

INSPECTION REPORT

ILFORD URSULINE HIGH SCHOOL

Ilford, Essex

LEA area: Redbridge

Unique reference number: 132106

Headteacher: Miss J Reddington

Reporting inspector: Mr R Passant
2728

Dates of inspection: 17 - 21 March 2003

Inspection number: 249592

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: Voluntary aided

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Female

School address: Morland Road
Ilford

Postcode: IG1 4JU

Telephone number: 020 8554 1995

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Sister Maureen Maloney

Date of previous inspection: This is the schools first inspection

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2728	Roderick Passant	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion Drama	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9779	Suzanne Smith	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Students' attitudes, values and personal developments How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31218	Thomas Allen	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography Geography (sixth form)	
4697	Robert Black	Team inspector	Music	
30553	Rick Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)	
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form)	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)	
17201	Vikki Harrhy	Team inspector	Physical education	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	English as an additional language History History (sixth form)	

21822	Helen Maskew	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
20420	Stuart Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Physics (sixth form) Science	
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)	
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)	
4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	French (sixth form) Modern foreign languages	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided girls' comprehensive school. Formerly independent, the school became Voluntary Aided in September 1999. The school has grown significantly in size since then, although it remains smaller than average. There are 548 students¹ on roll including a sixth form of 105. There is a high percentage of students whose mother tongue is not believed to be English; however they are all fluent English speakers. The percentage of students on the register of special educational needs is small- well below the national average as is the percentage of students with statements. A third of the students are White UK heritage, and the rest of students come from a diverse range of ethnic heritage groups. The largest groups are Indian, White European, Black African and Caribbean. Overall attainment on entry to the school is above average as measured by National Curriculum tests in the primary school. In addition the majority of students have good literacy skills. Whilst there are students who come from economically disadvantaged homes, overall the intake is socially advantaged as reflected by the fact that the percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

The school operates complex admission criteria, drawing students from the local parishes. The school, is, however, unusual in that 15 places out of the 90 each year are reserved for non-Catholic students, even though the school is over-subscribed by Catholic parents. This brings a diversity of faith into the school, although all girls are expected to participate in the Roman Catholic faith-life of the school. The school is currently under-going an extensive building programme.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Iford Ursuline is a very good school. Students make very good progress and attain well above average results in National Curriculum tests and public examinations. The school is in the top five percent of schools when compared to similar schools². The school has been awarded a Department for Education and Skills award in recognition of its results for the last two years. Students' attitudes to learning and their demeanour around the school are very mature. This, coupled with good and often very good teaching, leads to rigorous standards of scholastic achievement. The school has managed the transition from private to voluntary aided school very well because of the overall high quality leadership by the headteacher and key staff. The overall unit costs of the school are currently high, linked to its smaller than average size but the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve standards which are well above average and in the top five per cent of similar schools.
- Teaching is good and often very good.
- Students have excellent attitudes; they are self -motivated, mature and want to do well.
- The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of students' personal development is very good.
- The leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good.

What could be improved

- The use of national comparative data at departmental level to monitor departmental effectiveness and to set challenging targets for the department and students; ensuring that students know what it is they have to do in order to improve their work by making grades criteria clear.
- Improve the status and provision for physical education, whilst acknowledging the difficulties caused by the accommodation and site and the very significant financial investment in the off-site provision for the subject.

¹ Normally in Ofsted reports the term *pupils* is used to describe those attending school between the ages of 11 and 16 and the term *students* to describe those attending the school between the ages of 16 to 18. The preferred term at the Iford Ursuline is *students* to describe *all* those attending the school. This term has therefore been adopted throughout the report.

² Similar schools are not defined by characteristics such as whether it is single sex, or a church school but by the sole characteristic of whether it is in the same free school meals band.

- Broaden the curriculum of design and technology to ensure that the subject meets statutory requirements.

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 that the school has been inspected by Ofsted.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11 and students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A2 level AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A*	A	A	A*
A2 levels/AS-levels		A	N/A ³	

Key

very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Performance in GCSE exams is in the top five percent of schools when compared to schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. Because the school has only had to report results in the last three years since it became voluntary aided it is not possible to indicate an overall trend in results over time. Nevertheless, in the last three years standards have been maintained at well above average at Key Stage 3⁴ and in GCSE examinations. The school's targets are very challenging and it came very close to meeting them in 2002.

Standards in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 in English are very high: in the top five percent of schools. They are well above average in mathematics and science. Overall, the results are well above average and have been so for the past three years.

Students attain very good standards at GCSE in English and mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages and art. They achieve good standards in science, ICT, design and technology and music. Standards in drama, only recently introduced, are in line with expectations. Standards seen in lessons in physical education are broadly average-however, restrictions of the accommodation mean that overall, when their physical education experience is viewed over time, standards are below average. Overall, students achieve very well during their time in school.

Students are very literate and have very good speaking and listening skills. These skills are developed well in subjects such as English, geography and history. Students have good numeracy skills and apply these well across subjects in the curriculum. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good, although not all subjects make as effective use of ICT as they might to support learning in their subjects.

Students with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to their targets overall because of the basic management structures and the work of the special needs co-ordinator. Not all members of staff are aware of, or sensitive to, students' individual additional needs. Students with English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers. There was no evidence that students from different ethnic heritages perform differently from their classmates.

Higher attaining pupils are provided with appropriate challenge and they attain high grades at GCSE.

³ National comparative data are not yet available for 2002

⁴ Key Stage 3 is a term used to describe the period of schooling from Year 7 to Year 9 – the ages of 11 to 14 approximately. Key Stage 4 describes the period in Year 10 and Year 11 – ages 14 to 16.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have excellent attitudes. They have a very mature approach to learning which makes a significant contribution to the standards they achieve.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is very good. There are occasional incidents of teasing and name-calling, causing unhappiness to individual students.
Personal development and relationships	Generally there are very good relationships between students and staff, although some members of staff do not seem to appreciate students' general maturity.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is good and it is often very good. Teaching is very good in English, modern foreign languages and, very often, in history and art. It is good in citizenship, design and technology, drama, geography, ICT and music. Teaching in mathematics is, overall, good but teaching is not consistent. Teaching in science and physical education is satisfactory overall. Active approaches to learning are used less often in the post 16 provision.

The quality of learning is very good because of the consistent quality of good teaching which develops students' excellent attitudes. They are organised, concentrate well and are particularly motivated. They work very hard independently and have a very strong work ethic. Students develop the rigour of scholarship. They are not always clear what it is they have to do in order to improve their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall the quality and range is good. There are strengths in modern languages, English and the arts. Weaknesses in the curriculum provision are: physical education, a narrow programme in design and technology and the use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum to support learning.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The provision for special educational needs is very good.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Whilst the school lacks an infrastructure to support early language learners, the current learners are fluent speakers. They have no difficulty in accessing the curriculum and make similar progress to their peers.

Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Students' individuality, self-esteem and their concern for others are developed well. The provision for spiritual development is very good. There is a strong sense of community that fosters the very good moral and social aspects of students' development. The provision for cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its students	Overall the care for students is very good. The school is a safe place.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good. Management is good across the school. The headteacher has successfully steered the school from its former independent status into the maintained sector. There is a clear sense of direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very committed and supportive with a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their statutory duties well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does evaluate its performance through formal and informal structures. The use of national assessment data needs to be developed within departments.
The strategic use of resources	Overall the school makes very effective use of resources.

There is a good match of staff to the curriculum and resources in the main school are adequate although the library requires additional investment. There are unsatisfactory aspects to accommodation, particularly in physical education. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents value the fact that their daughters are expected to work hard and that they make good progress. They also value the fact that girls behave well. They are pleased with their daughters' growing maturity and sense of responsibility and the fact that they like coming to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant minority of parents feel that the range of activities provided outside of lessons is limited. A minority of parents felt that the school did not work closely with parents and that they were not kept fully informed about their daughters' progress.

Inspection evidence confirms parents' positive views. Inspectors consider the number of clubs and the provision for student support to be good, given the size of school and number of staff available to run these activities. The school has in place all the ingredients for the provision of effective information about student progress but the co-ordination of meetings and reports could be improved. There is a home/school agreement that provides an effective basis for a working partnership, but the process of ensuring all parents feel involved and consulted is not yet developed fully. The school does seek to develop a close working relationship with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has expanded its curriculum and is establishing itself as a centre for Ursuline students as well as those in the Ilford area wanting further education in a single sex school. Students come from a wide range of religious and ethnic backgrounds, many of who are not Roman Catholic, and make good progress supported by the strong Catholic ethos of the whole school.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Overall standards are above national average with almost all students successfully completing their GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary courses. The overall good teaching enables the majority of students to achieve well in relation to their qualifications on entry to the sixth form. Amongst the subjects inspected in detail, the provision for English and art and design is particularly strong. There is good provision for history, geography and French. The school is still developing provision as sixth form numbers increase and has yet to provide a sufficiently wide range of courses and activities to meet the needs of most Ursuline students seeking further or higher education. Students are expected to take responsibility within the main school. Overall, students are positive about the sixth form, particularly in discussion, though feel that arrangements do not always recognise their maturity and interests.

The main strengths and the areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

Strengths

- Students are significantly more successful in gaining qualifications compared with the national average as well as with girls in other similar schools.
- Students develop considerably as thoughtful and mature individuals as a result of the strong school ethos that encourages personal responsibility.
- Teaching is mostly good and prepares students well for examinations.
- The responsible senior manager provides good leadership and has been particularly effective in expanding the sixth form size and the range of provision.

What could be improved

- Although overall teaching is good, some teachers use a limited range of strategies to engage students.
- Assessment and reporting procedures are well established but ongoing assessment is less consistent in informing students of their current progress against national standards.
- Some practical arrangements and activities do not fully meet the students' interests or recognise them as mature young adults.
- The enrichment activities and sporting opportunities for sixth form students.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form work. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report. 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 judgements about provision, and comment
Biology	Satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and all students learn to an appropriate depth.

Curriculum area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Teaching is rigorous and supportive and, if lacking in breadth, nonetheless helps students attain standards in line with national average.
Physics	Satisfactory. Students successfully complete their Advanced level, though the less strong teacher guidance and support result in some of those students doing less well than they should.
ICT	Good. The very good teaching benefits those few students who pursue additional qualifications in ICT, although in general, access to and use of ICT is less developed.
Art and design	Very Good. Students make very good progress and achieve well as a result of the very good management and teaching.
Geography	Good. The well-informed and well-organised teaching is helping students make good progress.
History	Good. Informed preparation for examinations and student self-assessment contribute to good learning. Students are making good progress in the development of historical skills.
English	Very good. Standards attained are consistently high and students achieve very well because of the very good teaching and learning.
French	Good. The good management and teaching have resulted in a marked improvement in Advanced level results and students now reach standards above national average.

Inspectors make overall judgements of the provision in subjects and courses in the range: Outstanding, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, very weak

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well the students are guided and supported	Students are well supported in their tutor groups, where they further benefit from a varied personal and social education programme and informed careers guidance supported by the local careers service. There are regular reporting procedures, although some students are less clear about their ongoing progress in particular courses.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The good management of the head of sixth form and her colleagues has succeeded in promoting the sixth form and put in place procedures for the growing number of students. Despite increasing pressures, the above average standards have been sustained despite the current disruptions caused by building projects that will ultimately improve accommodation and access to ICT and other resources.

Inspectors make overall judgements of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: outstanding, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, very weak

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What they liked	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The help and support of the head of sixth form and the tutors• Enjoyed the teaching and enrichment opportunities in most subjects• Access to informed careers and higher education advice by the school and local careers service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about their progress and the standards they are reaching in some courses• A wider range of course options• More extra-curricular activities including opportunities for sports and physical education.• Greater respect and autonomy as a young adults.• Better resources and study areas including access to ICT facilities

The inspectors support the students' views about the good teaching and support systems. The school itself is aware of the importance of continuing to develop the range of courses and activities and this will occur as the school continues to grow in size. The current building work has adversely affected the current study facilities although this will be resolved shortly. The inspectors agree with students that not all sixth form teachers have developed the good practice elsewhere in the school of keeping students informed of their progress and how they can improve. Students demonstrate considerable maturity and a well-developed capacity for independent learning though they are not always accorded the status of responsible young adults.

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 students' achievements

Performance at GCSE is in the top five percent of schools when compared to schools with similar proportion of free school meals. In the last three years standards have been maintained at well above average at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations. Students make very good progress.

1. On entry to the school, students have above average levels of attainment as measured by National Curriculum tests scores in primary school. Their attainment as measured by cognitive tests taken at the school shows more average attainment. Attainment as measured by these tests shows a slight drop since the school became voluntary aided. Students make very good progress and achieve high standards at Key Stage 3 and well above average standards at GCSE examinations.
2. The school creates successfully a learning community that has high expectations of its students. Through its consistently good teaching and through the formal and informal curriculum the school structures and develops a number of features, which, in combination, account for the very good progress students make. Some of these are only indicated in this section and are dealt with in more detail elsewhere in the report. They can be grouped under a number of broad headings.
 - Students' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
 - Students' attitudes and motivation to learn.
 - Using homework very successfully to extend the learning opportunities of the formal teaching.
 - The school's particular ethos and the way that this is structured.
3. Students develop through their work in English, history, geography and other subjects very good standards of literacy. Students reach high standards in speaking and listening, engaging in debate and using language in a dynamic way when arguing and contributing to all forms of oral work. They use excellent oral skills in music when explaining their ideas. There are, however, too few opportunities for students to speak in science. They have good reading skills overall and most subjects support reading well through setting research projects, using the Internet, and reinforcing technical vocabulary. In mathematics, students read and interpret questions accurately, while in modern languages they review books read. Teachers reinforce the use of good research skills in English, geography, art, design and technology. A notable feature of the school is the 'bookishness' of students: groups of students are regularly seen reading a book or carrying out research in the library in their own time. Standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally good. Students take pride in their work and presentation is often excellent.
4. Students also develop very good numeracy skills, which are used effectively in other subjects. Teachers, generally, are aware of the use and development of numeracy; a whole school policy is being formulated with their active contribution to the detailed planning. Currently, numeracy skills are thoroughly developed in mathematics lessons with a particular initial emphasis, in Year 7, on number and handling data. Well above average skills are evident in science, where they are used to benefit scientific understanding and, in turn, complement students' perceptions of numeracy itself. In geography and ICT, spreadsheets are used, for example to record temperature and rainfall data; they are competently interpreted using numeracy skills. In technology, good graphical skills and precision in all work also reflect a high level of numeracy. English lessons contribute to the development of numeracy skills through reasoning and problem solving and drawing conclusions from data, as seen for example in a newspaper survey. The mathematics department will enable Year 9 students to carry out detailed analysis of data collected in geography as an end of academic-year numeracy project.

5. Although not all subjects make effective use of ICT to support learning in their subjects, overall students have good ICT skills. In science, students attain above average standards. Teachers have a good command of subject material in science but there is over-reliance on teacher delivery and extensive use of text resources for learning.
6. The second major factor in developing students' very good progress is that the school very successfully creates an ethos where students have high aspirations, are motivated very well and want to succeed and learn. Students for the most part are seen as active participants in their learning rather than as passive recipients. The result is that students actively engage with their learning, bringing their enthusiasm, interests and developing skills to the lessons and to their independent study.
7. Closely allied to this is the very effective use of homework, which lays the foundation for academic achievement and very effectively extends the learning opportunities. Students get through a lot of work as a result. A few parents were concerned about homework, in most cases because of the amount of time that their daughter was spending on it. More sympathetic monitoring may be required in individual cases. On the whole though, students seemed to manage their work well and saw homework as an important part of the process.
8. The last feature, that of the school's ethos, is subjective and difficult to define. The school does have a particular quality. The school is evidently rooted both in the academic achievement of its past and in a faith community founded on strong beliefs and dedication. There are implicit expectations that members of the community will conform to its rules. The reception staff knows all the students and deal with their concerns with a sensitivity that shows the advantages that goes with a small school in which individuals are constantly recognised. The daily life of the school and the interactions of its staff reinforce the characteristics of the school to advantage so that its size, its traditions and its faith play an important, albeit intangible part, in setting its expectations of the students and in creating a community which is focused on learning.
9. Students with English as an additional language make very good progress. All are fluent speakers of English and they are assisted further by the emphasis on close analysis of text and word, which helps develop their awareness of idiomatic English.
10. Students with special educational needs make, overall, very good progress against their targets. A good range of strategies is used to support them in and out of lessons, especially for literacy and numeracy and, as a result, students accelerate their learning and improve their skills. One individual pupil has made excellent progress with her reading in a very short space of time. Learning Support Assistants make a very good contribution to students' learning.
11. The school community is composed of a diversity of ethnic heritages. There was no evidence that any groups of students were making progress different from that of their classmates. Higher attaining pupils are also challenged well so that they succeed in gaining very high grades at GCSE. The very good progress that students make is reflected in the parents' questionnaire where well over nine out of ten parents considered that their daughter was making good progress and almost all parents considered that the school expected their child to work hard and achieve her best.

Sixth form

In 2001 standards were well above average compared to all schools. The average point score per candidate improved in 2002. On the basis of the subjects inspected standards are above average. Students make good progress.

12. Students achieve at least national standards in all subjects. They achieve high standards in English. Standards in French are above average and in art students achieve well. Students make good progress in history and geography. Standards are satisfactory in mathematics, biology and physics. Good teaching benefits those few students who seek additional accreditation in ICT.

