning. The planned practical was outlined and carried out at a sensible pace with good awareness of health and safety. Most students completed the activity and all class results were shared at the end to consolidate learning. The teacher moved round, challenging students' understanding and helping with problems. Students showed good understanding of the work about identifying alcohols.
216. Students are set regular homework and marks are recorded. There are supportive comments on the work and errors are identified and corrected. Interim test marks show students are making progress in their learning. Past examination papers are used to consolidate and check learning; however, some of these were not marked. The work in folders, whilst mostly marked, does not indicate the standard of the work in relation to AS-level grades or how the standard reached relates to students' target grades. As a result, students are not provided with clear guidance on what they should do in order to improve the standard of their work.
217. The attitudes of students to their work are good. All contribute positively to lessons and make every effort to progress. Students relate well to each other and their teacher. The quality of the work in course files shows that students take pride in their work, make good notes and organise materials well. Students clearly enjoy their chemistry lessons and appreciate the support that teachers provide to help them to overcome problems. Although students are provided with the course syllabus to encourage them to engage in independent study, there are not enough structured activities to develop students' independent study skills. Not enough use is made of independent topic searches followed by feedback and discussion with the class. Opportunities for students to engage in independent study are restricted by the lack of a course textbook. These have been ordered but there have been problems in obtaining them.

218. The new leadership and management of the chemistry department are satisfactory. Schemes of work have been put in place and resources are being managed and used effectively. Information on students' attainment is being collated and used effectively to monitor performance. There are no scheduled chemistry department meetings although the chemistry teachers meet all the time as a part of day-to-day working. Faculty meetings take place fortnightly. There is a need for more formal subject meetings to share ideas, monitor students' progress and engage in planning. The accommodation for the subject is very good. The close proximity of the laboratories allows the head of department to be aware of the progress groups are making. There are plans to expand the curriculum through chemistry revision courses and links with University College London for spectrometer analysis of substances students have made in school. The head of chemistry keeps up to date with developments in the subject by attending standardisation meetings held by the examination board.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

219. The focus was on design and technology (textiles) but graphics products was also sampled. In graphics products, the examination results were well below the national average in 2001. The results in 2002 were similar. Two Year 12 lessons were observed. Both were satisfactory. In the lessons students worked on their individual coursework imaginatively. Teachers gave students good help and advice. As a result, students made good progress and were aware of deadlines they had to meet in order to finish their work on time.

Design and technology (textiles)

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

Strengths

- Students' very good attitudes.
- The acquisition of basic designing and making skills.
- The progress made by students with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- The use of ICT, particularly in coursework.
- Learning resources.

220. Standards overall are well below the national average. Standards on entry to Year 12 are well below the national average. Some students have not been taught textile technology before they enter the sixth form and so their skills in designing and making are poor. No students took the subject in 2001. In 2002, males entered the course for the first time. Standards at the end of Year 13 remain well below the national average. In 2001, no student obtained A or B grades in the A-level examination. All three female candidates obtained pass grades. These students had been taught in the two secondary schools that merged to form Hertswood School. The results in 2002 were similar. Attainment in the lessons observed was better. Achievement is satisfactory when standards on entry to the course are taken into account. Students with special educational needs make very good progress with additional support from teachers.
221. The standards of teaching and learning are always satisfactory and sometimes excellent. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. They give good help and advice to individual students in practical lessons, particularly to those with special educational needs. Teachers are relaxed and enthusiastic. As a result, students are keen to learn and make good progress. There is always a very good working atmosphere in lessons. Students were seen in a Year 12 lesson learning about the impact textile technology has on the environment and designing and making collages from waste fabrics. Some of the collages were very imaginatively created. Students enter the course with weak basic making skills and lesson planning takes careful account of the need to develop these skills. As a result, these skills gradually improve as

students move through the course. In an excellent lesson in Year 12, students were seen working on their coursework - wall hangings, fashion bags, bell-bottomed trousers and an evening gown. One student was making a wall hanging based on natural themes and had visited the Eden Project to gain design ideas. They were making excellent progress with the help and advice of the teacher. Assessment is used effectively and students

are aware of the deadlines they have to meet in order to finish their work on time. Some students stay on after school to improve their work. However, not enough use is made of ICT to improve the presentation of coursework.

222. The subject is well led by the acting head of department working together with an assistant head teacher, who is a specialist textile teacher. They are well supported by a full-time specialist teacher with further education experience. Although the number of students taking the A-level course is small, the course has been soundly established. There is a need for more basic learning resources.

