

INSPECTION REPORT

NETHERTHORPE SCHOOL

Staveley

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112985

Headteacher: Mr M G Cooper

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 18 – 20 November 2002

Inspection number: 249597

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Ralph Road Staveley Chesterfield Derbyshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	The Reverend W Butt
Date of previous inspection:	4 November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Registered inspector		What the school does well? What could be improved? What should the school do to improve further? Results and students' achievements Teaching and learning The effectiveness of leadership and management in the sixth form
9504	Mrs S Gurney	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development The school's care for its students Partnership with parents
32115	Mr J S Foster	Team inspector	French	Curricular and other opportunities for students
22906	Mr B Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4757	Mr D Morris	Team inspector	Art	
1994	Ms H Olds	Team inspector	Geography Educational inclusion Special educational needs	
3731	Mr W G Robson	Team inspector	English	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	15
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	21
PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	27
RESULTS AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS	27
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	28
TEACHING AND LEARNING	28
CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS	29
THE SCHOOL'S CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS	30
PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	31
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM	32
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Netherthorpe School is near Staveley, a few miles from Chesterfield, Derbyshire. It was founded in 1572 and has provided education in the locality ever since. Most students come from many primary schools in Staveley and the surrounding villages, but some come from Chesterfield and other parts of North Derbyshire. The school had Grant Maintained status until 1999, and is now a Foundation school. It is of average size for a secondary school. It is comprehensive and provides for 1039 students, of whom 167 are in the sixth form. Overall, there are similar numbers of girls and boys in the different year groups, although there are more boys than girls in Year 7. It is very popular and many more parents apply to have their children admitted than there are places available. There is no recognised area from which the school draws students; all admissions are as a result of parents' choice. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and none has English as an additional language. Fewer students than is typical nationally leave or join the school except at the usual ages of 11, 16 or above. The proportion of students believed to be eligible for free school meals is average. Some students have backgrounds of considerable social and economic deprivation; there is still unemployment locally because of the end of coal mining. The percentage of students on the school's register of special educational needs is below average, but an average proportion has statements of special need. Their needs mainly involve difficulties with learning or physical impairments. When students join the school at age 11, their attainment spans the full range but is average, overall. The school is currently working to achieve the status of a specialist science college.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Netherthorpe School has improved substantially since it was last inspected in 1996. It is a good school where students work hard, behave well and are well taught. Students make good progress throughout the school and achieve good standards of work. The leadership and management are very good. The school rightly has the overwhelming confidence of parents in the good quality of education it provides for their children. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students make good progress and reach standards above those usually attained in similar schools throughout the country.
- The leadership of the headteacher and governors is very good and has enabled the school to improve greatly since the last inspection.
- The teaching is good, with much that is very good, and helps students to achieve well.
- Relationships are very good. Almost all students have positive attitudes to the school and to learning. They behave well.
- The school uses data on students' academic performance very well to help them to improve their standards of work.
- The school has the confidence and overwhelming support of parents and the local community.

What could be improved

- Students do not use information and communication technology (ICT) in enough lessons in Years 10 and 11 to help them reach higher standards in the subject by the age of 16.
- Students and staff deserve better accommodation than that which must be used by some subject departments.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in November 1996, the school has improved substantially. Students are now making good progress throughout the school, well supported by good teaching. The key issues of the last inspection have largely been resolved. The work and performance of school departments are now much more closely reviewed by senior management. Underperformance is vigorously challenged and standards have risen. Heads of department check regularly on the work in their own departments. Students' academic performance is closely monitored and they achieve well. The

weaknesses in curriculum for physical education and for information and communication technology (ICT) have mostly been overcome. Much more use of ICT takes place and it is now part of all students' experience. Many more computers and other ICT equipment are available and staff have received training in how to use them. However, students do not use ICT in enough lessons in Years 10 and 11. The accommodation has greatly improved since 1996. However, some temporary accommodation is old, worn and shabby, and students and staff deserve better. There is not enough indoor accommodation for physical education, specialist provision for drama, or practice cells for music.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools**
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	***	C	***	***

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* The average point score is the average of the overall points gained by students at GCSE and A-level; it is often considered the best measure of a school's overall performance.

** Reference to similar schools is to those with students of similar backgrounds. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country.

*** 2001 is the last year for which national A-level comparisons are currently available. Sixth form examinations changed in 2001, and it is not possible to make comparison with 2000. Reference is made to 2002 results in the text below. There are no similar school comparisons at A-level.

From entry to the school in Year 7, students make good progress to gain above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests. Standards compare very well with those of similar schools. Students attained particularly well in English in the tests in 2001 and 2002 and their results were well above average. The trend in students' performance during the last five years has been above the upward national trend.