13. The sixth form is small and therefore the numbers entering examinations are relatively low and in some subjects very low. The performance of an individual student can make a significant difference to overall percentages and average point score. Approximately one-third of entries in 2002 at A2 level gained grades in the A to B range. Almost all students completed the course. The average point score per entry at A2 level, 5.51, is in the C to B range.⁵

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

Students in the main school have excellent attitudes. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is very good. There are occasional incidents of teasing and name-calling causing unhappiness to individual students. Generally there are very good relationships between students and staff.

14. The attitudes of students to school, together with their very strong work ethic, are excellent and a major strength of the school. Inspection evidence confirms the views of the large majority of parents that their children enjoy coming to school; that they have very high aspirations, are keen to learn and approach their work with relish, particularly when lessons are demanding and require high levels of interaction. This makes a very substantial contribution to how well they learn.
15. In response to an ethos in which students usually grow and flourish they develop high levels of confidence, analysing and interpreting data competently and discussing their work very articulately when opportunities are provided. They respond very well to the usually high expectations for them to research independently, using the Internet effectively where this is needed and access available. Facilities available in the school library are used responsibly and well for private study. Independence grows through the work they do at home, in which they show high levels of perseverance, most working very hard to produce the best they are capable of.
16. The extraordinarily high levels of motivation, desire to achieve and mature attitudes to learning, lead students to excel in the work they complete independently. The very large majority of students take enormous pride in the presentation of their work, producing it to an exceptionally high standard that shows a real joy in learning. Most are very loyal to their teachers, they value the school community and are particularly appreciative of the dedication of their teachers and the time they give to support them outside lessons, for example with revision. They respond conscientiously to the high expectations for them to evaluate their own work, and are well focused in their efforts to address areas of relative weakness that are identified. In evaluating the work of their peers they are constructive in their comments, showing high levels of maturity.
17. The behaviour of students is very good throughout. There is a very high level of personal responsibility amongst them for their own actions and this makes a significant and very positive contribution to the school as an effective learning environment. No disruption to learning was observed as a result of behaviour during the course of the inspection and there is very little need for teachers to caution students or to refocus their attention during lessons. This ensures that time available for learning is used to best effect. Students have a very good understanding of school rules, which they rarely infringe. Although they value the system of merits the effectiveness of these is somewhat diminished by perceived inconsistency in the way they are awarded. Out of lessons they usually interact and socialise confidently and happily with each other and are invariably well mannered, polite and courteous. There are very few instances of bullying: when it occurs it usually arises from teasing that has gone too far. There is an anti-bullying policy but it is not always consistently applied. This results in occasional insensitivity in the way staff respond and sometimes reluctance amongst students to confide their concerns. Where this occurs, students are usually confident of peer and other support.

⁵ There have been delays in the availability of data for 2002 A2 and AS levels. There has also been a change to using the points scoring used by University Clearing to calculate the average points score. The information used above is based on the old style of calculation but takes into account the new method of calculation to form a judgement about improvement in 2002 over 2001. The details shown above with reference to average point score per entry will differ from statistics published in the media.

18. The number of exclusions is unusually low in comparison with other similar schools. School premises, materials and equipment are treated with high levels of respect. Movement around the premises is very sensible and contributes effectively to the personal safety of students. It reflects the high levels of maturity consistently displayed throughout the inspection and which some students would like to see recognised in improved access to the premises for them at break and lunchtimes.
19. Relationships throughout the school and the response of students to opportunities provided for their personal development are very good. They are particularly positive with reception staff who deal with first aid problems and often act on behalf of students with a high degree of sensitivity. Students show very high standards of personal organisation and are able to order priorities well. This enables them to achieve an effective balance of work needs against social commitments. They take an active part in the life of the school through involvement in extra-curricular activities.
20. Students have a growing awareness of the needs of others through the support they initiate for various charities. They develop well-considered views about the environment and world affairs, becoming increasingly well equipped to take their place in society as clear thinking and contributing adults. Those with student council responsibilities carry these out conscientiously, although some feel the views of the peers they represent are not always sufficiently valued by staff. As they move through the years they are increasingly articulate and by the time they reach Year 11 can present their views with a high level of maturity, disagreeing, where needed, in a firm but courteous manner.
21. Relationships among students across the rich mix of cultures that make up the school community are very positive, enabling them to collaborate and learn from each other effectively. Students listen willingly to what others have to say, valuing their opinions and acknowledging the right of other people to have views different from their own. They co-operate very well with their teachers and this has a significant impact on the quality of learning experiences. This is particularly so when teachers listen to and value students' views and opinions, very often leading to high levels of mutual respect.
22. Attendance for the last school year is 94.3 per cent. Well above the national average, it makes a very positive contribution to how well students learn. Unauthorised absence is also very low. Reasons for absence are invariably sound. The school day gets off to a prompt start and lessons invariably start on time.

Sixth form

Most students demonstrate considerable maturity and a well-developed capacity for independent learning. They are thoughtful and articulate and, while very supportive of the school do not always feel they are accorded the status of responsible young adults.

23. The sixth form students have varied social and ethnic backgrounds and many come from other schools. Yet almost all readily embrace the values of the school and have excellent attitudes to learning. When given the opportunity many give their time freely to support causes and charities and value their involvement in the many school-initiated activities.
24. They are very attentive in class and have very good listening skills. Students study hard in and out of school and have a high expectation, not always fulfilled, that the teacher will show them how to improve further. They have responded well to the temporary worsening of study areas and made full use of library and other local facilities. Students are proud of their school and enjoy the strong sense of community that comes from a smaller sixth form. Many readily take on responsibilities such as being a form prefect, though a significant number feel that, on occasion, particular school rules and some staff attitudes are not consistent with their demonstrated behaviour as mature young adults.
25. Attendance levels for students in the last school year are 93.4 per cent, making a satisfactory contribution to how well they learn. During the current year building works have had an adverse

impact on opportunities for private study and this has resulted in many students' making mature and sensible decisions to work elsewhere, for example the public library. Whilst the school has an accurate knowledge of who is on site or not, the formal recording by the school computer registration system cannot easily accommodate these changed routines with the consequence that the statistics produced by the system during the current year indicate a significant drop in attendance and a corresponding rise in unauthorised absence. Students are usually conscientious about their attendance at lessons.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Good and very often very good teaching develops students' excellent attitudes to learning. This combination of consistent good quality teaching and students' excellent attitudes ensures that the quality of learning taking place is very good and that students make very good progress.

26. As detailed in the previous section, main school students have excellent attitudes towards their work. They are organised, concentrate well and are particularly motivated. They work very hard independently and have a very strong work ethic. Students develop the rigour of scholarship. They develop these skills because of the good and often very good teaching that they receive. It is the consistency of the good quality of teaching that ensures students' developing maturity.
27. The school has high expectations of its students. They are known individually and, for the most, part members of staff view them as active partners in the learning process, so that their views are sought and valued. The excellent attitudes that students have are acquired by being part of a community that expects students to display such attitudes but also where members of staff work consistently to achieve them.
28. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good overall. Because the curriculum support department is very effective in relaying relevant and helpful information to all staff, pupils make very good progress in most lessons. However, the actual individual education plans need to be clearer and members of staff do not make consistent use of them as a result. This may account for the fact that not all members of staff are aware of, or sensitive to, students' individual additional needs. A good range of strategies is used to support students in and out of lessons.
29. A key strength in the overall quality of teaching is the very good subject knowledge that teachers have. In subjects such as English, modern foreign languages, art, history and geography this depth of knowledge, coupled with enthusiasm for the subject, ensures that work is challenging, engages students' interests and involves them in the disciplines of the subject, developing a rigour of approach and genuine scholarship. They use their expertise to plan interesting and varied activities to captivate students' attention, involve them in their learning and challenge them. Because of this depth of knowledge teachers are confident and able to question students in depth, helping to focus their learning. Most teachers use a variety of activities to sustain students' interests and develop their understanding, as seen, for example, in design and technology. In geography the best lessons were those where students experienced the fun of learning, engaged with challenging tasks. In contrast where learning was less effective, the pace was more pedestrian, as seen in some mathematics lessons and there were fewer opportunities for students to engage with the work so that they were more passive, as seen in some science lessons.
30. As indicated earlier, homework is an important extension of the learning. Although Year 7, in discussion, found the demands of homework initially difficult to manage, by Year 11 students accepted that homework was a necessary part of achieving what they wanted to do. They reported that they did about 15 hours a week in fulfilling home and coursework demands. This, coupled with the overall very good attendance, means that students get through a lot of additional work and makes a very significant contribution to the very good progress that students make.

31. An aspect for improvement in teaching is linked to assessment. Whilst there is some very good practice in the school, there is inconsistency in the explicit sharing of National Curriculum assessment and GCSE criteria with the students so that they know what it is that they have to do in order to improve their work.

Sixth form

Overall teaching is good and students make good progress. Some teaching lacks a variety of approach.

32. Overall teaching is good and the characteristics of teaching seen in the main school are usually but not always present in the teaching of the sixth form. The very positive features seen in the main school, whereby teachers use their very good subject knowledge to establish active, participative learning are not seen consistently, particularly within the sciences. In English, for example, where teaching is consistently very good, teachers use their expertise to enlighten and guide students through complex texts and make effective use of research, questioning and discussion to develop their ability to think critically and sharpen their personal response. In history, students respond enthusiastically to an active style of teaching characterised by high levels of discussion and debate but this approach is not used consistently across the department. In some of the other teaching seen, the way learning is structured places an over-reliance on the teacher as the active partner and the student in a more passive role of recipient of information. The result is that, although in some cases teaching is good, it lacks a variety of approach to provide the necessary challenge to students.
33. As with the main school there is inconsistent use of sharing examination grade criteria with students with the result that they are unsure of what they need to do in order to improve.

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

Overall the quality and range is good. There are strengths in the curriculum provision for modern languages, English and the arts. Weaknesses in the provision are: physical education, a narrow programme in design and technology and the use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum to support learning.

34. The status and provision for physical education require further consideration. Currently standards are below average and the full range of experience is not available to the students because of the significant difficulties caused by the accommodation and site with its lack of playing fields. This is despite the fact that the school makes a very significant financial investment in the off-site provision for the subject.
35. Currently the school barely covers the National Curriculum requirement of providing at least two strands of design and technology in Key Stage 3 with resistant materials and textiles for one and a half terms in Year 8 and only offers one strand in Key Stage 4. As a result the subject does not meet the National Curriculum requirement, although the school does ensure that all students take a GCSE in the subject. In addition, despite the best efforts of the teacher, the quality of experience in textiles as a design and technology strand is limited by the absence of technology, for example, no sewing machines or resources for computer aided design (CAD/CAM). Thus the experience is craft based with no industrial dimension. The resistant materials strand has limited access to CAD/CAM as well. A weakness highlighted by parents is a lack of food technology, a strand strongly recommended by the Qualifications and Assessment Authority as an important aspect of design and technology.
36. The strengths in other aspects more than outweigh these two deficiencies. Particularly strong is the provision for modern languages. Most students study two languages at Key Stage 3 and well over a third take two languages at GCSE- a higher than average proportion compared to selective

schools. English is particularly strong and the arts in the school have been given additional emphasis through the introduction of drama.

37. Overall careers education and guidance are good. All pupils undertake work experience in Year 10. Many pupils find their own placements, and all placements are well monitored by school staff. Currently, Year 11 pupils receive a personal careers interview from the external careers adviser and get an action plan with targets for improving their preparation for work. Careers lessons are included in the personal, social and health education programme in Years 10 and 11. There are no opportunities at present for students to take vocational subjects at GCSE. The careers library is underdeveloped at the moment.
38. There is good provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education. A broad programme of extra-curricular activities is in place ranging from regular sessions, which extend and develop curricular provision, as in physical education, to those which assist with homework tasks such as the ICT Club, where students work across all subject areas. Frequency of meeting varies from nearly every evening, as with the Art Club, to the weekly meeting held by the History Club. Physical education activities occur every day, both at lunchtime and after school, and are wide ranging in their remit. Activities encompass protracted periods of commitment as is required by school concerts and drama productions, off-site visits, field-trips, visiting speakers, debating activity, Amnesty International and a newly formed group, Global Vision which involves students in all aspects of its organisation and administration. Activities are open to all students and where demand exceeds capacity, priority is given to those who register their interest and commitment first. The uptake of activities is good and students participate in them with enthusiasm. Time to run them and enthusiasm to sustain them are given voluntarily by teachers: students respond to this with appreciation, loyalty and commitment. The extra-curricular life of the school is rich given the size of the school and the relatively small number of staff.
39. Since becoming a voluntary aided school in 1999, links with other schools in the area have developed satisfactorily. There is membership of the local secondary head teachers' association and the person with overall responsibility for pupils transferring into Year 7 is beginning to find advantages to belonging to a local 'transition group'. This plans for effective arrangements to support continuity and progression in learning at the time of transfer from primary education. At present curriculum links with primary schools are limited to English where there is joint planning for a piece of work across Years 6 and 7. Arrangements for the transfer of both pastoral and academic information from primary schools are effective, and liaison between the schools about students with special education needs is particularly so.
40. The contribution of the wider community to students' learning is satisfactory overall. Cultural awareness has been enhanced through visitors during 'Black History Month,' a performance from a local musical group, visits to museums, residential trips to France and Germany and to a local drama centre. The personal development of students has been supported effectively through visitors' promoting teamwork and 'mind mapping'⁶. Community police provide effective support for a range of issues relating to personal responsibility and safety. For Year 7 students the day spent off the school site for 'bonding' activities has had an effective impact on their attitudes to each other as part of a distinct group within the school. Visitors from the diocese support religious education effectively.
41. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils are organised into support groups or individually withdrawn from lessons for extra help. The newly established study support groups are very effective in supporting older pupils who require extra help in managing their course work for examinations. Good use is made of information technology to support teaching and learning for these students.
42. Students have very good literacy skills because of the work carried out very effectively in a number of key subject areas. The overall excellent provision for modern foreign languages and the school's consequent implicit valuing of all languages, coupled with the detailed textual analysis in

⁶ 'Mind-mapping' is a specific technique to help students map out their ideas about a subject often as preparation to write an essay.

English, which helps develop students' understanding of idiomatic English, ensures that students with English as an additional language make similar progress to that of their peers. The school has recently submitted a literacy report on the approaches taken to improve further literacy in other subjects. Currently the literacy policy is not yet embedded fully in all schemes of work or the day-to-day assessment of students' work. The library is not resourced well, particularly for sixth form study, although there has been significant recent investment. Some departments have yet to begin tapping into the library as a resource centre to extend students' information-seeking skill. There is very good provision for numeracy.

43. In this school there is a very strong inter-relationship between the various strands that contribute to students' personal development. The excellent attitudes that students develop are due to a large number of factors, some of them, as indicated under the standards section of the report, more intangible. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. Overall, members of staff are very good role models. They treat students with respect for the most part, although students, particularly in the sixth form do not always feel that their developing maturity is recognised by some. Members of staff are usually courteous, polite, show kindness and clearly want the students to succeed. In the main, students are regarded as individuals and their individuality is fostered.
44. The school has high expectations of the students: they are expected to show kindness, consideration, to include others rather than exclude and to respect others. Students are expected to have opinions and to express those opinions, which are valued. They are expected to develop their skills of empathy through their work in literature and history and develop concern and compassion for what is happening in the world through aspects of the curriculum and assemblies. Assemblies are a particularly important means of transmitting the school's community values. The ethos is one in which students' sense of self is fostered. Although it lies outside the scope of this inspection, the religious nature of the school clearly fosters this respect for themselves and care, concern and compassion for others.
45. Intertwined with the powerful spiritual provision is the very strong moral provision. Personal rights and responsibilities, truth, justice, equality of opportunity, right and wrong are issues that the school explores within the curriculum framework. Students consider examples of the moral dilemmas facing characters in fiction, for example, and around the school students are expected to take responsibility for their actions. Although a minor example, the encouragement in assembly not to drop litter was framed and presented in way that reinforced the moral stance of the school: whether the appeal was successful or not was almost less important than the reinforcement of the concepts of fairness and consideration. This consistent drip-feed, reinforcing the development of a considerate way of life within the school community, becomes, over time, part of the school's moral code of behaviour-reflected in the consideration shown by students to each other in the dinner queue or their sociability on the playground at break. Assemblies are also used to provide examples of moral virtue, through the collective worship that unites the school community.
46. Social development is also very strong. The strands of personal, social and health education and citizenship, the careful fostering by the headteacher and senior management team of the ethos of the community of the school, with its inclusive values fostered through corporate events such as assemblies, the school photograph or the choir are very strong. Provision for students to take the initiative and responsibility, developing a concern for what is happening in the wider world enhance students' positive outgoing attitudes so that they are prepared to engage and challenge, are able to express their point of view, to defend their opinions and, if necessary, to challenge the existing order. Cultural provision is good. There are good examples of planned provision to extend students' cultural awareness within art and music, as well as in literature. All members of the community work together well and students have a good awareness of other religions. One of the key characteristics of the school is the diversity of ethnic heritage of its students. This diversity does not seem to be seen as the rich resource it is to extend students' cultural awareness. There are occasional insights, for example, when a Muslim student was explaining how she managed her revision programme around a major religious festival.

Sixth form

47. The school is expanding the range of curriculum provision carefully so that what it offers provides the most popular range of AS and A2 courses and remains cost effective. It is aware that it is not yet meeting the needs of all students in Year 11 but there are plans to develop the range of courses. Two courses are currently taught by distance learning, which includes a regular video link to their tutor. Students choose AS and A2 courses from a range of options.