BUSINESS

223. The focus was on business studies but economics was also sampled. In the Year 13 lesson observed teaching and learning were satisfactory and standards were consistent with course expectations.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good relationships with students help them achieve satisfactorily.
- Good assessment of students' progress.
- Students' good attitudes to their work.

Areas for improvement

- The availability and use of ICT in lessons.
- The attendance of some lower attaining students.
- Links with local businesses.

224. A-level results in business studies for the seven students entered in 2001 were well below the national average, but results in 2002 were slightly better. Results at AS level were below average for the higher A or B grades in 2002 but all six students passed, and their achievement was satisfactory in relation to their GCSE standards on entry. The twelve current AS-level students are making satisfactory progress: three higher-attaining students who entered the course with high GCSE grades in business are achieving well. Results in the AVCE examination were better. The six students entered in 2001 completed the course successfully, in line with the national average. There were no entries in 2002, but the course has been re-launched. Small numbers on courses make national comparisons statistically invalid, but, encouragingly, course numbers for AVCE and AS level have risen significantly. Thirty students enrolled in Year 12 this year and the retention rate has been very good.
225. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by students presently in Year 12 are satisfactory for most AS-level students in relation to course expectations, and, for some AS-level and several AVCE students are above predictions. The one Year 13 A-level student is making good progress and attaining in line with national expectations.
226. In AS-level work seen, higher-attaining students drew neat supply curves and they were aware of how businesses could run short of cash, but they did not supply enough real or topical examples

in their work, making their evaluations too brief. They did not apply motivation theory thoroughly but had good basic understanding of procedures in human resource management. A Year 13 coursework project was very well presented but lacked enough desk research. AVCE work was of higher quality because students showed a good ability to calculate and analyse financial ratios, in line with expectations for this type of course.

227. Students' attitudes are good both in lessons and as reflected in the presentation of their work. However, in one AS-level lesson on human resource management students were not fully engaged and lost concentration. AVCE students show developing skills in planning their own ways of learning, with some students making good use of their experience in part-time jobs to enrich the quality of written coursework assignments.
228. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some that is good or very good. Good relationships are characteristic of work in the subject and underpin the progress students are making. Teaching meets the needs of most students, but a small minority of Year 12 AS-level students are not suited to the course as they find it too hard and do not attend regularly. They were ungraded in the first external module examination. Teachers are not able to plan enough activities involving the use of ICT as computers are not always readily available in lessons for Internet research and analysis of financial data. In a very good AVCE lesson the teacher began with an effective recap of students' homework and closely supervised the students' graphical skills as they answered an examination question on supply and demand. As they proceeded, students were given a very clear indication of marks to be awarded for each section of the question.
229. Some weaker teaching of the AS-level groups was mainly due to the teacher's inexperience. Despite good planning and good relationships with the class, there were not enough opportunities for students to take an active part in the lesson, and concentration was lost as a result. Homework was set and marked regularly by all staff, and this helped students improve the quality of their presented work.
230. The leadership of this well-established department is good. Staff work as an enthusiastic team, plan their lessons well and ensure that schemes of work are updated and topical. A satisfactory range of resources, including up-to-date textbooks, are used, but not enough opportunities are given for students to link with local businesses on visits and work placements. In AS-level lessons, there is not enough planning to improve students' communication and ICT key skills. The subject has been adversely affected by high staff turnover, but with the now more stable staffing situation the department has very good capacity for improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

231. The A-level course in computing has been discontinued and replaced by an Intermediate level GNVQ course and an AVCE course, both in ICT. In the 2002 A-level examination, all four candidates obtained pass grades, although none obtained higher A or B grades. The results in 2002 were similar. Two lessons were sampled. Although teaching was satisfactory in the Year 12 GNVQ lesson on the Data Protection Act, students were too passive and dependent on the teacher. Teaching and learning in the Year 12 AVCE lesson on manual and electronic indexing were satisfactory. Students' attitudes in both lessons were positive. There were no lessons in Year 13.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

232. The focus was on physical education but the GNVQ Intermediate course in leisure and tourism was also sampled. In the Year 12 lesson observed teaching and learning were good and standards were consistent with course expectations.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm with the students.
- Support for students in lessons helps them overcome individual difficulties.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- The provision and use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The consistency of marking procedures.
- The number of students following the A-level course.