Students of all levels of competence, including the few from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well in Years 10 and 11. They attained above average standards in gaining five or more A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2002 and in the previous two years. Results compare well with those of similar schools and the percentage of students who have attained five or more A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in recent years compares very well with similar schools' results. Overall, girls usually attain higher standards than boys, but boys are nearer to girls' standards than is typical nationally. Boys did particularly well in the 2001 examinations. Students usually do very well in science. They have not done as well in art, French, Spanish or physical education as in their other subjects in recent years. However, their performance in Spanish improved in 2001 and 2002, and in French in 2002. Standards in art rose considerably in 2002.

The targets set to be achieved in GCSE examinations are challenging and carefully worked out from the available data on students' potential and previous performance. The school usually reaches the targets it sets and often exceeds them.

In the work seen during the inspection in English, students in Year 7 had weaknesses in spelling and difficulty in writing accurately at length. They were seen to progress very well and could write extended pieces in which they used words imaginatively and accurately by Year 9. In mathematics, students recalled subject knowledge very well and used it when learning new topics. They were less competent with algebra in Years 10 and 11. In science, students planned their practical investigations very well, but they did not write extensively enough about subject topics.

In the sixth form, students attained average A-level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) standards in 2001, the last year for which national comparisons are validated. The boys attained above average standards, and above those of the girls in 2001. In 2002, A-level standards overall were similar to those of 2001. In the 2002 Year 12 AS-level examinations, students attained higher results than in the first year of these examinations in 2001. They were able to continue their studies to A-level with confidence. Students usually attain the results in advanced courses that might reasonably be expected from their previous attainment in GCSE examinations, but they could reach even higher standards. In 2001, their standards in A-level mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics and geography were strong. Results in economics were below average. Results in A-level French have been consistently below average, but in 2002 the few students involved attained better results. Students' performance on the Intermediate GNVQ course in business in 2001 was weak; standards improved in 2002. In work seen during the inspection, students were achieving at least satisfactory standards and often higher, except in French where their achievement was unsatisfactory.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Girls and boys have positive attitudes to the school and to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Almost all students behave well in class and act responsibly when they are not directly supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students become more mature in outlook and their personal development is supported by very good relationships.
Attendance	Students' rates of attendance are higher than in most secondary schools.

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.

The teaching provides well for the needs of students of very differing competence, including high attainers and those with a wide range of special educational needs. The few students from minority ethnic backgrounds consistently achieve their potential and make good progress. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are good. The teaching of students with special educational needs, when withdrawn for additional help with literacy, is very good. English, mathematics and science are well taught. The teaching of performing skills in music in Year 9 was of high quality. In all subjects, teachers manage students very well because relationships are very good. Students respond well, almost always want to learn and concentrate on their work in lessons. Teachers communicate their extensive subject knowledge and understanding very well and plan lessons effectively. They assess students' work and rate of progress very thoroughly. Very occasionally, teachers do not manage students well enough for them to make the progress that they should.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Overall, well adapted to students' needs, but students are not required to use computers in enough lessons in Years 10 and 11. The school is providing well for the new National Curriculum subject of citizenship. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students with a wide range of needs make good progress and achieve well. Learning support assistants provide very good support to students and teachers.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Students' personal development is well provided for overall. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory. Their moral and social development is very well provided for. They are helped to understand a diverse range of cultures.
How well the school cares for its students	The school cares well for its students. Information about their academic progress is used very well to help students to improve their standards of work.
Partnership with parents	Excellent. The school works in close partnership with parents, who have great confidence in how it assists their children's learning and personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development. He has the confidence and support of staff, governors, parents and students to improve further the quality of education. Although students achieve well, there is no complacency. The headteacher and key staff work very well together as a team, and manage change effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors fought successfully some time ago to prevent the school from closing and continue to be very supportive and intensely loyal towards it. They scrutinise planning and developments thoroughly. They do not provide students with their entitlement to an act of collective worship every day.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school checks carefully on students' standards of work and on the quality of teaching. It uses the data on students' performance exceptionally well to help them to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funding is used very well. The school seeks to gain the best value when purchasing goods and services in order to provide a good and improving standard of education. Considerable improvements have been made to the accommodation, which is adequate, but provision for some departments is old, worn and shabby and staff and students deserve better. Learning resources are good, but the library is small for a school of this size.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school ensures that their children work hard and achieve their best.• The leadership and management of the school are very good.• Their children are helped to become mature and responsible.• They are confident to approach the school with problems or difficulties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents think homework arrangements could be better.• Some want more information on their children's progress.• Some would like to work more closely with the school.