All students in Year 12 take general studies, which includes a specific religious education element. The current lack of physical education and sports activities was an aspect high-lighted by students. There are ICT courses available for those who wish to develop their ICT skills.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Overall the care for students is very good. The school is a safe place.

48. The overall standards set for the care, safety and protection of students are very good. Members of staff know students very well indeed and the usually effective relationships help them to settle into the school well. There is a suitably trained and experienced person with overall responsibility for child protection matters and the school has effective procedures in place. Monitoring in the event of concern is thorough and members of staff are suitably briefed where necessary. Newly qualified teachers are fully informed about what to do in the event of concern and other members of staff have good access to the child protection policy. At present there is no formal arrangement for all staff regularly to revisit child protection procedures as part of ongoing professional development.
49. The school liaises very well with local support agencies to meet the individual needs of students where necessary. There is a school counsellor with whom students may ask for an appointment if they wish. Students acting as peer supporters have been professionally trained for the role and ensure that those who are reluctant to share problems with staff have access to alternative support in the first instance. The new programme of sex education includes a useful module on child abuse in this context and a female police officer discusses with students aspects of their personal safety. There are effective links with the educational welfare officer and a strong pastoral support system, which ensures that problems are usually picked up well.
50. There is a suitable health and safety policy, which provides effective guidelines about what is required. The person with overall responsibility for health and safety has a good working knowledge of requirements and ensures that necessary procedures are followed. There are suitable arrangements to deal with first aid emergencies and prescribed medicines. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised with sufficient frequency to ensure that staff and students are aware of what to do in the event of a fire. Arrangements for the regular checking and servicing of equipment and appliances used in the school are through outside contractors and meet requirements fully. No unsafe practices were seen in lessons during the course of the inspection. Risk assessment procedures are thorough and conducted annually. In addition there are formal arrangements for staff to report concerns on a day-to-day basis. There are suitable risk assessment procedures to guide arrangements for the various trips and visits made out of school.
51. Procedures for monitoring and promoting high standards of attendance and behaviour achieve very high standards and are good overall. Registration arrangements meet statutory requirements and provide an accurate record of those present in the school. Registers are kept centrally for use in emergency. Procedures to record the very few arrivals after registration are effective. Reasons for absence are always required. There are formal routines to make contact with parents on the third day that a student is absent.
52. The school works well with the educational welfare officer where this is needed to support good attendance. The impact of poor attendance on students' learning is usually made clear in annual reports to parents about their children's progress. Analysis of the attendance levels of the various

ethnic groups that make up the school community is not yet sufficiently well developed to enable the school to identify any variations that may need to be addressed. The awards for those students who are able to achieve full attendance are valued.

53. There are detailed procedures to monitor behaviour and promote high standards and these provide effective guidance for staff. Students are very well aware of the high expectations of staff and invariably respond accordingly. The strategies used to manage behaviour are effective in the few instances where they are needed. Procedures for dealing with the rare instances of exclusion are in line with guidance for this and parents are informed of their right to make representations to the governing body. Where there is concern about the behaviour of individual students parents are contacted promptly. They are informed about any merits and demerits given to their children through the homework diaries and this acts as an incentive for some students. At present there is some inconsistency in the response of staff to individual students' concerns about occasional name-calling and teasing.
54. Arrangements to promote and monitor students' personal development are good and result in very high standards of achievement. Well-planned induction enables them to meet staff and become familiar with the school prior to starting in Year 7. This, together with an effectively planned day for 'bonding', ensures that they settle well and feel safe and secure in the school environment. Form tutors monitor the students' development very well on an informal basis and this is reflected in the quality of information provided to parents in the reports they receive each year about their children's progress.
55. The personal, health and social education programme is planned well to ensure students receive effective guidance and opportunities to explore a wide range of topics to prepare them for life beyond school. Arrangements for careers guidance are effective and include opportunities to consider the choices that must be made about what to study for GCSE and in the sixth form, together with a suitably planned work experience programme. The newly introduced citizenship programme ensures that students explore community issues, for example 'rights and responsibilities', and they are encouraged to consider other social issues, as when they support charity. At present the school council is not sufficiently well developed to make best use of this opportunity for students to exercise responsibility and use initiative.
56. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good overall. Students are known by staff and because of this there are strong informal methods of monitoring students' achievement, which, given the high standards achieved, clearly work well up to GCSE. The informal systems have been supplemented by more formal tracking procedures that provide the means of identifying potentially underachieving students.
57. Subjects receive data on student performance in National Curriculum tests from the end of the primary school and the school tests, which students take on entry, using standardised cognitive ability tests. The results of these tests provide a base line and are then used to determine minimum target grades for students. In general students are aware of their target grades. Some departments, modern foreign languages for instance, have pupil record cards which students complete indicating past and current attainment and also predicted target grades. Mathematics uses end of unit tests to monitor progress, students record their own and class average marks, measuring their own performance against that of the class. Many departments make good use of past GCSE examination papers to measure student progress and standard.
58. Notwithstanding the overall high student achievement, there are two aspects, which the school needs to address to raise standards even further, particularly with older students. Departments need additional training in using national comparative data to monitor departmental effectiveness and to help set challenging targets for the department and for its students. Departments lack the skill to really judge their effectiveness and the value they are adding to their students' achievements. This is particularly important in this school because students are highly motivated and able and are able to achieve well, compensating for perhaps adequate provision. Departments need the necessary skills to judge effectively that, although standards are high, they may not be high enough given the quality of the students. Currently departments are not able to

do that. Nor do they appreciate that predictions for students that are minimum target grades do not provide sufficient challenge to these more able students.

59. The second aspect linked to assessment lies in the inconsistency across the school in the explicit sharing of National Curriculum assessment and GCSE criteria with the students so that they know what they have to do in order to improve. This inconsistency of approach is also a feature of the sixth form.
60. Students have interim and annual reports. The annual reports can show current and target grades though these are not consistently completed by teachers. The reports need to be read in conjunction with a school curriculum booklet since they do not give details of course content. Comments tend to be directed to attitude and the effort students make and insufficiently clearly

identify what it is students should do to improve in a particular subject. Students are able to add their own targets to the report, which is helpful in raising student awareness of attainment against targets.

61. The data manager for the school is establishing a useful database on students. Teachers have access to the full set of data – provided on disc and the school network – for their use. Currently there is no clear line manager for the school's approach to assessment, monitoring performance and developing the understanding of the use of data. There has been a review of assessment in the school and a new policy is to be implemented within the near future.

Sixth form

Assessment

Assessment is generally conscientiously done but not all staff share grade criteria so that some students have concerns about knowing how they are getting on against national examination standards and what they have to do to improve.

62. There is some very good practice evident in the sixth form assessment. In English, for example, teachers continuously link the assessment objectives to the work so that students know how they underpin the study and analysis of a text. As a result students have an increasing understanding of the assessment criteria for specific essays and what they have to do in order to gain a higher grade. In history, the important focus placed on the evaluation of examination requirements and mark schemes in lessons is particularly effective when linked to self-assessment and target setting. In art, regular review and assessment of work assure students of their progress, and set targets for them to work to. Very well organised assessment in ICT means that students are prepared for the examination assessments. In other subjects, students are less clear about their progress against examination criteria. Not all members of staff are sharing the grade criteria or using assessment as a means of accelerating learning by engaging the students, allowing them to home in onto what they need to do to raise their standards.

Advice, support and guidance

The advice and support of the sixth form team is effective and valued by the students.

63. Many of the students continue into higher education and there is a well-structured careers programme as part of the personal, social and health education programme. The school also has a close working relationship with the local careers service and the careers adviser is available to provide further informed advice. Normally the careers education is well supported by a valuable higher education and careers resources room but there is only a more limited provision during the new school building work. Students show considerable maturity in the way they research their own higher education preferences and the school allows some time for them to attend careers conferences and university open days. There are further opportunities for all students to have two weeks' work experience, though this is less well focused on work shadowing the professional and

managerial occupations, which many of the students will enter. Four of the students engaged in work experience in France last year.

64. Arrangements to monitor and support good attendance in the sixth form are satisfactory overall. Study arrangements have necessarily changed for students during the current year, in particular those in Year 13. Building works have severely limited opportunities for private study at the school and students in this year group have been accorded the responsibility of studying at home or in the public library when not required to be in lessons. Students value this privilege; they have responded in a mature manner and show themselves worthy of the trust placed in them. Arrangements for them to sign themselves in and out of the premises ensure there is an accurate record of those present, and in addition, individual teachers maintain registers for each lesson.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

The involvement of parents with the school has a very good impact on their children's learning. There are good links with parents and the quality of information provided is also good.

65. The large majority of parents are very pleased with what the school provides and achieves. Most say their children like coming to school, that they behave well, are expected to work hard and that they make good progress. They are pleased with their children's growing maturity and sense of responsibility. Inspection evidence confirms these positive views. A significant minority feel that the range of activities provided outside lessons is limited. Inspectors consider that the number of clubs and the provision for student support, for example with revision, is good given the size of school and number of staff available to run these activities. The enrichment of classroom learning, however, through the school's use of the wider community, although satisfactory overall, is inconsistent across subjects. Parents take very high levels of interest in how well their children are progressing. Some would like to be better informed about this and inspectors agree that, although the school has in place all the ingredients for the provision of effective information, the timing of meetings and reports could usefully be reviewed and better co-ordinated. A few parents do not feel that the school works closely with them. There is a home/school agreement that provides an effective basis for a working partnership, but the process of ensuring that all parents feel involved and consulted is not yet developed fully.
66. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents and carers is good overall. There are well-planned opportunities for them to get to know the school and key staff before their children transfer from primary school. This is enhanced by an opportunity, shortly after their children start, for them to meet other parents socially. Staff are present at this event to deal with queries or concerns about how children are settling in to their new school. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents provide overall good information about expectations, routines and performance. The rich mix of cultures present in the school community is not yet reflected in their representation on the governing body. Parents are provided with booklets that outline the work to be covered in each key stage of their children's education. Homework diaries are kept well and this enables parents to take an interest in the work their children are required to do at home and to communicate with form tutors if they wish. The newsletter sent home each term provides useful information and diary dates. There is a parents' evening prior to the choices that need to be made by students in Year 9 about courses to follow for GCSE examinations. Parents of children with special education needs are invited to annual reviews about their progress.
67. Annual reports about their children's progress provide for parents good information about attitudes to work, personal development, attendance and behaviour. They reflect how well members of staff know individual students. There is usually a general overview of achievement and sometimes more specific information about work covered. Where targets are set they are often insufficiently specific to be of real help to parents in understanding what their children must do to improve their work. For example, they suggest that children should 'continue to work hard next year' or to 'revise' without indicating where effort should be focused. At present there is no formal arrangement for parents to meet staff to discuss these reports. They are sent home at the end of the summer term when there is little time before the holidays for parents to contact the school about any concerns they raise. There is inconsistency in reporting the national curriculum levels students are working at, although results of testing at the end of Year 9 are reported as required. Interim reports give grades for attainment, effort, homework and organisation and provide a useful measure of how students are progressing between annual progress reports.
68. The involvement of parents with the school has a very good impact on their children's learning. A small group of highly committed parents that is representative of the cultural mix of the school organises a range of social and fund raising events. These are popular and support the work of the school well through the monies raised. Parents take very high levels of interest in how well their children are doing. They regularly read and sign homework diaries and take interest in and provide suitable support for work set to be done at home. They have a lively interest in their children's targets and some would like the opportunity to be present at their children's academic

reviews. The levels of attendance at annual consultations with subject teachers are exceptionally high. The very large majority ensures their children attend school regularly and this has a major impact on how well they learn.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good. Management is good across the school. Financial management is excellent.

69. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is very good. She has successfully steered the school from its former independent status into the maintained sector and maintained the very high standards academically and in terms of students' attitudes and behaviour. Teaching is good and often very good and learning is of high quality. The sense of the community of the school and concern for individuals, both students and staff, are very strong. There is a very strong, shared commitment by staff to take the school forward. The inclusive ethos of the school, with the sense of academic history, implicit high expectations and the development of its students as independent, assertive, confident young women with strong views and awareness of the world around them is structured and developed carefully. There is a very clear sense of direction for the school and a development plan, which identifies clearly the steps to be taken. There is no complacency at senior level in the school and raising standards further lies at the heart of the plan. Performance management has been introduced well. The school is currently seeking specialist science status. The senior management team work very effectively together. At senior management team level, the school makes effective use of external data to monitor the school's performance. The management of the school is also very effective at senior level and good across the school. It functions very smoothly on a day-to-day basis, despite the fact that it is undergoing a major building programme.
70. The school is small and members of staff often carry multiple responsibilities. They juggle their priorities well. Teaching is monitored regularly but, nevertheless, there is good practice in the school, particularly regarding the development of active approaches in some departments and this needs to be shared across the school and, in a few cases, within departments. Individual members of staff would benefit from the professional development of seeing good practice in other schools. All staff would benefit from training in the use of external data so that they can effectively measure the difference their department is making to the students. The use of assessment as part of the process of learning, ensuring that students are aware of what they need to do in order to improve also needs to be made more consistent.
71. The governing body is very committed and supportive of the school. It has a good awareness of the strengths of the school and where it needs to develop. It is prepared to challenge, to act as 'critical friend' and members having a good understanding of governance and their strategic role. All governors have undertaken governor training in school and some have undertaken further training by external providers. There are good relations between the school and the governing body. They fulfil their statutory duties well.
72. Financial management is excellent. The school has a systematic approach to financial management and planning. The strategic use of the school's resources is triggered by the planned priorities for improvement in the quality of students' education. The bursar, in collaboration with the governors, very efficiently manages the school's financial planning. As a member of the school's senior management team, his overview, backed by long-standing experience, synthesises educational and financial considerations. The school carefully weighs the advantages of running services itself, or going out to tender. The school has been successful in its bids for additional grants, such as for the new science wing, but thoroughly assesses the necessary additional supportive private sources of finance first. The donations from parents, including those specifically for the current building project, are being used well.
73. Overall the school provides good value for money. In recent years the rapidly increasing student roll has been supported by above average levels of funding. In turn, high levels of expenditure have

been applied to provide appropriately for a growing main school as well as a sixth form with developing curriculum requirements. At the same time, essential resources are being put in place anticipating lower per capita funding when the school reaches its planned numbers. The funding available to departments is now generally adequate to support good provision and when the new building is in use, enhanced ICT facilities will be one of the final aspects.

74. The school makes very good use of specific financial grants and ensures that they are used for their designated purposes. It supplements these, if they are inadequate, to secure the level of provision the school has determined on the basis of educational grounds; this is the case in the support for students with special educational needs. The school applies excellent value for money criteria and principles of best value to its spending decisions. Detailed appreciation of the advantages of established local authority contracts and of contracts developed when the school was independent is evident. The school has evaluated the benefit of lease rental contracts to spread life-cycle costs for computer systems, the advantage of a single contractor for a range of security services and the efficiency of a cleaning service, which is managed by the local authority. Year-on-year costs are analysed, and Internet websites used to provide benchmarks for expenditure levels. Good systems are therefore in place to ensure the cost effectiveness of the goods and services purchased to implement educational priorities.
75. Management of the curriculum support department for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The Manager has a very clear vision of where she wants this recently established department to go. Staff in the department has a very good knowledge and understanding of the individual needs of all the students on the register of special needs. These are clearly identified and communicated to teachers concerned. Statements are maintained and reviewed appropriately, with the full involvement of pupils and their parents. The school builds on its assessment procedures very effectively when identifying students with special educational needs and fully complies with the new code of practice. The system for monitoring the management of pupils with special educational needs in the classroom is good. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that all teachers, pupils and their parents are fully aware of targets set in individual education plans and how they may best be achieved.
76. There is a very good match of staff to the curriculum. The contact ratio is low in comparison with other comprehensive schools, reflecting the fact that most members of staff carry additional responsibilities. There has been and is considerable investment in accommodation, although the overall provision for physical education, made more difficult by the current building programme, requires considerable thought. The lack of playing fields and limited gymnasium facilities cause the extensive use of off-site provision. This not only has on-going significant financial implications but also causes much dead time taken up with travel.
77. Resources in the main school are adequate although the library requires additional investment.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

78. The management of the sixth form is good. Procedures are in place for the growing numbers of students. Standards identified as being above average in 2001 have been improved and the range of courses increased. Overall the quality of teaching is good and students make good progress.
79. The school is very aware of ensuring that the sixth form is cost effective, which it currently is. There are plans to expand the size of the sixth form and to increase the range of courses available.