233. In 2001, only four students were entered for the AS level examination. Overall standards achieved were below the national average, but all students obtained a pass grade. In the 2002 AS-level examination (seven entries), the proportion of students attaining the higher A or B grades was broadly in line with the last confirmed national average results of 2001. Only one student failed to achieve a pass grade. Results were better than in the previous year and represented satisfactory achievement for most students. Boys and girls achieved similar standards. There were no A-level entries in either year.
234. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by students presently in Years 12 and 13 are in line with expected levels nationally. Within a wide attainment range, most students are achieving well. Year 12 students understand the main theoretical aspects covered so far, for example, how skill is acquired and the physiological effects of exercise on the body. The few higher-attaining students can make detailed analyses and evaluations of the determinants of skilled performance. A minority of students have more limited technical vocabulary and their course assignments lack extended writing skills. They have difficulty in applying some theoretical principles to practical situations. The two A-level students have a good knowledge of the psychological factors relating to sporting performance; they demonstrate a clear understanding of the physical factors which affect training, exercise and energy systems. In one A-level lesson, a high-attaining student produced a very well-researched and detailed comparative study of sports organisation in the USA and in the United Kingdom. Students show a satisfactory level of competence in key skills. They communicate effectively in discussions and use appropriate numerical concepts in their written work. Most use appropriate technical language, but extended writing skills are less well developed. A few students use ICT for research and to enhance presentation, but generally it is under used.
235. Most Year 12 students have good attitudes and work well. Students persevere well to understand quite challenging concepts at the beginning of the Year 12 course. The two Year 13 students are highly motivated and wish to gain places on sports related degree courses.
236. Overall, teaching is good. Students achieve well because teachers have good subject knowledge, their expectations are high and they plan lessons to engage students at all attainment levels. In an A-level lesson the teacher provided opportunities for research, analysis and problem solving, and stimulated all students' learning of motivation theories. A few Year 12 students are taking time to adjust to the more independent nature of A-level work. Their teachers provide good guidance on accessing background information and resources, including the department resource base. Teachers do not, however, provide enough opportunities for students to enhance their learning through the use of ICT, and marking procedures are not consistent across the department. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for students to develop literacy and numerical skills.
237. The department is well led and managed. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are good and are used well to monitor the students' progress and to set targets. Students' learning is enhanced by the provision of good accommodation; library resources are adequate. The students' personal performances in their selected sports are enhanced by extra-curricular activities, and some perform well at area and county levels. In order to improve further, the department needs to increase the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, develop more consistent marking procedures and raise numbers

on A-level courses. Retention rates on courses are very good, but few AS-level students continue to A level. The subject has the capacity to improve further.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

238. The focus was on the Intermediate GNVQ course in health and social care.

Health and Social Care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning.
- Teachers' relationships with students.
- Students' excellent attitudes and good achievement.
- Teachers plan interesting activities that students really enjoy.

Areas for improvement

- Availability and students' use of ICT.
- Students' use of work placements to enrich learning.
- Standards of literacy are below average.

239. This new one-year intermediate course has made a very good start, in which seven of the nine students entered for the first module in January 2003 obtained pass grades. Students (all girls) are due to complete the course in summer 2003.

240. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by students presently in Year 12 are good in relation to course expectations, and all have made good progress. In lessons and work seen, the three higher-attaining students are making very good progress, considering their very low starting points in GCSE examinations. In the sample of three very good lessons seen, intermediate students were able to discuss intelligently the effects of excessive alcohol on young people with a visitor from an advice centre, and worked very well in pairs to devise strategies for care workers in residential care settings to use to combat alcohol abuse and discrimination. Students showed excellent teamwork and oral communication skills, but in lessons and work seen, standards of literacy and ICT were below average because descriptions and evaluations were too brief. The range of ICT software that students used to present and analyse work was limited, mainly because of lack of easy availability of equipment.

241. Students' attitudes and behaviour on this new course are excellent. These attitudes are promoted by very supportive teaching that fully involves students of all attainment levels, including any with special educational needs. Above all, students say that their lessons are fun, and they are very appreciative of teachers' continual efforts to keep every student involved in practical activities.

242. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. All of the three lessons observed were interesting and enjoyable. Learning activities were well matched to students' needs, so they made very good progress. Students were encouraged to offer their own opinions without inhibition and, because teachers ensured that discussions were topical and relevant, students remained fully involved in written and oral tasks. Teachers' examples showed humour and considerable expertise, for example, when a teacher used an excellent illustration from 'Only Fools and Horses' to show how Uncle Albert made his case for paid residential care! Teachers' continual focus on literacy, by using writing frames to help students write fuller descriptions of physical, intellectual, emotional and social life stages, helped to show students how to express theory in their own words. Students' written work is regularly marked and teachers give students constructive targets to improve the quality of their work.

243. Leadership and management of the subject are good, as, although the GNVQ course is only in its first year of operation, routines and schemes of work are well established, and staff work as an enthusiastic, committed team. Staff plan to extend the currently limited range of links with local care settings and to introduce work placements to enrich the quality of students' work. Greater use of ICT by students in lessons to help presentation and numeracy skills, for example, relating

to health and diet monitoring, needs to be planned. The subject has very good capacity for further improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

244. The focus was on media studies, but art and design, music and theatre studies were also sampled. AS and A-level results in art and design were average compared with 2001 results nationally. Unconfirmed results for 2002 show a similar pattern of attainment. Three lessons were observed. In the Year 12 AS-level lesson teaching was good and in the Year 12 Intermediate GNVQ lesson it was very good. Students use art vocabulary to explain their ideas and opinions clearly and most take an active part in discussions. Teaching in the Year 13 A-level lesson was very good. Higher-attaining A-level students show good levels of independent learning through first-hand research which is helping them develop stronger drawing, painting and analytical skills. Teaching and learning in the Year 13 music lesson observed were very good and attainment is consistent with course expectations. Teaching and learning in the one Year 12 dance lesson observed were good, although attainment was below course expectations. A small group is taking A-level theatre studies in Year 13 and a much larger group is taking the subject in Year 12. It was not possible to observe any lessons during the inspection. Evidence from students' work indicates that they are making satisfactory progress in both practical and theoretical aspects of the subject.

Media studies

Overall, the quality of provision in media studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding provide good intellectual challenge for students.
- Students enjoy the practical nature of the subject.
- Students in 2002 achieved higher grades in the A-level examination than predicted by their GCSE results.

Areas for improvement

- The adequacy and suitability of the computer software for students' practical projects.
- The split-site makes it difficult to monitor and support students' work outside lessons.
- Students' weak independent learning skills impede progress.
- The frequency of individual tutorials.

245. Results in the 2001 A-level examination were well below average when compared with results nationally. None of the seven students entered gained the higher grades A or B and students' results were below those achieved in their other subjects, although not significantly so. The 2002 results showed some improvement; of the eleven candidates, two gained grades A or B. However, school and LEA documentation indicates that students in 2002 gained, on average, about three-quarters of a grade higher than those predicted by their GCSE results. There are no significant differences in the attainment and achievement of male and female students.
246. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by students currently in Years 12 and 13 are below average in relation to course expectations. Their practical work is better than their written and theory work. Some good examples of film were observed in a Year 13 lesson. This showed originality and the work of the higher-attaining students benefited from some unusual camera angles and sharp editing. The work of lower-attaining students lacked cohesion and suffered from slow editing. Although discussions are lively and underpinned by good relationships between teachers and students, the latter demonstrate a lack of self-confidence. Students are developing their knowledge and understanding of technical terminology but as yet it is not an integral part of their normal subject vocabulary in discussion. For instance, in one Year 12 lesson, students struggled with the meaning of 'protagonist' and 'inversion' in their study of television sitcoms. Their written work, though demonstrating care and enjoyment, is impeded by

below average critical and analytical skills and levels of literacy. This leads to relatively simplistic analysis and work that is characterised by simple sentence structures and limited vocabulary.