Resources

80. The current building programme will ultimately improve accommodation and access to ICT and other resources. Currently there are limited private study facilities and access to ICT. The library requires additional investment to support sixth form study.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81. In order to build on the many significant strengths of the school, the governing body, headteacher, and senior staff should:
- (1) Train staff in the use of national data, such as those contained in the 'autumn package' so that they are able to:
 - Monitor department effectiveness effectively;
 - Set challenging targets for the department;
 - Set challenging targets for the students.*(paragraph: 58)*
 - (2) Develop consistent use of assessment practices across the school so that students are clear what it is they have to do in order to improve.
(paragraphs: 31, 33, 59)
 - (3) Improve the status of and provision for physical education.
(paragraph: 34)
 - (4) Broaden the curriculum of design and technology to ensure that the subject meets statutory requirements.
(paragraph: 35)

Sixth form

In order to build on the strengths of the sixth form the governing body headteacher and senior staff should:

- (1) Develop greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the sixth form, particularly in science subjects, which places more emphasis on engaging students through active approaches.
(paragraph: 32)
- (2) Develop greater consistency in the use of assessment in informing students of their current progress against national standards.
(paragraph: 33, 62)
- (3) Establish an effective method whereby the school can listen to and act upon the legitimate concerns sixth formers may have.
(paragraph: 24)
- (4) Introduce more enrichment and sporting opportunities for sixth formers.
(paragraph: 47)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	97
	Sixth form	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	2	35	40	20	0	0	0
Percentage	2	36	41	21	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	1	14	7	9	0	0	0
Percentage	3	45	23	29	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 Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form here as each lesson represents one percentage point in the main school and three percentage points in the sixth form.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	443	105
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	36	5

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	4	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	16	0

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	174

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	90	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	88	84	81
	Total	88	84	81
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	98 (99)	93 (95)	90 (87)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	90 (73)	77 (76)	51 (52)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	73	85	85
	Total	73	85	85
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (88)	94 (93)	94 (96)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	56 (56)	74 (76)	70 (69)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	n/a	84	84

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys			
	Girls	69	84	84
	Total	69	84	84
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	82 (77)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	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	55.5
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
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	2001**	0	34	34

**The last year in which there is comparative national data

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates		34	34
	Average point score per candidate		20.8	20.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
208	0	0
12	0	0
23	0	0
5	0	0
7	0	0
6	0	0
15	0	0
76	0	0
33	0	0
4	0	0
31	0	0
52	0	0
44	0	0
13	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
15	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	31.88
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.65

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	235

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	66
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	29.2
Key Stage 4	25.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	1,992,283
Total expenditure	1,967,262
Expenditure per pupil	3,726
Balance brought forward from previous year	-59,133
Balance carried forward to next year	-34,112

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.78
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16.5

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	548
Number of questionnaires returned	436

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	47	8	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	43	50	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	46	6	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	53	10	2	1
The teaching is good.	31	56	8	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	50	15	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	44	7	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	39	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	53	17	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	41	47	6	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51	4	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	46	21	8	6

*Numbers may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Not all respondents answered all questions*

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 **excellent**.

Strengths

- The English results in the National Curriculum tests and the GCSE examinations are consistently very high.
- Students achieve very well as they move through the school, reaching high standards in all areas of the subject.
- Standards of literacy are very good and contribute to the high performance of students.
- Teachers work hard to ensure that students give their best; in turn, students achieve highly.
- The subject is led and managed very well.

Areas for improvement

- There is scope for rigorously analysing and using tests and examination data.

82. Over three years, the proportion of students achieving the expected Level 5 and above in the national tests was very high. These sustained and very high standards exceed the national average and the average for girls in similar schools. In the 2002 GCSE English language and English literature results, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C was high when compared with the national average and the average for similar schools. Standards have been maintained over the last three years. In 2002, over a third of students gained the topmost grades A* or A in English language and in English literature.
83. Standards in lessons and from an analysis of folders and draft books support these results. Students make exceptionally good progress in all areas of the subject. Students from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English might be an additional language, achieve as well as their peers and overall, those with special needs make very good progress because of the effective support they receive. There is sustained performance because students apply themselves to their work and the quality of teaching and learning are consistently very good with many excellent features.
84. Speaking and listening skills are well above the national expectations in all year groups. In Years 7 to 11, students listen attentively and perceptively to each other. They exude confidence when debating and argue persuasively when discussing controversial issues. Students are never at a loss for words and are competent and mature speakers, putting forward and defending their views clearly. They use spoken standard English in formal situations with ease, and command a wide vocabulary. Students are very alert when doing oral work and are well practised in giving spontaneous responses, speaking coherently and at length.
85. Standards of reading are well above the national expectations. Students read widely and fluently from a range of texts and make use of the recommending reading lists to extend their reading. In Years 7 to 9, students maintain meticulous records of their reading. Students have a secure knowledge of subject specific vocabulary and make rapid gains when reading and analysing texts because of the emphasis teachers place on text and word level work. Throughout Years 7 to 9, students understand how to use evidence well to support their views, as demonstrated by Year 8 students in their work on *The Tempest*. Research work is thorough and by the end of Year 9 higher attaining students use well researched notes to develop their understanding of texts such as Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. By the end of Year 11, students demonstrate very good levels of critical response based on their independent reading and extensive contextual research notes. Students make very good use of mind mapping, text marking and annotation when analysing texts.
86. Standards of writing are well above national expectations. The higher attaining students in all year groups, including the gifted and talented, are assured writers who structure their work very

well and use quite sophisticated vocabulary. These students adopt a mature style of writing and write for different purposes competently. All students use the writing process meticulously: planning is very thorough and editing skills are used extensively to improve the quality of their written work. Sentence level work is often very good, as is the use of punctuation to clarify meaning and grammatical features to create effect. However, some middle and lower attaining students do not proofread their work very well and as a result, careless errors persist and meaning is not always expressed clearly enough. The diagnostic marking, peer marking and self-assessment support writing very well.

87. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good with some excellent features. Teachers love and are very knowledgeable about their subject. They use their expertise to plan interesting and varied activities to captivate students' attention, involve them in their learning and challenge them.
88. Teachers ensure that students, particularly those in Years 9 to 11 have a thorough knowledge of the assessment criteria through marking sample papers, discussion on exam skills and modelling answers. These activities lead to students' having an increasing awareness of how to improve their work in order to gain the higher grades or levels. The activities are used as a powerful tool for raising expectations as students become very self-critical, but constructively so. Students learn very well because teachers plan and sequence lessons to build on their prior knowledge and understanding of the work. Every opportunity is used to increase students' word power and communication skills. Teachers are very precise about what students should know, understand and can do. As such, objectives are shared with students, assessment is ongoing in every lesson through the use of rapidly fired and open ended questions, short, timed activities lasting for five or ten minutes and followed by feedback to extend and assess students' understanding of the work. For example, in Year 8 lessons on *The Tempest*, teachers used drama to motivate students and increase their knowledge of the themes. They use a wide range of activities, different group settings and feedback with gifted and talented students taking a leading role in chairing, making notes or reporting back to the class.
89. The study of literature is well taught and teachers bring texts to life by making links to previous work, using novel methods to teach dense texts, relating texts to world events. For instance, Year 9 students analyse *Macbeth* and summarise the main thrust of the scenes using text messages. Year 8 students through their work on Prospero's statelessness in *The Tempest*, made links to the present quest for world peace. Students are actively challenged to express their opinions confidently and give spontaneous extended responses, thus encouraging them to become critical thinkers able to reach and defend a viewpoint. Homework consolidates and extends class work. Marking is diagnostic and provides students with detailed comments to help them set personal targets for improvement.
90. Aspects of the literacy strategy are used but all lessons do not have a clear plenary session towards the end of the lesson to evaluate the learning that has taken place. The study of literature and language is used very well to promote students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Students are exposed to literature from other literary heritages and develop an increasing understanding of multi-cultural and citizenship issues. There are opportunities for extra-curricular activities to widen their awareness of literature; for example, the organised Year 8 visit to The Globe Theatre and the drama project work on Elizabethan England.
91. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and the team of teachers is strongly committed to ensuring that they do the very best for students. Standards are rising by the end of Year 9 and 11 and the team has started to review the curriculum to reflect the national changes. Procedures for assessing students' work are very good but there is scope for analysing data to inform teaching and learning, planning and setting more ambitious targets for students. The department has begun using surveys to consult students about aspects of the curriculum. Professional development is ongoing; however, there is limited storage space to accommodate the needs of the department. There are not enough specialist classrooms to accommodate the large size of some groups and this restricts activities and movement. Provision for the application

of ICT is satisfactory but the department makes good use of it for research, presenting work and administrative work. The subject is a strength of the school.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Students make excellent progress and attain very high standards.
- Students are diligent; their written work is excellent.
- Thorough marking of homework and tests ensures that students know how well they are progressing.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching which facilitates very good understanding as well as learning should be established universally.
- More opportunities to experience mathematics in contexts, which arouse interest and stimulate discussion.

92. Standards attained in the national Year 9 tests are very good. Students join the school with above average attainment in mathematics; they make excellent progress and are two years ahead of typical standards by the end of Year 9. More than three-quarters of the students gain level 6 or above compared with under half nationally. Students' work, currently, is also in line with these very high standards. Homework has a significant impact on standards and presentation of work with clarity of expression is universal.
93. Attainment in GCSE examinations is very high. Excellent progress is sustained from Year 9 through to Year 11. The 2002 results were typical of the school's recent performance; nearly 90 per cent of the students were successful at the higher grades, A* to C, compared with just below 50 per cent nationally, others were just one grade below. In 2002, 35 per cent of the girls attained the highest grades, A* and A - nationally these levels are attained by just 10 per cent. Overall, students do better in mathematics than in the majority of their other subjects. The quality of work of students currently in Years 10 and 11 is indicative of similar standards for example; many Year 10 students are already working successfully at higher-level topics.
94. Teaching is good overall but the very good pace of some lessons contrasts with the pedestrian approach of others. A good example of an effective lesson introduction was observed when, within the first five minutes, a class had completed and discussed a challenging set of mental questions based on a single number. Planning of lessons to ensure that students learn well is often very good. Concepts of proof were effectively developed when students structured an argument with the help of a 'geometrical reasoning problem solving frame'; they used a structure, familiar to them from other subjects. This was much more successful in developing understanding than copying notes, which is a feature of some lessons.
95. One of the effective methods used in teaching lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, is relating mathematical study to familiar situations. In Year 7, the understanding about parallel lines and angles, included considering examples in the classroom and in Year 9, making models from cubes enhanced an appreciation of volume. Learning support assistants also help individual students learn well and to participate fully in lessons. In a Year 11 class, teaching and support focussed on lower attaining students to the detriment of those appropriately aspiring to GCSE mid-grade success.
96. Opportunities are missed, generally, to make the study of statistics relevant by using data of interest to students or to develop an appreciation of aspects of social and cultural education and citizenship. Opportunities to use ICT, albeit infrequent, are very effective in supporting mathematical understanding. For all year groups, preparation for high attainment in tests and examinations is paramount. Students meticulously maintain records of attainment in tests and an evaluation of their performance to inform improvement. They skilfully analyse errors made in examination papers and learn from them. They seek success earnestly and to this end have very positive attitudes to study.

97. Management of the mathematics department is very good. The department has identified appropriate priorities to improve students' learning and understanding. These include a focus on numeracy used in other subjects at school, the extension of students' experience using ICT in mathematical situations and analysing students' attainment, in order to modify teaching methods and to help students learn more effectively. Both gifted and talented girls and those needing additional help in mathematics are well catered for. Students compete in mathematics challenges, there are a number of lunchtime interest and support sessions provided and the first group of high attaining students in Year 10 will take the GCSE statistics examination this year; their GCSE mathematics next. Most students benefit from working in classrooms with good mathematics displays, which include their own work. The new building should secure this entitlement for all students next year, together with better access to computers for all students. However, currently, equipment to make mathematics more visual, such as overhead projectors, is not being used. The impact of mathematics lessons would be greater if students had a lesson on three or four days weekly and not just on two, which is the case currently for the majority.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- A full complement of well qualified teaching staff.
- Students with above average ability and above average attitudes to learning.
- A positive view of the future with new laboratories and ICT facilities to encourage motivation in students and teachers alike.

Areas for improvement

- Introduce more active teaching and learning styles.
- Further develop the implementation of the Key Stage 3 science strategy.
- Improve departmental approaches to literacy, numeracy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Increase the use of ICT for information search, display and data-logging.
- Further develop the departmental plan to be more rigorous.

98. Students entering the school have a range of attainment above that found nationally. By the time students reach age 14 their attainment is well above the national average. Attainment in science is below that of English and mathematics in the school and has remained steady for the last three years whilst nationally attainment in science has been rising. When compared to schools with a similar intake, attainment is about the same, showing that progress from age 11 to 14 is satisfactory. The percentage of students gaining grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2002 was above that found nationally for girls. School science module test results already gained for the current year 11 show that the majority of students are achieving at or above their expected levels. Progress from age 14 to 16 is good.
99. Students in Year 7 have a good understanding of the pH scale and its use. Their books show good knowledge of the kinetic theory of matter but some were unable to use this to explain how a thermometer works. Year 8 students know about micro-organisms and separation of mixtures. Some conclusions are not clearly related to relevant science. Year 9 students typically show good presentation and the work of able students is of above average standards. Students have a good understanding of photosynthesis and the link with food chains and could clearly explain the concept of terminal velocity of a falling body. Students in Year 10 have good quality work that will form useful revision material. In a lesson about forces and movement, students showed good understanding of stopping distances. Some show limited understanding of hydrocarbons and the distinction between elements and compounds. Year 11 students show very high quality work about the periodic table starting with its historical development through to its use in identifying the atomic structure of elements. This work is of at least A grade standard. For students aged 11 to 16 there is no evidence of the use of ICT in their work.

100. Overall teaching in science is satisfactory. It is satisfactory for students aged 11 to 14 and good for examination classes. Where teaching was effective, the lesson started with an introductory activity in which students copied details from the board about pH. The teacher recapped earlier learning and extended this to new work on pH. Explanations were made to a silent class and students were moved for a demonstration where experimental techniques were shown to ensure that practical work could be carried out. Students copied a result chart in readiness for the practical that was carried out sensibly. Where teaching showed need for improvement, for example when there was recap of earlier work, it was by teacher input with little student interaction, leading to passive learning. Whilst students were moved to see a demonstration, they were positioned too close to the front desk and each other and some could not see, showing a lack of awareness of pupil needs. In one lesson, six students were identified as having special educational needs but no particular provision – other than a support teacher – was made and one girl could not read the work sheet she had been given.
101. Teaching for students aged 14 to 16 is good. A Year 10 group learning about forces and movement showed start, main activities and a brief plenary. Lesson delivery was very clear, logical, at a high academic standard and linked stopping distances to the Highway Code. Catching a ruler was used as a means of calculating reaction times, data sheets were used and the lesson concluded in good time reviewing learning. During this lesson there was little active learning by students and the reaction time work was a very brief demonstration that could have formed an enjoyable active learning experience for an extremely well behaved and co-operative group of students. In another Year 10 lesson students could not access the start activity as it was inappropriate, teacher explanations were not well developed and active learning strategies that could have been used effectively did not significantly advance learning. The lesson was about polymerisation of hydrocarbons but the majority of students showed poor recall of earlier work on the topic and so progress was difficult. Teaching at a high academic standard about giant structures in ionic and covalent compounds was observed. The lesson started from first principles of atomic structure and led logically to complex ideas of ionic crystals; however, the lesson was heavily teacher directed and students began to demonstrate listening fatigue after extended teacher delivery. Teachers have a good command of subject material but there is over reliance on teacher delivery and extensive use of text resources for learning.
102. The attitude students bring to their work is very good. This enables students to reach high standards and to achieve, in many cases, more highly than the quality of teaching would be expected to produce.
103. All courses meet national curriculum or awarding body requirements with weakness in the use of ICT. Whilst the department has begun to work on developing literacy skills, there is a need for this to be more consistent and co-ordinated. Students show well developed numerical skills but the approach is not co-ordinated sufficiently across the department. Aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are evident in the curriculum but this area is insufficiently well developed and the rich cultural diversity of the student body is not well used. Science has below the national average curriculum time for students aged 14 to 16 and some students find having three teachers for three different topics in each week confusing.
104. Management of the science department is satisfactory. A database of pupil attainment and progress is developing and this is starting to be used to monitor progress. There is a need to make more effective use of data to inform teaching and for monitoring at individual and whole department levels. Marking has been monitored but there is a need for practice to be more consistent. Teachers need to convey more clearly to students what it is they need to do to improve the standard of their learning in science. Teaching has been monitored and this has led to training. There is a need to monitor the impact of teaching styles on pupil attitudes to science. Currently there is too much reliance on didactic teaching and an over-use of textbook exercises as main teaching strategies. A Key Stage 3 audit has been undertaken and the department is beginning to implement three-part lesson planning. There is a development plan for science but this does not clearly identify target dates, persons responsible or the financial impact of the plan.

105. Currently management is difficult. Building work has literally taken the department apart and made working more difficult. Under these conditions the department continues to function well. The Head of department and technicians have been involved with the new laboratory design. Technical support is good and the senior technician helps management of the department by ordering new materials and equipment and by keeping a running budget total. Resources for ICT and its use by students are both unsatisfactory although there is use of ICT as a teaching aid.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Very good achievement, and progress in all years; attainment is above average and shows an improving trend.
- Teaching is largely very good, to excellent; lessons are very well planned and presented.
- Displays and high quality resources provide an inspirational learning environment, and promote very high standards.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and often exemplary.
- Very good leadership and management give the subject clear educational direction.

Areas for improvement

- Poor accommodation is a constraint on achievement and subject development.
- National Curriculum levels and level descriptors could be shared more with students.
- Information communication technology, and the computer aided design element of the art National Curriculum are underdeveloped.