247. Students display positive attitudes towards the subject and say that they enjoy planning and developing their own practical work, but in lessons some, especially boys, take time to settle and they clearly find it difficult to organise themselves. This was demonstrated in a Year 12 lesson where some students were obviously overwhelmed by the amount they still had to complete before the deadline for their practical projects. Teachers are good at identifying strengths and weaknesses in students' work but they would benefit from more individual tutorials. However, not all students fully recognise their own responsibility to do much more work themselves outside lessons.
248. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good now that there is a full complement of well-qualified teachers. This good teaching is characterised by teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding, active teaching methods which aim to increase students' independence and good printed resources to support them. Teachers generate some lively discussion about such topics as the representation of gender in situation comedy and use examples of previous students' work to show examination requirements. However, the department has suffered from recent staffing instability and some of the marking of the early pieces in Year 13 files was not helpful. Lack of grades or formative comments together with inaccurate assessment gave students little help in improving the standard of their work. Marking is now much better. The subject also makes a good contribution to students' personal development through the study of such topics as violence and censorship, gender, film, television and the printed media; this helps students to make sense of the world around them.
249. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Because the newly appointed head of media spends so much time at the lower school site, the head of English has retained for the time being the responsibility for sixth form media. However, the head of media has rapidly developed a clear view of what she must do to raise standards and is prioritising these needs. She has already brought in specialists from high-achieving schools to give students a clearer understanding of what they need to do to reach higher standards. Although printed resources are good, the editing software installed on the department's computers is difficult to use and this has an adverse impact on students' achievement. The split-site also makes it difficult to give enough support to students or to chase up late work at lunchtimes.

HUMANITIES

250. The focus was on geography, but history, psychology and sociology were also sampled. Because of staffing difficulties, the A-level course in history has been taught by a series of temporary, non-specialist teachers and this is having an adverse effect on teaching and learning in the subject. Two lessons were sampled. A non-specialist, temporary teacher, was supervising the Year 13 lesson observed. Not enough progress was made in the lesson because no teaching was taking place and students were expected to engage in independent study. Teaching in the Year 12 lesson observed was good because an enthusiastic subject specialist took the lesson. Students were actively engaged throughout the lesson and, as a result, good progress was made. In the Year 13 psychology lesson sampled, teaching and learning were very good and attainment was consistent with course expectations. Teaching and learning in the Year 12 sociology lesson observed were satisfactory, although attainment was below course expectations.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Students develop good independent learning skills.
- Teachers challenge students effectively so that they support their answers with relevant evidence.
- Students have positive attitudes and support each other with their studies.
- Students understand their progress because assessment is regular and helpful.

Areas for improvement

- The literacy and communication skills of lower-attaining students.
- Access to and use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

251. A-level results in 2001 were above average for grades A to E, but below average for the higher A or B grades. Males performed better than females in terms of A or B grades. Students performed better than in other subjects taken. Achievement was good. One student took the AS-level examination and was unsuccessful. A-level results in 2002 were similar but national comparative data is not yet available.
252. Inspection evidence shows that standards attained by students presently in Years 12 and 13 are in line with course expectations. GCSE standards on entry to the sixth form were above average and students' achievement is as expected. Students develop independent learning skills and gain confidence in sustaining an argument with facts. They read rapidly, highlighting key points from articles to summarise an author's views. Students draw upon earlier learning to illustrate points. They refine their critical skills by listening to each other read their work to a class. Using an examination mark scheme, they comment on how well the answer meets the criteria, and how higher marks could be gained. Higher-attaining students understand and apply theories succinctly. For example, Year 13 students said that modern agriculture revised the Malthusian theory that food production would not keep pace with population growth. Higher-attaining students develop good written work by including apposite evidence from case studies. Lower-attaining students give less attention to fully exploring topics and leave out significant evidence. They are careless about including titles on diagrams and maps, and occasionally tables are incomplete. Students with English as an additional language progress as well as other students do.
253. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Students listen to each other carefully and give supportive advice. They enjoy geography and collaborate successfully in pairs and small groups.
254. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers encourage students to develop independent learning skills. For example, groups of Year 12 students researched changes to a Hertfordshire village from the 1920s. They were challenged to present their findings to the class at the end of the lesson. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly so that time is used productively. They use their assured geographical knowledge and understanding to motivate students with sharp questions. For example, in a lesson on natural hazards the teacher's questions steered Year 13 students to consider how people perceive hazards. Students gave instances of how perception influences response to hazards such as floods and earthquakes. Teachers manage discussions and students' participation very well. They inform students fully about their progress and examine with them ways to improve their work. Students' independent work at home and in school is used very well to extend learning.
255. Sixth form geography is well led and managed by an assistant head (former head of geography) until the new head of geography starts in April. Four specialist teachers focus on different aspects of the course; this gives students variety. However, teachers meet regularly to review the progress of the course elements. Because of access difficulties, not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. There is a high retention rate in the subject and numbers are increasing. The subject has good capacity for improvement.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

256. The focus was on English language but English literature and French were also sampled. Results in English literature in 2001 were well below average, although these improved in 2002. In the Year 12 lesson observed, attainment was below average. Most students displayed relatively superficial understanding of Shylock's character, although one higher-attaining student was able to present a more balanced and thoughtful view of the complexities of the character. Teaching was satisfactory, although the teacher had to work hard to get through the work after half of the

class arrived 15 minutes late because they had forgotten which room they were in. Teaching of key skills was particularly good, with the teacher insisting on a wider and more subject specific use of language in students' analyses of the character. Few students have continued learning French in the sixth form and there were no AS or A-level entries in 2002. Teaching and learning in the one Year 12 lesson observed were satisfactory. There are currently three students taking the AS-level French course. They have started the course from a weak GCSE base. Although one student speaks French at home and has a high level of oral proficiency, overall standards are low. Students lack confidence and find much of the work difficult.

English language

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in lessons.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge provides good intellectual challenge for students.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Students in 2002 achieved higher grades in the A-level examination than predicted by their GCSE results.
- There is good emphasis in lessons on how to achieve success in examinations.

Areas for improvement

- The depth and style of students' written work.
- The development of key skills.
- The amount of work which students do outside the classroom.
- Students' understanding and use of subject terminology.

257. The first students taking English language were entered for the examination in 2002. Only four were entered and all gained at least a pass grade, with two gaining grades A or B. School and LEA documentation indicates that students gained, on average, about three-quarters of a grade higher than predicted by their GCSE results. The attainment of students currently taking the course is below average. There are no significant differences in the attainment and achievement of males and females.

258. Although achievement in lessons is good because of well-planned and enthusiastic teaching, there are some underlying features which impact on students' overall achievement. These are students' lack of understanding of the amount of additional study that they should do between lessons, their dependence on teachers and their unwillingness to take responsibility for their own learning. Students are developing knowledge of the subject terminology, although they find it difficult to use as part of their normal discourse in lessons, and their contributions to discussions are often lively and informed. In a good Year 12 lesson the all-female group made good gains in an exploration of the importance of language in conveying the different expectations that teachers and parents have of boys and girls and of the differences between male and female uses of standard and non-standard English. Year 13 students made good gains in a lesson preparing them for the editorial writing examination. The teacher's use of exemplar scripts enabled them to improve their understanding of what they need to do to achieve good marks as they analysed the task requirements and compared different responses to the task. Their progress is impeded, however, by their lack of wider knowledge about the features of different text types. They admit that they do not read a range of newspapers and other texts; they had to be prompted to differentiate between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers and had not come across a popular series of travel guides.

259. Students' written work suffers from the same problems. While files are well organised and neatly presented and good use is made of drafting and editing to improve their work, students' standards of literacy are below average. Although spelling is generally accurate, most use a restricted vocabulary and a limited range of sentence structures. When writing commentaries on their work - an important aspect of the subject - they do not readily use the language of analysis and

evaluation. Higher-attaining students do, however, produce some work of real quality. A good example of this was one commentary on Tony Blair's speech after the death of Princess Diana, which demonstrated a perceptive analysis of the way in which he had combined the conventional language of mourning with a more personal and everyday style.

260. Students generally display positive attitudes towards the subject. They enjoy lessons and contribute willingly to discussions. However, they have not yet learned what it means to be a serious student. They are willing to work in lessons but it is obvious that some make insufficient effort to continue their studies between lessons or to read around the subject. They recognise that they started the course with a low level of understanding of language, and particularly grammar, but rely too heavily on their teachers rather than researching for themselves.
261. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to interest and enthuse their students and to provide good intellectual challenge in lessons. Planning is very good and leads to lessons with a good range of learning activities and good pace so that students work at full stretch. Homework is used effectively to consolidate new learning and the subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development. For instance, in a Year 12 lesson about language and social context, the teacher helped students to focus on how their own perceptions of one theorist's work changed subtly when they realised that she was a woman rather than the man they had assumed. Teachers are rightly concerned to encourage greater self-esteem, but in doing so they sometimes support students too much with both resources and praise and this works against the development of independent working practices. This also affects marking, which sometimes does not give students a clear enough picture of their weaknesses.
262. The department is well led and managed. Staffing has suffered from recent instability and this has slowed the speed of development and improvement but there is currently a strong and well-qualified team. There are good monitoring and support systems for new teachers and the head of department is building in more formalised procedures for next year. She has a clear vision of the direction she wishes the department to follow and her determination, commitment and energy form a good base for further improvement.