106. Art is a popular subject and students achieve well and make good progress. Teachers' assessments in both 2001 and 2002 show attainment at the end of Year 9 to be well above national expectations. However, few students are shown as achieving the highest grades, and none are shown as achieving exceptional performance. Inspection evidence would suggest that at least one or two per cent of students may come into the top categories. Students understand and use the art elements of line, tone, pattern, texture and colour extremely well, relating their work to the styles and techniques of well-known artists. Current work in Years 7 to 9 is overall well above average standards. GCSE results in 2002 were an improvement on the previous year, but were slightly below the national average A* to C pass rate for all schools, and below the average for girls' schools. However, Year 11 work seen during the inspection was of a higher standard, and teachers' predictions are for attainment overall to be close to the average for girls' schools in the 2003 examinations. There is an upward trend in the standard of work in Years 10 and 11 over the past three years.
107. Practical work is cleverly integrated with contextual studies in all years, and students' work shows a strong influence of the work of major artists and art movements past and present. For example, Year 7 research the artwork of the Ancient Egyptians, and match colours closely to those the Egyptians used. Their knowledge of colour mixing is well advanced, and they use the transparency of watercolours to good effect. With a clear understanding of task objectives, Year 8 girls readily adapt their designs to be Aboriginal in character. Their treatment of scenes from Australia is imaginative and original using distortion, strong pattern quality and symbolism, to capture the Aboriginal style. Using small mirrors Year 9 students make very expressive self-portraits of themselves yawning, in the style of the artwork of *Max Beckmann*. They develop interesting arrangements of six faces on a page. Their understanding of visual composition and its importance in art is, overall well above average, as is their understanding of art vocabulary and its use in evaluating artwork.
108. In Years 10 and 11 students follow a process of exploration, discovery and experimentation towards finished artwork in a variety of media. Most work is based on direct observational drawing and is linked to the work and objectives of other artists and movements. For example, a visit to the Royal Academy inspired students to produce decorative semi-abstract work, and to develop lively sketches that show a very good understanding of the Aztec style. Finished large-scale

work is rich in pattern quality and striking in design and composition. Course work sketchbooks and folders contain observational drawings, collages, and a wealth of information for further work with good documentation of how the work is influenced by the art work of others. Students are developing a good knowledge of self-evaluation techniques, and a clear understanding of examination requirements and assessment criteria. Large-scale work shows very good productivity and commitment to the subject; confidence in the use of strong colour, and well advanced study skills. Overall standards of work seen are above expectation at this stage.

109. Students in all years have very positive attitudes to the subject; application and response are always good, and behaviour is almost always very good and often exemplary. Excellent working relationships with teachers are formed through mutual interest in the subject, and respect for their expertise. Students always present their work well and take pride in their achievements. They enjoy the subject and are keen to be creative, including those with special needs, who learn well through practical work, problem solving, and investigating and exploring visual media.
110. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than good, is largely very good and there is some excellent teaching. Projects and courses are well structured to cover all requirements and to provide a rich programme of practical and academic inquiry. Teachers have a very good command of the subject and expertise in communicating ideas and concepts for example using the artwork of *Max Beckmann* to illustrate the meaning of compositional balance. Learning is greatly enhanced by the opportunity to visit art galleries and experience artwork first hand. Teachers make full use of these occasions by linking them to project work. For example, the styles of *William Morris* and *Sonia Delaunay* are used to illustrate how the use of colour can create strikingly different moods in pattern work.
111. The very best lessons are carefully managed, they move at a brisk pace; exciting ideas spark curiosity, and tasks are challenging. Teaching and learning strategies are varied and good use is made of time and resources. Very good learning is promoted and reinforced through good introductions, with clear aims and objectives, lively questions and answers, and evaluative plenary sessions. Teachers talk to individual students about their work during practical sessions, and overall marking and assessment are good. However, National Curriculum levels and level descriptors are insufficiently used or shared with students in Years 7 to 9. Literacy is very well integrated with contextual work in all years, and independent research and written work are of a high order. Numeracy is not so well promoted, and although reference is often made to such concepts as proportion, scale or spatial relationships, some opportunities are missed to develop mathematical links further.
112. The art and design curriculum is good overall. A range of art and design aspects and media are covered, with some three dimensional work. Information communication technology is used in most years to enhance the presentation of homework, which is extremely well done by the majority of students. However, the computer aided design element of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum is insufficiently developed, as the department does not yet have its own facilities for this. Informative displays in the art rooms and around the school create an inspirational learning environment and promote high standards.
113. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. There is clear educational direction for its development. Management of the schemes of work, and of the examination courses is very good. The technician ensures good management of resources, and teamwork and day to day running of the subject area are excellent. There are good plans to develop the department, with appropriate emphasis on raising standards in Years 10 and 11. Potential achievement is constrained by poor accommodation provision and limited information communication technology facilities. Assessment needs to take more account of National Curriculum levels, and the content of the single Year 11 lesson needs review, with regards to improving learning efficiency.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The very good ethos of the school, which supports the development of citizenship.
- Student participation in debate is good.
- Student involvement in issues of the day is positive.
- The commitment of leadership to developing the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Integration and monitoring other subject's contribution to the citizenship programme and making this clear to students.
- Developing the systems of student assessment.

114. The school satisfactorily meets statutory requirements for citizenship introduced in August 2002. The students achieve good standards at the end of Years 9 and 11. They have a high sense of social responsibility and take an active interest in current affairs. The school has established a good foundation for further development. There are three main ways that the subject is taught within the school. The first is through specific modules within the personal, social and health education programme. The second is through the contribution of subjects across the school. (It is the aspect to develop further, so that all subjects are aware of their specific contribution to citizenship – currently, much of value occurs implicitly.) The third and by far the most powerful aspect is the school's ethos, with its emphasis on service.
115. The students gain knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. By the end of Year 9 they are well informed about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and discuss its relevance to their lives as well as to the lives of children in other countries. Discussions with students show that they are knowledgeable about the issue of child labour in some less economically developed countries. Year 8 students study the role and importance of the police; discuss the topical issues of 'stop and search', crime and punishment, the *Stephen Lawrence* and *Mc Pherson Report* and the wider field of fair trade on the international scene. In Year 9 they examine trends in youth crime and relate it to gender, in relation to women in Holloway Prison.
116. They develop skills of enquiry and communication in making a case to the school for action against the war in Iraq. Many opportunities are taken during lessons to present different viewpoints on issues such as discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, religion or gender. Moral issues are debated on aspects of family life and personal responsibilities.
117. They develop skills of participation and responsible action. Students took the initiative to send packets of rice to the Prime Minister's office under the banner of 'Feed your enemies' as a protest against the war in Iraq. Students from all year groups join the Thursday Amnesty International Club to campaign for the upholding of human rights. They take an active part in raising funds for charity including *Red Nose Day Appeal*, (specifying aspects that the fund should not be used for), *The Malcolm Sergeant Cancer Appeal for Children's Home* and the *Blue Peter Appeal*. In addition support is given in the local community to *Age Concern* and *Samaritans' Purse*. The role and function of the school council requires further development.
118. Citizenship is taught as specific modules within personal, social and health education. It was not possible to see specific citizenship lessons because of timetabling of the subject. A sample of personal, social and health education lessons was seen. The overall quality of teaching, based on these lessons, work scrutiny and informal discussions with students was good. The very good subject knowledge and wide range of expertise of the staff are used to good effect in making the students aware of current issues. Sensitivity on the part of the staff in dealing with themes such as family values, crime and punishment, allows a variety of opinions to be presented and debated democratically. The topics are made relevant to the experiences of the students and this is instrumental in holding their interest and attention.
119. There is very good leadership of the subject by the deputy headteacher, particularly in her contribution to developing citizenship within school's ethos. She is supported by dedicated staff committed to achieving high standards. A very good start has been made in the introduction of the course as part of personal, social and health education but there is much to be tapped from other subject areas. The management is engaged in regular review and updating of procedures in order to ensure a high standard of performance. Further work on developing assessment in the subject is required. The themes planned for assemblies, which are organised by the students, make a very important contribution to citizenship provision in the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students make good progress and achieve very well in the courses provided.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in GCSE graphic products.
- The new head of department is using her informed knowledge of the subject to improve schemes of work.

Areas for improvement

- Students have only a narrow range of experiences in Years 7 to 9 and the course offered in Years 10 and 11 does not meet National Curriculum requirements.
- Shared learning and assessment practices have yet to be established.
- Until the new building is completed, the resources and accommodation seriously limit the delivery of an appropriate curriculum.

120. Until most recently, design and technology was taken as a combined GCSE with business studies. In the 2002 results, just under two thirds of students gained grades A* to C in the design and technology component of the qualification and this was broadly in line with girls' performance nationally.
121. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average in the range of experiences provided by the school. Students use their strong literacy skills to discuss, develop and present their design ideas as well as plan the making stage. The higher attaining students use ICT very effectively to present their work. Most take considerable care and show accuracy in measuring and in the use of the limited range of tools and equipment. This lack of facilities, particularly in Year 8 where there are no sewing machines in the textiles technology course and limited access to equipment for some resistant materials groups, limits the opportunities for students to achieve even higher standards.
122. Standards in Year 11 are also above national average with the girls' strong literacy and numeracy skills combined with similar strengths in graphics and art result in good quality outcomes. The well-informed teaching with its high expectations ensures that students make very effective use of the more limited lesson, with many of the higher attaining students showing the potential to successfully complete the full qualification rather than the short course for which they are entered. Much of the work is well planned and presented and the range of pop-up children's books and stage settings demonstrates accuracy and creativity in producing the prototypes. Students with special educational needs produce less ambitious outcomes, though this represents good progress helped by the strong teacher support.
123. Teaching is good overall and very good in the GCSE course. The small team that teach design and technology to Years 7 to 9 vary in their approach to the subject but lessons are consistently well planned and use a variety of activities to sustain student interest and develop understanding. This is seen in the effective use of ICT based learning to improve students' understanding of mechanisms and in the use of group work and presentation to develop analytical and presentation skills. GCSE teaching is very well informed; lessons proceed with pace and have clear learning outcomes. Students respond well to the enthusiasm of the teacher, often continuing project work after school and showing care and accuracy in their design and make activities. GCSE project work is regularly monitored and most students have a clear idea about their progress in the graphic products course but this is less true in Years 7 to 9, where the learning activities are less closely linked to National Curriculum standards.
124. The subject leader has made a good start in raising the profile of the subject in school as well as developing schemes of work and sharing good practice. Historically, staffing and resources have been less developed in the subject and this is reflected in the limited range of learning experiences. In Years 10 to 11 this limited range does not meet National Curriculum requirements. The new building work will do much to address these concerns and provide a more

challenging curriculum that includes computer aided design and manufacture. The school has no tradition of providing the important strand of food technology though current developments may provide an opportunity to further improve provision.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and very positive relationships.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject.
- A firm foundation for the subject to develop further has been created in a very short time.

Areas for improvement

- Developing a system of assessment which parallels the National Curriculum levels and criteria in English, art and music (as appropriate).
- Seek to improve the accommodation for the subject.

125. Drama was introduced into the school curriculum at the start of the academic year. It is in an early stage of development but a good foundation for the development of the subject has been laid in a very short time.
126. There are no national standards or expectations in drama because it lies outside the formal national curriculum. Standards of work seen in Year 7 are good, mainly because of the attitudes of the girls and the way they work together. Standards in Year 9 are satisfactory. The students' social skills and skills of working together are good but clearly they have had limited dramatic experience. They are able to create sharply observed characters and develop an improvisation in which a character's motivation parallels that of Lady Macbeth. The subject provides a very good context for developing speaking and listening skills in role and in organising their and others' ideas. Students are confident and are at ease in sharing their work within the group. GCSE work in Year 10 is in line with the requirements of the GCSE syllabus.
127. Teaching is good. The teacher is confident and has very good subject knowledge. Lessons are planned well and develop in a structured way so that lessons build on the previous one. The teacher is encouraging and supportive; she listens carefully to students' contributions and clearly values their ideas and opinions. Relationships between the member of staff and the students are very good. Class management is very good. Class routines are established well which means that very little time is wasted. High expectations regarding the nature of the work and the disciplines inherent in it have also been established well. In a couple of lessons seen the timing somewhat slipped so that the whole class evaluation at the end of the lesson of what had been learnt was somewhat rushed. Homework is set and followed up appropriately.
128. The quality of learning is very good because of the good teaching and the fact that the students bring energy, and enthusiasm to the learning. They clearly enjoy the subject, want to do well and find, working within the subject, opportunities for success, which further motivates them. They all demonstrate very good organisational skills; socially the way the classes are able to work together, in groups or pairs, is very good- and is a further reason why learning is very good. Although classes are ethnically very diverse there is a very strong cohesiveness about the classes. All students make very good progress and it is impossible to distinguish the progress of students with additional needs from the rest of their classmates.
129. The planned curriculum is still being developed. It offers a good range of dramatic experience. Resources are currently limited but developing as the teacher refines the work. Assessment needs to be refined, particularly for Key Stage 3. The subject does not have National Curriculum levels. Developing the subject's equivalent, drawing on the National Curriculum for speaking and listening but looking closely also at the levels in art and music will help establish clarity about progression in the subject. Accommodation is not easy to manage. Most drama lessons take place in a cleared space in the hall. It is difficult to establish an identity for the subject within this public space or to display material to support the work. Given that accommodation is tight in the

school- the stage, properly prepared, might provide a better alternative. It would also allow access to lighting and sound equipment necessary for GCSE work. The teacher has a disciplined, very organised approach to developing the subject and has clear ideas of where the subject is going. Drama makes a good contribution to the students' personal development.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- High standard of attainment.
- High standard of student work presentation.
- Very good use of information technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Good progression through from Year 7 to 11.
- Highly motivated students with a keen desire to learn.
- Good procedures for assessment.
- Very good use of homework to extend learning.

Areas for improvement

- Recruitment of students for the 6th Form.
- Raising the profile of geography in relation to career opportunities.
- Provision of good quality fieldwork opportunities for Years 7 to 9 students and residential fieldwork for Years 10 to 13.
- The provision of identified opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students.

130. Teacher assessment of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 showed that the percentage of students achieving level 5 and above was well above the national average and has been maintained over the past three years. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirms this result. The students make very good progress over time.
131. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the percentage of students achieving A* to C grades was well above the national average and all students entered for the examinations gained a pass, also above the national average. This has been maintained over the past three years. The standard of work seen during the inspection was very good and the students make good progress.
132. The students have a very positive attitude to their work, reflecting the very good ethos of the school. They are very keen to learn and work diligently in class and on homework. The presentation of their work is of a very high standard, which is an indication of the pride they take in what they do. They work co-operatively in pairs and in larger groups, contribute well to discussion and show respect for the opinions of others. In their dealings with staff they show confidence and growing maturity.
133. The students in Year 7 receive a good grounding in the basic skills of mapwork, using six figure grid references, describing relief from contour lines and using scale to calculate distances. They apply the skills learnt in mapping land use in Cranbrook Road and present the information gathered in a statistical form. By the end of Year 9 the students know and understand the use of choropleth, isoline, topographical, topological, mental and thematic maps indicating planned progression in basic skills. Land use conflicts and coastal management in Dorset are topics which enabled the students to use their literacy skills in letter writing on the effects of tourist development. They study aspects of economic development in Brazil and show good understanding of the factors that affect population change and the standard of living. Students preparing for GCSE show well-developed powers of analysis, as for example in the comparison of hydrographs of different streams. They extend and illustrate key principles of industrial location in the case study of warehouse distribution networks in Stratford.
134. The quality of teaching overall is good but with some examples of very good lessons seen during the inspection. No lesson seen was unsatisfactory. Teachers demonstrate very good knowledge

of the subject, which is used effectively to extend the students' field of vision. The best lessons seen were those in which the students experienced fun in learning and showed curiosity for finding out more about the subject. The good relationship among the students and with the staff helps to produce an environment conducive to learning. Challenging tasks, as for instance using satellite images for weather forecasting seen in a Year 8 lesson, stretch the imagination of the students and make the work relevant to their own experience. This led one student to ask what kind of weather system gave rise to today's weather? Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. In a few lessons, however, the opportunities for independent learning were missed by the use of whole class summaries made on the board and copied by the students. Lesson plans do not always take sufficiently into account the different levels of attainment in the class.

135. The leadership of the subject is good and it is well managed. The members of staff work co-operatively sharing resources and ideas. The head of department keeps abreast of the demands of the subject through professional development courses. Schemes of work have been updated to meet the needs of the students and to reflect the expertise of the staff. The curriculum is broad and balanced and systems are in place for regular assessment of students' performance. The accommodation is adequate, although somewhat cramped for large classes but the resources are good, very well organised and accessible. All aspects of the department are very highly organised and students are given good support, as for example through the basic skills club.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The consistently high levels of attainment at GCSE.
- The department has very high expectations of student achievement. Excellent study routines, instilled when students enter the school, are reflected in the overall quality, presentation and organisation of individual work.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Aspects of the marking and correction policy.

136. Following a well-established pattern of high attainment, GCSE results were significantly above the national average for all maintained schools in 2002. Eighty five per cent of students gained A* to C grades and, of these, 39 per cent gained A* and A grades. In terms of relative performance, the results were significantly above the results attained by the same students in other subjects, and history was one of the strongest subjects in the school.
137. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Year 9 standards are well above nationally expected levels, and students are achieving well in terms of their ability and attainment levels on entry. Overall, students show good knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence. All, including those with special educational needs, can extract and cross-reference information from a variety of written and pictorial sources. In general, students show a very good sense of chronology and a well-developed empathetic understanding. The majority of students have very good oral, listening and writing skills. They are able to articulate their viewpoints in class and to write persuasively and at length in a range of contexts. Overall, the exceptional quality of presentation and organisation, which characterises written assignments, reflects the pride taken in individual work.
138. At the end of Year 11, overall attainment is significantly above the nationally expected level. It is clear from lesson observations that students' historical knowledge and understanding have deepened. In written work, students analyse evidence critically to produce reasoned arguments and can explain, often very perceptively, how and why different historical interpretations have been produced. They are able to evaluate the relative importance of causes and to justify priorities,

maintaining a critical awareness of bias, propaganda and prejudice. Research skills are also well developed. Students can process information selectively to reach substantiated conclusions. They identify and justify causal factors and recognise the relationship between continuity and change. In class, students are very responsive to the directions of their teachers and work industriously and productively. By the end of Year 11, the majority of students demonstrate high levels of independence and maturity in their approach to learning.

139. Students join the school with above average general ability, and good to negligible skills in history. They make very good progress over time. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, generally make similar rates of progress as their peers. However, there is scope to improve the range of teaching materials to make the curriculum more accessible for these students. Particularly good provision is made for gifted and talented students, specifically through a range of extensions tasks and a regular history club. Extra work is undertaken with a commendable level of enthusiasm and thoroughness.
140. The quality of teaching is never less than good, and often very good. Lessons are well planned to build on the prior attainment levels of students. Although more could be done to share learning objectives with students at the outset, clear general guidelines are established and students understand what is required of them in class. Attitudes and behaviour are exceptionally positive during lessons. A Year 11 debate on communism versus capitalism, for example, was conducted with a high degree of order and maturity. Overall, students are ambitious and keen to succeed. They show well above average levels of diligence and enjoyment in their learning. Listening attentively, they are responsible in their approach, and ask for clarification when this is required.
141. Teachers are confident in their possession of subject expertise, and knowledge and understanding are systematically consolidated. Lessons successfully incorporate a diversity of learning strategies, styles and activities that promote very positive expectations of achievement. By challenging students appropriately, for example through skilful questioning, teachers ensure that learning is sharply focused. The department benefits from the leadership of an experienced examiner. It is clear that the emphasis placed on the improvement of examination techniques and the review of marking criteria in Year 11, contributes to the self-assurance and success of the students. Resources, including a wide range of teacher-produced notes, are used to stimulate interest and help understanding. However, there are some shortcomings in terms of accommodation, as videos, and more especially overhead projectors can be seen only with difficulty in the history room due to the lack of blinds.
142. An experienced head of department has high expectations of the students. Homework is set regularly, and used to reinforce learning in lessons. However, in contrast to core assignments, which are carefully evaluated and graded, the marking of some homework provides students with a rather limited awareness of how to improve the standard of their work. Students are taught to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical conventions in class, but errors in literacy, and even the misspelling of keywords, are not always highlighted in written exercises.
143. The department follows well-defined and effective procedures for pupil self-assessment and target setting. Appropriate schemes of work are in place. A programme of visits, including an excursion to the Imperial War Museum is organised annually to enrich the curriculum. A lunchtime revision group for Year 11, which draws on the expertise of Year 12 students, is impressive in terms of the quality of learning outcomes. There is also evidence of good practice in the use of ICT in history, although opportunities to support learning are restricted due to current pressures on a limited number of school computers. Students have access to a satisfactory range of history books in the school library. The department makes a significant contribution to spiritual, cultural, moral and social education, as well as the teaching of citizenship. The cultural diversity of the classroom is celebrated.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 7 to 11; very good in the sixth form.
- Teachers' very good relationships with students, who develop very good attitudes.
- Students' very good evaluation skills and critical judgement.
- Some subjects such as geography and mathematics use ICT well in Years 7 to 9.
- The subject is very well managed. Three new computer rooms are being built.

Areas for improvement

- Higher attaining students are not fully stretched in some lessons. Class sizes are generally too high.
- Insufficient opportunities for ICT in several subjects such as music, science and technology due to shortages of computers.
- Uncorrected spelling and grammatical errors sometimes spoil brochures and business letters in Years 7, 8 and 9.

144. All students in Years 7 to 11 take ICT (GCSE in Years 10 and 11). Teachers assessed students' attainment in the national curriculum by the end of Year 9 in 2002 as above national expectations for all schools. Levels are assessed accurately, but the relatively few opportunities to use ICT in other subjects because of shortages of computers have limited attainment at the highest levels. The first GCSE students are due to take the examination this year.
145. All Year 11 students are predicted to pass, with an above average proportion of A* to C grades. Standards are below average in the sixth form because no advanced courses are currently offered and students did not take GCSE in ICT (details are reported elsewhere).
146. Students' standards of attainment in lessons and work seen in Years 7 to 9 are above national expectations for all schools. In discrete ICT lessons in Year 7 students begin to think critically about ways of reaching an audience with their spreadsheet models for a tuck shop, and produce attractive handwritten posters showing mind-maps of spreadsheet terms. Year 9 students search topical websites effectively and plan very good databases for a dating agency, using above average skills to create queries and write extended evaluations of their work. On a residential visit to Dorset students produced well-displayed marketing brochures for the residential centre's clients. A newsletter and mail-merged business letters showed a very good appreciation of the type of clients they were aiming at. However, uncorrected spelling, grammatical and display errors frequently spoilt their very good presentation.
147. Students learn basic measurement and control skills by logging data and running simulations, but opportunities to use computers in subjects other than geography and mathematics have been limited because of shortages of equipment. In a good geography lesson seen, Year 9 students collected data on temperature and rainfall around the school, using their own rain gauges, and created spreadsheet models to record the data and draw graphs to explain it. Students use equipment safely and develop particularly good planning and evaluation skills. Students with special needs worked hard and achieved very well, sometimes with no additional support. Most students use word processing well for homework tasks. They make very good use of computer clubs at lunch and after school.
148. Current students in Years 10 and 11 are attaining at above average standards in GCSE ICT lessons seen. Year 10 students word processed letters well, and merged them with tables of names they created. They evaluated reasons why manual systems need to be upgraded very well. Year 11 ICT students consolidated and applied theory on flow charts very well in GCSE coursework projects when designing databases for a local organisation of their choice, and showed very good understanding of validation procedures. Examples of coursework seen from higher attaining students were above national expectations, with well-argued evaluations of stock control spreadsheets in which macros were comprehensive, and procedures were well annotated. Whilst the quality of written work was well above average, technical skills were average. Students developed a good understanding of ways ICT could be used within different organisations.
149. Students' standards in ICT in most other subjects in Years 10 and 11 are below national expectations. Whilst lessons just meet national curriculum requirements, lack of available computers in other subjects than ICT have limited students' progress. Three new computer rooms are opening soon. Most students have home computers, which they use to word process homework essays and coursework, and they research the web well in most subjects.

150. Teaching and learning were good in lessons seen in Years 7 to 11, and very good in the sixth form. Supportive relationships between teachers and students sustain the very good attitudes to learning students come in with in Year 7, and foster pride in their work. Most students make good progress, and develop very good, mature, individual learning skills. A small minority in a large Year 10 lesson seen lost concentration from time to time, talked too much whilst the teacher explained routines and did not do their best. Teachers supported individuals well, set homework regularly and marked work constructively, so students knew how to improve and evaluate their own progress. Higher attaining students in Years 7, 8 and 9 could have achieved more if some more advanced tasks had been set.
151. Teachers in other subjects are beginning to extend students' ICT capability with the help of recent government-funded training. ICT lessons are very well led and managed by an experienced teacher assisted by a very competent colleague with good experience in further education colleges and a good technician. ICT developments in the school are being well managed overall, and accommodation used is satisfactory, maintained well and safe. Three new computer rooms are opening soon. The number of computers available is in line with the national average and will soon be significantly higher. Availability for other subject lessons is currently limited. The capacity for further improvement is good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes promote very high standards.
- Excellent use is made of homework to extend the work of the classroom.
- Teachers contribute very well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Too few students in Years 7 to 9 complete the corrections of their written work to improve its accuracy.

152. The proportion of students attaining a grade in the range A* to C in the GCSE examinations in French and German in 2002 was significantly above the national average for all students and for girls in maintained schools. The proportion of girls attaining higher grades in French (A* and A) – just over one third of those entered – was also significantly above the national average for girls. The proportion of girls attaining higher grades in German – just under one half of those entered – was also significantly above the national average for girls. All students attained a grade in the range A* to G in French and in German. The number of students who sat the examination was smaller in German than the groups for French, but all these students learnt two languages.
153. Examination results in both languages have remained consistently high over the last three years. The proportion of students attaining the higher grades in French and German compares most favourably with that of students in selective schools. When results at GCSE are compared within the school, students achieved better in French and German than in all other subjects.
154. Teachers' assessments of students' work in French, the schools' main language, at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show that students' overall standard of attainment was well above average.
155. The lessons observed and the standard of work seen during the inspection show that students' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is well above average. Students' understanding of the foreign language, which the teachers use extensively in the classroom, is good and sometimes very good. They also extract information successfully from conversations that they hear on cassette. Students' oral skills and pronunciation are satisfactory. Students' written work is their strength. They write accurately to consolidate all their vocabulary and they practise different constructions and tenses. Higher attaining students in Years 8 and 9 use the perfect

tense to write about past events: in Year 9 some students have learnt the imperfect tense, but they are not yet secure in its use. Middle and lower attaining students use different

constructions of *pouvoir* correctly to write about leisure activities and household tasks. However, too few students complete their corrections in order to improve the accuracy of their written work.

156. Students' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 11 is well above average. Students' understanding of the foreign language is good. They extract information from cassette successfully. Higher attaining students in Year 10, for example, noted successfully the main points from eight conversations about the Eurotunnel. In Year 11, students encountered few problems in understanding the new vocabulary they heard as they filled in the missing words on a worksheet about department stores. Lower attaining students in Year 11 noted correctly the items of food that were bought and the price in euros.
157. As in earlier years, students in Years 10 and 11 continue to consolidate in writing their topic vocabulary for use in coursework or for their oral examination. They practise different tenses, and they use them to good effect to write in their coursework about future plans or their previous work experience. Higher attaining students in Year 11 write accurately, at length and with the relevant vocabulary about healthy eating and keeping fit: middle attaining students write with reasonable accuracy about a dream occupation, and lower attainers, with varying degrees of accuracy, about a previous weekend.
158. The majority of students begin German in Year 8. By the end of Year 9, many students are at, or are approaching, the nationally expected levels. In work in one class in Year 9, for example, students had used their knowledge of the perfect tense to record their findings of a survey. They participated in role-plays in pairs, asking each other questions with about six exchanges. In the listening exercise, students displayed very good understanding and many students scored full marks. Students are making very good progress.
159. One class of students continues to learn German as well as French in Year 10 and in Year 11. They make very good progress over time. The quality of coursework in Year 11 is outstanding. There are occasional mistakes, but the overall standard of writing is very high: some of it would not seem out of place in a Year 12 class. Students use different tenses with precision. Word order in main and subordinate clauses, introduced by a wide range of conjunctions, is almost faultless. In addition, students use a variety of adverbs of time, separable verbs and relevant vocabulary. Case endings are used correctly with different propositions. Adjectival endings are also used correctly. Students have worked very hard and very productively to assimilate all these details. Some students record the results of surveys in graphs and pie charts.
160. The achievement and rate of progress of students in French are very good in Years 7 to 11. Over time, students acquire a very thorough knowledge of the relevant vocabulary to help them with all their different tasks. They copy the words most conscientiously into their exercise or notebooks. They develop their understanding in nearly every lesson with a comprehension exercise. There are opportunities in many lessons for them to develop their oral skills in pair work with a partner. The department makes a very good contribution to developing students' literacy skills. Students learn verb patterns and irregular verbs in different tenses. In some lessons, for instance, verbs and nouns of different gender are colour-coded to make the identification of them easier. There are regular tests. Some students use spider diagrams appropriately. Students also complete many exercises in which they have to complete the missing words in sentences. Numbers are used well in the date for every lesson and students' birthdays. Students learn to tell the time, which they then use for the school timetable and lessons, or to describe their daily routine.
161. Students with special needs make similar progress to those in the class. The support assistant worked very well with a statemented pupil in Year 9, especially in the oral pair work. Gifted and talented students make excellent progress as do students with English as an additional language.

162. Students' attitudes and behaviour in class are excellent. Students are very willing to learn. They apply themselves most conscientiously to their tasks. They work very well independently or co-operatively in pairs. Relationships are excellent. Just occasionally, students remain passive when they could take a more active part orally in the lesson and they have to be targeted by the teacher to answer.
163. The quality of teaching is very good overall. In the lessons observed, teaching ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subject, and they use the foreign language very effectively in the classroom to challenge the students. Teachers plan their lessons very well. Every lesson has a starter activity or revision session. Lesson objectives are shared with students, so that they know what they have to learn. Most lessons finish with an evaluation of what has been learnt, but occasionally this could be used more effectively to challenge more students. Different activities and skills help students to maintain their interest and concentration. In an outstanding lesson with lower attaining students in Year 9 class, students reciprocated the teacher's enthusiasm. They all answered the register, using French words from the topic, sang a song, learnt and practised grammatical constructions, consolidated them in writing, sang a short song to reinforce days of the week and asked each other directions in pair work.
164. Teachers' expectations are very high, particularly in the examination forms. These expectations are evident in the very high standard of students' presentation of their written work. The regular tests in the back of exercise books in a Year 7 class, for example, were very neat and meticulously ruled off. Some books are very nicely illustrated. The teachers use homework most consistently and effectively to consolidate the work of the classroom and to help students extend their knowledge. Most students respond appropriately to this challenge. Resources are used well, particularly the overhead projector and flash cards to present a visual element to the lesson.
165. The head of department provides excellent leadership and educational direction and manages the department very effectively. A team of committed linguists support her. The excellent curricular provision enables most students to study two languages in Years 8 and 9, and for one group to study both languages in Years 10 and 11. The number of students studying two languages is six times the national average for comprehensive schools. The department contributes very well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes combine to promote very high standards. This is a very successful department.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good; students work very well and effectively.
- Students' knowledge of musical information is excellent.
- The organisation of the instrumental teaching is very good. Nearly a fifth of the students learn instruments.
- There are very good opportunities for students to participate in choirs and instrumental ensembles to a high standard.

Areas for improvement

- Because of a lack of facilities students are unable to broaden their curriculum experiences through the use of information and communication technology.
- Many of the keyboards being used for class activity are either old or basic in the facilities available on them.

166. There are no National Curriculum tests in music but teacher assessments show that standards in Year 9, in 2002, were well above the national average. Observations of lessons during the inspection confirm that these standards are being well maintained. In Year 9 the large majority of students have well-developed keyboard skills and a very good practical knowledge and

understanding of musical notation. The results in the 2002 GCSE showed that standards in Year 11 were well above national expectations. Observations of Year 11 lessons show that current overall standards are very satisfactory. Students show that they have very good knowledge of the areas of study and of musical forms. However, when answering examination type questions, students sometimes find some difficulty in applying this wide knowledge to the analysis of music being heard. In all years students have extremely good knowledge of the theoretical side of music. In a Year 8 class the rapidity with which students were able to sort out key relationships was quite exceptional and indicates excellent understanding. Almost all students have a high degree of music literacy. There is some evidence, however, particularly in Years 8 and 9, that this very good level of knowledge and understanding is not always matched by a similar competency in basic keyboard skills.

167. Students in Years 7 to 9 learn well. They are enthusiastic and well motivated and clearly enjoy their work. In their paired keyboard activities they quickly organise themselves and will actively discuss together how to share out the task. The students are productive in their work and eager to share their enthusiasm - they are keen to show that they know! A Year 8 project on Mozart produced some excellent individual contributions from students. Overall, the attitudes and behaviour could not be better. A marked feature of the lessons is the students' use, and clear understanding, of the technical language of music. In Year 10 the students individually prepared a brief presentation most efficiently and showed a very good capacity to work quickly and productively. In their composition activity students show great interest and an enthusiastic commitment that is unusual. Students with special educational needs learn as well as the other students. The material is well suited to the needs of students of differing abilities.
168. The students learn well because the teaching is good. The teacher's subject knowledge is very good and her own enthusiasm and keyboard command are a strong factor in the success of the students' learning. Lessons are characterised by good planning, they get off to a very brisk start with excellent question and answer sessions. The teacher uses this questioning to guide revision of recent work. It draws all students in, maintains a fast pace, which keeps the interest level high, and probes and extends the students' thinking. The response of the students to this activity is very good with many raised hands indicating the general enthusiasm. Particular support for one pupil with special educational needs is very effective. In all lessons the teaching makes consistent use of musical terminology. The teacher's expectations are very high and the excellence of the students' knowledge and understanding shows that these expectations are well justified. Sometimes, in practical keyboard work, there is a need for more extensive structured examples to consolidate the knowledge.
169. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear vision of the quality that can be achieved, not only in academic achievement, but also in performance. The response of the students shows that there is good understanding on their part, also, of the potential for quality. The present head of department has only been in position for two terms and much has been achieved in that time. Documentation is very thorough and, at all stages, planning is good, which is a major factor in the promotion of the overall good teaching and learning. The recently constructed new building provides an excellent environment for developing an aesthetic response to music and the quality of the attractive and informative display further enhances the atmosphere for learning. Assessment is well organised and well used to inform about students' strengths and progress. Students are encouraged to develop skills in self-assessment and to discuss the work of their peers. There are, however, some deficiencies in the provision for music. There is only one computer within the department and the students have no facilities to experience the use of technology in musical composition. Although there are enough keyboards for general use, sharing one between two, most of them are either old or are basic in their technological capabilities.
170. The department presents excellent opportunities for the social enjoyment of making music. Rehearsals for the school concert, in the week following the inspection, showed that performance skills are well developed and that ensembles are enthusiastically supported. A large number of students participate in a senior choir, which performs with very well developed tone and technical assurance and the orchestra provides excellent opportunities for the young instrumentalists to

experience some challenging, but very accessible, arrangements. The instrumental teaching is organised well and is a great strength of the school. The number of students taking advantage of the arrangements is unusually high and is a characteristic of this good department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good GCSE results.
- The new head of department is carrying out a full review of the curriculum and assessment.
- Committed teachers offering a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The school commits a high level of financial support to the subject.
- High participation rates together with excellent student attitudes.

Areas for further improvement

- Specialist accommodation for practical activities is inadequate for curriculum needs and affects attainment.
- Standards of achievement at Key Stage 3 and in non-GCSE at Key Stage 4.
- Revision of the curriculum in the context of the accommodation available to develop areas, which can be delivered more easily on-site.
- Revision of the curriculum including the time allocation to allow for depth of study to enable achievement to match that in other subjects.
- Opportunities for sixth form students to participate in physical education and sporting activities.

171. The number of students gaining grades A* to C is consistently significantly above the national average and the predictions continue that trend. The number of students entered for the examination is small and their performance is in line with those entered for other subjects in the school. Results for those achieving the expectation of level 5 and above, at the end of Key Stage 3 have fluctuated, a result of a period of changing staff. Assessment procedures are now in place, which will stabilise this and yield reliable results
172. Standards of achievement at Key Stage 3 are generally poor in practical terms. This is a direct result of severely limited indoor space for lessons, large classes where movement is necessarily restricted and the allocation of one ninety -minute teaching period per class. Students achieve extremely well in all aspects of knowledge and understanding and the few non- participants are provided with excellent work sheets, which are designed to develop and strengthen this aspect of their learning. The understanding and insight shown by the students as they record relevant points and assess peer performance is, without exception, excellent. Students' responses to questioning are of the same calibre. Their observational skills, too, are honed and the feedback that they give to each other is of high quality. In the National Curriculum strand of evaluating and improving performance, students excel. It is unfortunate that space limitation militates against the positive effect that this should have upon performance. Success in extra-curricular netball matches shows that where there is space and opportunity to challenge the students, results are good. Students with special educational needs make progress in the same measure as their peers: students with English as an additional language are indistinguishable from their peers and achieve the same standards. All students work together in harmony regardless of race, colour or creed and intermingle and group according to who is nearest rather than seeking out specific partners or friends. All are able to evaluate performance accurately.
173. At Key Stage 4 problems are different. Similar characteristics to those found in Key Stage 3 obtain with respect to the cognitive and evaluative aspects of the work. Students engage in discussion and speak with confidence in the subject, work enthusiastically in lessons and show knowledge and understanding of the concepts of the activities and rules of games. However, the performance aspects are affected by the time lost in travel to off-site locations and the variable and inconsistent provision of facilities at commercial centres when students and teachers get there. The school has committed a high level of financial support to underpin the physical education programme for students at this Key Stage, which has not reaped the rewards that such commitment deserves. At both key stages students have a good knowledge of warm- up and cool-down procedures and frequently lead and carry these out on their own in a way that shows a fundamental understanding of concepts and principles underpinning them.

174. At both key stages the time allocation for the subject falls significantly short of the recommended two hours per pupil per week, by twenty-five per cent. Travelling time exacerbates this at Key Stage 4 where contact with the activity time drops to a global total of forty-five minutes out of a two-hour time commitment.
175. The response and behaviour of students is excellent. Participation rates in lessons are high and students all wear the school uniform kit, which includes leotard and tights for gymnastics. There is some flexibility, within the prescribed uniform for games, which allows students to wear skirts, shorts or tracksuit bottoms according to their preference.
176. There is variation in the quality of teaching but the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Strengths in teaching derive from a good basis of subject knowledge in specific areas, supported by coherent planning. Lessons are competently structured. Organisation is always good and supports the aspects of safety germane to the large numbers working in a small space. Where teaching is most effective, it is interactive, makes pertinent use of observation and feedback to individuals and groups, introduces challenge, encourages self-esteem and uses formative and summative assessment effectively both at teacher and peer level. However, physical restriction of space does not allow such positive elements to produce the level of attainment that they should. The instances where teaching and learning can be improved hinge upon the pace and timing of the lesson, the frequency of feedback and intervention and extending the more able students.
177. The subject is now well managed: documentation and record keeping are a developing area. Assessment procedures are being thought through. Monitoring and evaluation are being set up to allow for the consistent assessment of students. The department is poorly resourced in terms of equipment for ICT, which should be rectified as soon as is possible. The department has had to accommodate and manage great change in the loss of the Head of Department, two replacement teachers and the unavoidable absence of the fractional appointment, all in the last year. The curriculum has a games focus. There is no opportunity to study AS or A2 level physical education in the school.
178. A very good programme of extra-curricular activities operates, which accommodates all categories of games and dance and also provides for these at club level and, in the case of games, at competitive level, with successful results.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

179. Religious Education was subject to a section 23 inspection by inspectors from the Brentwood diocese. Their report is published separately.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in **2002** comparisons are made against **2001 data**.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	1	100	86	0	43.4	1	2.9
Mathematics	2	100	70.6	0	29.9	2.5	2.2
Physics	2	100	85.6	0	39.1	1.5	2.8
English	6	100	95.3	17	38.6	2.67	3.0
French	4	100	88.9	0	40.4	1.75	2.9

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	11	91	88	9	34	3.82	5.25
Mathematics	10	100	87	30	43	5.8	5.8
Physics	2	100	88	0	41.5	4	5.7
Art and design	4	100	96	25	46	6	6.57
History	12	100	88	33	35	5.67	5.45
English	11	100	95	54	37	6.73	5.52
French	7	100	89	85	38	7.43	5.59

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
N/A	N/a						

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

180. Biology and physics were inspected in detail. Chemistry AS and A2 level GCE is also taught in science. In 2002 students entered for A2 level in chemistry attained results at below the national average. This represents a slight drop over recent years. Numbers of students enrolling have risen in 2002 and the subject is becoming a popular sixth form choice. A Year 12 lesson was seen; this lesson was good. Students were undertaking experiments to measure the rate of hydrolysis of halogenalkanes using silver nitrate as an indicator. All students clearly understood the theory behind this practical and could make predictions based on their knowledge of the molecular structure of the three halogenalkanes they were using.
181. The inspection covered the school's AS and A2 level course in mathematics, which consists of mathematics together with the applications - statistics and mechanics.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The work of higher attaining students is good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and all students learn to an appropriate depth.
- Students work hard and appreciate the good personal help they receive from their teacher.

Areas for improvement

- Students' work is not always accurate and mistakes are not always corrected.
- Students do not take enough responsibility for their learning and rely too much on the teacher.

182. The department offers courses in AS and A level biology. Around 30 students take up the subject in Year 12, making biology one of the most popular subjects in the school. Most students complete the AS course and continue with the subject in Year 13.
183. The A2 level examination results in 2002 were below the national average for 2001, the last year in which national statistics are available. These results have been falling over the last three years partly because there have been staffing problems. The large entry for AS level in 2002 attained similar results to other subjects in the sixth form.
184. The standards of work seen during the inspection are below average. However standards vary widely and accurately reflect the prior attainment of students studying the course. Results in modular tests show satisfactory achievement over GCSE grades. Students with special educational needs make similar progress.
185. Students' notes are of an appropriate depth for A2 level. The work of higher attaining students is consistently good. Their folders are well organised with key facts and concepts highlighted to help revision. These students have no weaknesses. The work of other students does show inaccuracies and misconceptions and these are not always corrected during marking. For example, some students do not have a clear understanding of continuous and discontinuous variation. Others do not accurately describe why females are carriers of haemophilia. A minority of folders contain work that is not sequenced, with some work unfinished; this makes revision difficult.
186. Students write essays well. For example, many folders contained a detailed description of how natural selection has produced pigment variations in the peppered moth, *Biston betularia*. Their essays explain clearly how the gene pool of the moths changes when the trees the moths use become darkened by pollution. The essays also used the work on moths to illustrate Darwin's ideas on evolution. Coursework practical assignments are good. Students explain well the theory behind their practical work. They design appropriate methods to test their hypotheses and

carry out trials to see if their methods work. Students make good use of the trials to modify their experiments.

187. Teaching and students' learning are satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are very good and students learn facts and concepts to an appropriate depth as a result. This also ensures that higher attaining students learn work that will enable them to attain very high grades. This was clear in a lesson on auxins where students were learning the fine details of cytoplasm flow as a means of transporting the plant hormone. Teachers plan a satisfactory range of activities to help students learn. Students make good use of fieldwork, reading from texts, practical work and coursework assignments to gain knowledge and understanding. However, students do not have enough opportunities to learn independently, to research and to present their ideas to the class. This means that students do not have enough responsibility for their learning and are too reliant on the teacher. Although students make good use of computers to write up coursework, there are not enough opportunities for students to use ICT in their learning. Students' learning is well focused in lessons because the teacher sets clear targets as to what work will be covered. However, the teacher does not always show how and why the work is relevant and because of this students are not readily engaged and then do not participate fully in the lesson. This was seen in a lesson on the transport of oxygen in the blood where the teacher's introduction did not relate the topic to students' every day experiences. The pace of teaching is good and students get through a large amount of work in the lesson. Students have a good understanding of their progress because the results of regular tests are returned as A2 level grades.
188. Students enjoy biology and appreciate the good personal help they receive from their teacher. They feel they work hard. They find the teacher's feedback on their answers in tests very helpful. They all like the topic books they are given, finding them a good learning aid. They also make good use of the reference books in the biology department but say the library does not have sufficient books to support their learning.
189. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department is now using data supplied by the school to follow students' progress and take appropriate action if targets are not met. The department has clear plans for raising standards.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The standard of written work which students produce is above average, with particular attention to logical, mathematically correct, presentation.
- Students learn from the regular and constructive marking by teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Students do less well than expected in modular assessments, compared with sets of questions at home.
- Students' understanding would benefit from participation in regular, in-depth discussion of mathematics.
- Some applications of mathematics should relate to real-world situations, to broaden interest and underpin understanding.

190. Attainment at A2 level is above national standards but is declining. Typically ten students successfully complete the course annually. In 2002 the full range of grades was recorded. Compared with previous years there was a smaller proportion of the higher grades, A and B, in spite of very good overall attainment in GCSE examinations prior to course commencement. Work in students' files fully reflects the course requirements; it includes well-worked solutions indicative of students' target grades and better.
191. Teaching is good but lacks variety in approach. Pace of lessons is judged well to enable students to follow the reasoning; this was exemplified in the development of the equation of a

circle by carefully relating geometric and algebraic aspects. However, students feel that the teaching of one particular aspect of statistics lacked the clarity needed for solving examination questions. Students are well versed in responding orally to questions requiring short answers and in taking notes. They work independently on questions for which they maturely refer to textbooks for support but rely on unnecessary use of calculators. They enjoy finding correct solutions; their depth of understanding would improve if mechanics was related to real world situations and statistics used in familiar contexts, relevant to their other studies and society in general.

192. Students have a good introduction to the subject because links with GCSE knowledge are well established before being developed. Later in the course recollection of some aspects, such as the circle theorems, is hazy, but students competently use principles and techniques, from earlier advanced level study, for other topics. Teachers have high expectations of students in terms of the number, difficulty and range of questions for homework. This is particularly evident for mechanics, where the teacher selects questions from many sources to ensure experience with a wide variety of styles. Work is frequently marked and quickly returned; students have the opportunity to learn from this, because the nature of errors is noted, erroneous working leading to correct answers is highlighted and suggestions made to help interpret answers. As a result, meticulously maintained files of work have the potential to form a very good resource for revision.
193. Students are diligent; their written solutions to questions are carefully annotated and illustrated by appropriate diagrams. On a one-to-one basis they are good at describing what they are doing and enthusiastically consider a different line of approach. In contrast, in class they were observed to be reluctant to volunteer response to questions and lacking the confidence to make suggestions. Students do not always fulfil their own expectations in examinations. To this end, two are re-sitting one year of the A2 level course and at least one has engaged a private tutor for mathematics.
194. The management of the advanced level courses is good. The two teachers liaise carefully, ensuring that they provide a well-planned coherent course with pure mathematics topics supporting the development of the applications. Appropriate texts and sets of questions are used but there is a lack of other resources, such as graphic calculators and computer software, to develop concepts and broad understanding. Greater in-depth analysis of students' marks and grades for examination papers should be used to monitor standards. Review of targets set, involving discussion with individual students, could usefully be introduced.

Physics

Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **satisfactory** with significant weaknesses.

Strengths

- Well-qualified and experienced teachers.
- Students who want to achieve.
- Sufficient resources.

Areas for improvement

- Careful attention to clear logical development of concepts and their application to real life and current situations.
- Rigorous use of data on student attainment on entry, minimum target grades and current attainment to monitor progress.
- Broaden the learning experience of students beyond that of syllabus and textbook content to raise student interest and enthusiasm for learning physics.
- A consideration of student views of their learning.
- Investigation of strategies to raise student attainment.

195. The number of students has been small for the last few years, making statistical comparisons invalid. In 2001 there was one student who gained a C grade. In 2002, there were two students gaining C and E grade. Seven AS students were entered in 2001 gaining four D grades, 2 E grades and an unclassified result. Of the current Year 13 students who took AS in 2002, one

attained above her target, 3 were below target gaining two U grades and one D grade. The remaining student with no target gained an E grade. Of the current eight Year 12 students, two are working at their expected level, four are below expectations and of the remaining two, one is working at E grade and the other has insufficient data on record to estimate progress. Overall, the progress made by students in A2 level physics is barely satisfactory.

196. In a lesson about induced magnetism, Year 13 students were able to use Fleming's left hand rule to determine magnetic field direction and use apparatus to obtain reliable results in an experiment to investigate factors affecting magnetic field strength. They readily converted units, applied formulae and converted small numbers to more manageable numbers using scientific notation. They quickly and accurately constructed graphs from their own practical results, showing good numerical skills. When working on theoretical questions about magnetic effects some students showed limited recall of the previous lesson's work and others who had been absent found aspects difficult because they had missed the practical application of theory on which the exercise questions were based. Several students had improved on their AS performance and were making progress almost as expected based on prior attainment at GCSE level. Currently Year 13 is not demonstrating high level advanced work; results in 2003 are likely to consist mainly of lower grades. The highest grade is likely to come from a Year 13 student who is repeating part of the course to obtain a higher grade.
197. Year 12 student notes show sequentially developed work through their units of study; however the logical development of ideas shows weakness. Folders seen show work that is insufficiently comprehensive to enable effective revision at a later date. Notes show a lack of skill in note taking or that ideas had not been sufficiently clearly explained or insufficient time allowed for notes to be taken. The work shows insufficient application of scientific principles to everyday examples, although a range of worked examples has been considered. In lessons, students did not seek advice from the teacher, ask questions to clarify understanding or show particular interest.
198. Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, some good teaching was seen. Where teaching showed strengths, as in a lesson about induced magnetism, the teacher made good efforts to explain the use of *Fleming's* left hand rule. The subsequent practical work enabled students to apply this rule. In a lesson about gas laws, a very good computer software programme was used to help students learn about particle movement and the effect of changing temperature and volume on pressure, but in this lesson teaching showed room for improvement, since delivery was not clearly linked to the principles of particular gas laws and students were not asked to consider which law could be applied or used to make predictions. When calculations were used, there was little interaction with students to develop ideas and involve them in the teaching and learning process. The logic of delivery of the lesson was unclear – especially in the development of ideas and calculations based on qualitative observations from the computer software model. In the development of equations, the teacher made larger conceptual leaps than some students could follow.
199. Whilst teaching is judged to be satisfactory, there is a need to ensure that development of ideas is logical so that students can readily follow an unfolding story. There should be a stronger link between theoretical ideas, practical applications and between school science and science in the world around us. Opportunities should be found to develop independence and initiative in student approaches to learning: currently there is over-reliance on the teacher to provide motivation and information. This makes students less proactive and less likely to challenge ideas. Where students are confident in their knowledge and interested in the applications of the science they are learning, they are more likely to show initiative and raise questions.
200. Teachers hold data on student performance and monitor current standards of work against minimum target grades. Homework is marked, written comments are evident and Year 13 students feel that the oral feed-back they receive is helpful; however, there is a need for greater clarity in conveying to students what it is that they need to do in order to raise the standard of their work. Monitoring student work files could help in their organisation and enable teachers to be alerted to the quality of student notes and be alerted to the likely impact this may have on

attainment. Students also feel there is a mismatch between their understanding of their own capabilities as scientists - based on their GCSE grades - and their performance at AS level. They feel they are achieving below their own expectations. This indicates a need for improved communication between student and teacher based on a more perceptive and empathetic teacher response and a more proactive and challenging reaction from students in response to their learning experiences.

201. Students show positive attitudes to their work in lessons. They apply themselves well to practical work or to the completion of exemplar calculations. They diligently complete homework. Some folders would benefit from more effective assembly. In both lower and upper sixth classes students showed a significant degree of absence. This could be a reflection of student views of the subject or a measure of student commitment. The level of absence is likely to impact on standards achieved in external examinations.
202. Students in Year 12 are enjoying their course. They find that practical work assists learning. However, they find they have a weakness in translating the concepts they have learned to real applications. During lessons, much of the work is teacher led with limited student input. Student involvement is chiefly based on appropriate activities – for example practical work or example calculations. Students are infrequently set research work to feed back information to the rest of the class. Homework is completed individually. Occasionally web site references are provided for this work. Limited use is made of the impact of science on everyday life as it appears in the news or current popular scientific journals.
203. Management of the physics department is satisfactory. Schemes of work are in place. Assessment data are collected on students and progress is monitored. However, an awareness of student views is an aspect that the department should seek to develop. Whilst the department is small, there is a need to ensure a more consistent approach to teaching and pupil guidance to ensure progress is maximised. Homework is set regularly. However, despite the use of data for monitoring student performance, there is a need to ensure student progress is at least in line with expected performance based on GCSE grades. Currently achievement is just satisfactory. There are sufficient text resources for students and there is sufficient apparatus to meet the demands of the curriculum. There is a planned visit to CERN to broaden the curriculum and to help students in studying for the atomic physics module of the course.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

204. Currently only Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) and Level 1 Internet Technologies examinations are taken because most students have not previously taken GCSE in ICT. Lessons are voluntary, and students attend when they feel they can. The situation is changing because all current Year 11 students are taking GCSE in ICT, and advanced courses are planned.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching helps students achieve good results.
- Students' excellent attitudes in the voluntary lessons.
- Very good accommodation and computer equipment.
- Well-organised marking and assessment.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the low level courses are below national expectations because no advanced courses are currently offered.
- Few current students have taken a GCSE qualification in ICT.

205. In 2002, 38 of the 48 Year 13 students entered for CLAIT passed. Year 12 students, at least half of whom came from other local schools did not achieve well overall because only 14 of the 48 entered passed. This was reportedly due largely to the poor attitudes of a minority who took time to adjust to the school's high expectations. Lessons were mandatory but the level required in the CLAIT course is below the standards that students who had previously taken GCSE could have achieved had advanced courses been available.

206. Standards of ICT in the sixth form are below average overall in lessons and work seen. This is not in relation to similar courses nationally but in relation to courses normally taken at advanced level by students who enter sixth forms with above average GCSE points scores. Lessons currently are voluntary, and because of the low level qualification, students in Years 12 and 13 make good progress and achieve well, passing the examinations. The majority of Year 12 students did not take ICT at GCSE, though they gained good basic spreadsheet and word processing skills in the business studies short GCSE course which most took. Five students have already completed the CLAIT modules and 10, nearly a half of those entered, have completed two modules, indicating good progress. Very few fail to complete the courses successfully due to very good teaching closely geared to examination requirements.
207. In the four lessons seen students had very good individual guidance to produce simple spreadsheets and good basic web pages, with appropriate hyperlinks. They displayed a good knowledge of HTML code, helped by the teacher's good subject knowledge related to the examination-marking scheme. Very well organised assessment, in which students developed excellent individual learning skills through marking their own work, meant that they were very well prepared for the examination assessments, which are available on demand. Students' excellent attitudes were very well sustained by the close support given to individuals by the teacher. Students made good use of the limited lesson time they could devote to fit in with their academic studies in other subjects, and sometimes they missed ICT lessons because they clashed with other school activities with a higher priority. They had little opportunity to be creative, explore more advanced routines or present work using desktop publishing.
208. The department plans to develop advanced courses as, this September, students leave Year 11 with a GCSE qualification in ICT. Three new computer rooms are being built. This very well managed subject has excellent potential for further improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

209. The work of the art department was inspected. The department currently offers Art and Design AS and A2 level courses. The quality of examination results is good and improving. The number of students taking the examinations is too small to make meaningful national comparisons. However in 2001, A2 level results overall were above the national average, and in 2002 all candidates gained a pass grade, but with fewer high grade passes. There is an upward trend of attainment, and predictions for 2003 are for well above average results. Retention rates are good and an increasing number of students are taking the subject.

Art and Design

Overall the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**, with some **excellent** features.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good to excellent; subject knowledge is extremely well communicated.
- Courses are well structured, planned, and presented.
- The positive attitudes and enthusiasm of students.
- Leadership and management are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information communications technology and computer aided design.
- The development of learning opportunities; through better accommodation and resources.

210. Overall standards of work seen are well above average. Year 12 and Year 13 students alike make very good progress from their GCSE work and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Students use a wide range of visual media, and their practical work is very good. Ideas for project themes show initiative, and are highly expressive and creative. Students use the work of well-known artists to develop their own styles and techniques, and they are developing a very good understanding of curriculum specifications and assessment criteria. For example, during a

discussion on examination technique, Year 13 students expressed confidence in talking about their chosen routes of enquiry and contextual links. All students understand the importance of not departing from their individual coursework styles, and their course work paintings, reflecting carefully chosen themes, are of above average quality. For example, paintings of 'The family' based on studies of the *Bloomsbury Group* show very good understanding of the use of strong composition, expressive colour and flat pattern. Year 12 produce lively work, demonstrating excellent experimentation with media, well backed up with explanatory documentation and annotation. Large scale finished paintings developed from direct observational drawings of natural forms show very good links to the work of Mondrian, O'Keeffe, Moore, and Braque. Their influence comes through strongly in students' work, which shows clear understanding of the use of a wide range of art media, with good composition, colour harmonies and tone values.

211. The quality of teaching and learning is at least very good, and often excellent. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and learning is very effective through clearly stated project aims and objectives. Excellent links are made to contextual studies, and often include visits to art galleries in this country and abroad. Teachers have high expectations of their students and set challenging tasks that are well thought out and appropriate to individual needs. The enthusiasm of teachers and students, and their positive attitudes are a major strength that ensures students achieve their full potential. Regular review and assessment of work assures students of their progress, and sets targets for them to work to.
212. Leadership is very good. There is an ethos of pursuing the highest standards, and improving learning opportunities. Courses are very well managed, structured and delivered. Good quality painting resources promote high standards, and displays in the art rooms and around the school create an inspirational and stimulating learning environment. Students benefit from the opportunity to work in their own time in an area exclusively for their use. Department development plans identify the main areas for improvement; to develop greater use of information communication technology and computer aided design and to further improve resources and facilities for students.

HUMANITIES

213. The work of the geography and history departments was inspected in detail. General studies, sociology, politics and a distance-learning lesson in law were also observed.
214. Only two students entered for the geography AS examinations in 2001 and the results were below expectations. One of these students is currently preparing for the A2 examinations. Of the three students on the AS course this year two joined the school in the sixth form. The standard of work seen during the inspection is in line with expectations. The students show a mature awareness of environmental issues such as global warming and the impact of globalisation. A detailed glossary helps to reinforce important concepts in the subject.
215. In 2001, results at A2 level in history were below the national average and in terms of relative performance on average students did less well in history than they did in the other subjects in which they were examined. In 2002, attainment levels rose markedly to be amongst the strongest in the school. A third of students gained A to B grades and all students gained an A to E grade at A2 level. At AS level, just under half the students gained A to C grades in 2002. There are as yet no national comparisons for 2002.

Geography

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

Strengths

- High standard of student work presentation.
- Highly motivated students with a keen desire to learn.
- Good procedures for assessment.

- Very good use of homework to extend learning.

Areas for improvement

- Recruitment of students for the 6th Form.
- Raising the profile of geography in relation to career opportunities.
- Provision of good quality fieldwork opportunities.

216. The students have a very positive attitude to their work, reflecting the very good ethos of the school. They are very keen to learn and make copious notes by selecting relevant material from the texts provided. A great deal of effort is put into homework exercises and the use of past papers for revision. Their work is always well presented and of a good standard. Contributions to discussions indicate a mature understanding of issues of the day.
217. The quality of teaching overall is good. The teacher demonstrates very good knowledge of the subject, which is used effectively to challenge the students' analytical skills. Very good guidance is given on how to approach the answering of questions paying special attention to the expectations of the examiner. Tutorial support is offered when the need arises and the students respond positively.
218. The leadership of the subject is good. The head of department keeps abreast of the demands of the subject through attendance at examination board meetings and is able to advise the students on any developing trends or emphases. Schemes of work have been based on the interests of the students and the expertise of the staff. The curriculum is broad and balanced and systems are in place for regular assessment of students' performance. The accommodation is good for the number of students involved and the resources are very good, very well organised and accessible. All aspects of the department are very highly organised and students are given good support to achieve their potential.

History

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

Strengths

- Teachers possess very good levels of subject knowledge.
- Teachers are very familiar with the examination specifications and assessment requirements, which they transmit successfully to students.
- Students are well organised and mature in their approach. They are ready to take responsibility for their own learning.

Areas for improvement

- The provision for active learning, specifically discussion and debate, in lessons.
- The school library holds an inadequate stock of books to support individual study.
- There is insufficient access to ICT to support learning because resources are limited.

219. In the work seen standards are above national expectations. Students are achieving well and making good progress in terms of prior attainment. Students in Year 12 are able to draw on previous knowledge and understanding gained from the GCSE courses and to develop the confidence required to reach sound historical judgements independently. Encouraged by their teachers, they are learning to think creatively and to consider different analytical approaches and historical interpretations. Written work demonstrates the growing ability of all sixth form students to challenge the assumptions implied in a question, and to select and use knowledge relevantly and effectively. Adopting a critical approach, students can produce convincing arguments and reach coherent conclusions. They are able to consider historical issues from different standpoints and to use the interpretations of different historians to support their arguments.
220. Students are focused and responsive, whether collaborating in small groups to share different perspectives and ideas, or articulating their views in class discussions. They are ready to interject with relevant questions and to search for accuracy. They are mature in their approach

and use the guidance received from their teachers constructively. Overall, students show good progress in the development of their understanding and historical skills. They become increasingly effective independent learners and as such are well prepared for university education.

221. Overall, the quality of teaching in history is good, and can be very good. This variability reflects some lack of coherence in teaching style. In general, students respond with positive enthusiasm to an active style of teaching, characterised by high levels of discussion and debate. Interactive lessons that are designed to extend historical enquiry and to develop conceptual understanding, result in very good learning. An overall strength of the teaching lies in well-structured lessons that identify what students must, should and could know. As an A level examiner, the head of department is very well informed about examination specifications. The important focus placed on the evaluation of examination requirements and mark schemes in lessons is particularly effective when linked to self-assessment and target setting. Possessing very good levels of subject expertise, teachers are able to confront students with issues surrounding evidence and the significance of historical controversies. When deploying skilful questioning techniques, they heighten the appreciation of different factors in historical causation; as was seen in a Year 12 lesson, where students assessed the contribution of the Jesuits to the Catholic Reformation of 1563.
222. Departmental policies and procedures are well defined. Marking is regular and constructive. Diagnostic feedback provides students with indicators for the improvement of their work, although this is not always closely focused. The department scrutinizes examination data, but there is scope for further analysis in order to measure value added and to observe emerging trends. Students have only restricted access to ICT for the purposes of research, and the possibility of word processing individual work is limited on account of the poor provision of printers. The stock of school library books for extended reading in history is also inadequate. There is scope to extend the provision of enrichment activities, including intellectually challenging conferences with university academics, in order to enhance students' learning. Each year students demonstrate their interest in history by choosing to pursue the subject at degree level.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

223. The work in the English department was inspected in detail. Attainments in the GCE A2 level course in English literature examinations are high. There has been a consistent 100 per cent pass rate with over two thirds of students obtaining grades A or B. The 2002 results were slightly lower than in previous years; however, students made progress as expected. In the 2002 AS level examinations, most students gained grades A to C, with only two gaining grades D or E. The higher attaining students achieved as expected, with most exceeding their target minimum grade by one or two grades. Retention rates are above average and attendance is very good.
224. The work of the modern foreign languages department was inspected and the teaching of French looked at in detail. The department provides AS level and A2 level courses in French. Classes are generally of a reasonable size, consisting on average of ten students. In the A2 level examinations in 2002, all eight students attained grades in the range A to E. Six of these were at the higher grades of A and B, and results were well above the average points score for 2001. This was a marked improvement on the previous two years. Standards are improving. The results of 15 students in the AS-level examinations in 2002 were broadly in line with their target grades. Eight of these students are continuing their studies to A2 level. Each one of them is retaking at least one component of the AS level examination to improve on past performance.

English

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

Strengths

- Attainment is well above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is consistently very good.
- Students achieve well year on year with most exceeding their minimum target grade.
- Students enjoy the subject and appreciate the very good support they receive from their teachers.
- The commitment of the team to maintaining high standards.
- Students have confidence in their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The analytical use of data to track students' progress.

225. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirms the high standards, which are sustained year on year. Overall, progress over time is very good. Students reach high standards in debate, argument and analysis. They are articulate and confident speakers who are never at a loss for words when expressing their opinions. They are very precise in their judgements, demonstrating a very clear command of formal Standard English during debate and feedback. Sensitivity is shown when putting forward their views forcefully, while at the same time maintaining a sense of balance when considering opposing viewpoints. Students attain high standards in critical analysis and interpretation of a wide range of literary texts. Critical interpretation is well informed through very thorough research on writers and their works. They are familiar with the positions and arguments of critics, which contribute to shaping their views. From the start of the course, students are taught to begin exploring ideas, language and style as demonstrated in their reading and appreciation of Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. They show a very secure knowledge of literary texts from different periods and cultures, in the work of a variety of authors. By Year 13, students' autonomy as readers is secure as they explore texts with ease as seen in their translation and analysis of Chaucer's *The Merchant's Tale*. In their reading, students demonstrate a secure knowledge of the different genres in the tale. Standards in writing are good and often very good. They make the transition to the advanced level course very well because of the solid foundation they received on organising their work and expressing their ideas very clearly.
226. Students have excellent attitudes to their studies in English and work methodically to keep up with the intensive pace of lessons. They are very confident and mature, demonstrating the ability to work with sustained concentration and intellectual rigour at all times. Students speak highly of their teachers and are of the opinion that the 'deep marking' helps them to make rapid progress in improving their critical reading and writing. They look forward to their English lessons because teachers are enthusiastic, use various methods, and treat them as mature individuals while maintaining a balanced relationship that combines humour and rigour.
227. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers use their expertise to enlighten and take students through complex texts. Their structured planning and focused attention on technical terms contribute to students' being well versed in literary terminology and style. Teachers continuously challenge students to think critically about their personal response and criticism. Practical criticism is well taught through structured planning, research, questioning and discussion, enabling students to make very good progress. This has a very positive impact on students' explaining their views on the themes in a range of texts, showing a detailed overview of texts as well as originality in their response. This was clearly illustrated in a heated debate on the presentation of masculinity and femininity in the play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In this lesson, with Year 12 students, the teacher used a series of group activities including plotting on a numerical scale a character's particular presentation before they worked on an AS level examination question. Learning was very effective because students, particularly the gifted and talented, were intellectually challenged to give individual interpretations, explore and justify their ideas on the various imagery and connotations of territory.
228. Central to the intense teaching and learning is the use of short, timed activities lasting for five or ten minutes to push students to develop a critical stance appropriate to advanced level work. Students also learn very well because teachers continuously link the assessment objectives to the work so that they know how they underpin the study and analysis of a text. This enables students to have an increasing understanding of the assessment criteria for specific essays.

Teachers apply the assessment criteria in their marking by indicating what students need to do to gain a higher grade.

229. The leadership and management of the sixth form course are very good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and work very well as a team and there is a supportive system for tracking and raising standards. However, teachers have yet to begin analysing and using data critically. The capacity for maintaining standards is high; boundaries are pushed, as there is scrutiny of results and findings are used to improve curriculum planning and teaching and learning. For example, some of the present Year 13 students re-sat AS level modules, which led to them either gaining higher marks or improving their grades by between one to three grades. This reflective approach is leading to teachers' analysing their teaching and curriculum planning. Teachers have had limited access to professional training, because of cancellation of courses outside their control. However, conferences and enrichment activities are organised for students but students noted that the teaching is so thorough that some of the organised academic lectures do not add any new dimension to their learning. The library resources support students' reading and teachers give them a good range of reading materials and Internet site. The capacity for improvement is very good.

French

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

Strengths

- Results at A2 level have improved significantly.
- The department contributes well to students' moral and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Feedback to students about their progress is not regular enough.

230. Standards of attainment in Year 13 are above average overall. Students continue to build on the very good progress that they made in GCSE, so that most students progress well. Over time, they acquire the relevant vocabulary to enable them to read and to write appropriately about a wide range of different topics, such as Aids, immigration and the French cinema. They understand the lessons, which are conducted exclusively in French by the two teachers who share the course. The accuracy of writing and confidence in speaking vary across the set: for example, two students in one lesson had to be engaged by the teacher to make an oral contribution to the class. Two students read aloud better and more confidently than several others. Students write with reasonable accuracy. They have a sound knowledge of tenses and make good use of the vocabulary and constructions that they have learnt. They research the material for their coursework well, using help from the Internet.
231. Attainment in Year 12 is above average: students bring with them high grades at GCSE. Their oral skills are well developed, and most students enjoy speaking and are willing to take the initiative in discussions. They are confident speakers and have good pronunciation. Grammar has sufficient emphasis during the course, but in their written work some students are still capable of basic errors. They are acquiring the relevant vocabulary and constructions for different topics: for instance, in one lesson they extended their knowledge about homelessness, in order to express their own opinions about the topic.
232. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers use French most effectively in the classroom. In a Year 13 lesson about Muslims in France, the teacher explained who *les familles harkies* were, to the satisfaction of the students. Lessons are well planned, with a variety of different activities and skills. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students watched a video about Creole writers, and in a Year 12 lesson they listened to a song, which connected well with a film that they had watched.
233. Lessons contain good opportunities for students to hear French on cassette, to speak in pairs and to work with authentic materials. Homework is used effectively to extend the work of the

classroom. Relationships are very good. Students' written work is well marked, with corrections and comments. Marking is regular and the work is returned quickly.

234. The department is managed effectively. Teachers make a good contribution to students' moral and cultural development. In discussion, students in Year 13 said they enjoyed the topics dealing with moral issues: they found the marking of their written work very positive, but they would like more regular feedback of their current performance in relation to their target grades. Four of the students engaged in work experience in France last year, and they all have regular contact in school with the French *assistante*.