Inspectors agree fully with parents' positive views. Homework is regularly set and is usually helpful in guiding students to extend their learning independently. The written information that parents receive on their children's progress is suitably informative. Some parents are concerned that their discussions about progress with teachers at consultation evenings are not private enough and inspectors cannot make an informed judgement on this issue; the school expresses the intention to review and improve arrangements where possible. Overall, parents are well consulted by the school which works closely with them.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form consists of 167 students and has increased a little in size since the 1996 inspection. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. About 60 per cent of Year 11 students continue their education in the school's sixth form centre, an above average proportion for the area. Some students join the sixth form from neighbouring comprehensive schools at age 16. Students have a good choice of courses, including vocational ones at Intermediate and Advanced levels. A reasonable standard in GCSE examinations is expected of those who begin advanced courses – usually grade B. The school is following a detailed plan, with a three-year timescale, to extend further the quality of educational provision.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective. Students attain average standards in A-level and AVCE examinations and their results are in line with what might reasonably be expected, considering their earlier performance in GCSE examinations. The teaching is good and much is of very good quality. It enables students to learn successfully and to achieve, at least, the standards that they should. Leadership and management are very good. Planning is well developed and management ensures that provision is cost-effective. Standards and the quality of education have been well maintained since the last inspection.

Strengths

- Students achieve the results that might reasonably be expected of them in AS, A-level and AVCE examinations.
- The teaching is good, and much is very good, and helps students to learn successfully.
- The headteacher has clear vision for the development of the sixth form.
- Students have very mature and responsible attitudes to the school.
- The checking on students' progress by using information from tests and examinations, and subsequent support for them to achieve well are excellent.

What could be improved

- Students could reach even higher standards in examinations.
- Students do not receive their statutory entitlement to religious education.
- Some accommodation is old, worn and shabby and staff and students deserve better.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Results are above average and many students attain very high standards. Very good teaching and students' positive attitudes ensure that they learn very well.
Chemistry	Very good. Students achieve very well and A-level standards are well above average. Teaching is excellent and enables students to enjoy the subject and make very good progress.
Business	Good. Standards are below average but students do better than expected from their previous GCSE results. Good teaching helps most students to learn independently, except in Year 12 where some classes are too large.

Computer studies	Good. Very good teaching enables students to achieve well, especially as they have little prior experience of the subject. Standards are close to the national average.
Health and social care	Good. Students achieve well because teachers help them to learn independently, especially on AVCE courses. Standards are in line with national averages.
Art	Very good. Students achieve very well because teaching is very good and they have very mature attitudes to learning. Standards in AS and A-level examinations are very good.
Geography	Good. Students attain above average A-level standards. Field studies are a particular strength. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their teaching is good.
English language and English literature	Satisfactory. Standards are improving and are close to the national average. Teachers have very good subject knowledge but the limited variety of teaching methods means that students do not take enough responsibility for their own learning.
French	Unsatisfactory. Students do not achieve as well as they should because of poorly developed oral skills. Results at A-level have been consistently below average, but improved in 2002.

In all other AS and A-level subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was nearly always at least good and some very good teaching and learning were seen in biology, music, physics and Spanish, where students achieved very well. In AS and A-level examinations students usually achieve at least as well as expected, by comparison with their previous performance in Year 11 GCSE examinations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good support overall. Some justifiably want more opportunity to sample sixth form courses before they begin them in Year 12. Guidance and help in applying to higher education are very good. Careers guidance is freely available, but students do not always use their initiative to make the most of it. The guidance that they receive on subject work, and the regular review of their progress towards the targets set for them are very good and help them to reach the standards that they should.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The sixth form is very well led and cost-effectively managed. Planning shows vision and a determination to improve educational standards and provision further. Students have equal opportunity and encouragement to achieve their best, and to gain a mature outlook and a strong sense of responsibility towards themselves and to others. Students do not receive their statutory entitlement to religious education or to a daily act of collective worship. Staffing is good. Accommodation specifically for the sixth form is good, but some subject accommodation used by sixth form classes is old, worn and shabby and the library lacks space to provide students with enough books for wider reading. Computers are well provided.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are well taught and helped to do their best.• Teachers are available to help them when needed.• They enjoy being members of the sixth form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They want more information on their progress.• They want a wider range of worthwhile activities and opportunities outside their main subjects.• They want more access to advice on careers.

Inspectors agree with students' positive views. The school provides good opportunities for students to know how well they are progressing. For example, 'progress review days' enable them to measure their rate of progress towards the academic targets set for them individually. The process is appreciated by students, especially those in Year 12. A good range of worthwhile activities outside main courses are provided and a good choice of extra-curricular opportunities is available. Most students following AS and A-level studies have very little time to take on further courses during the timetabled day, but most also take general studies and key skills. The guidance concerning students' choice of courses in higher education is good. Careers guidance is available for the students who want it. However, insufficient opportunity is available for students to experience the courses that they choose to study on entry the sixth form.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Students make good progress and reach standards above those usually attained in similar schools throughout the country.

1. Students enter the school in Year 7 having attained average standards overall. Considerable numbers have special educational needs, many of whom have learning difficulties. In Year 7 in work seen in English, for example, students' work contained many inaccuracies of spelling, the range of words used was restricted and they had difficulty in writing extended pieces of work. By the end of Year 9, when they take the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, their standards, overall, are above average, compared with all schools nationally, and well above the average of similar schools. (Similar schools are those with students of similar backgrounds.) Students of all levels of competence, including those with special educational needs, make good progress to achieve well in the national tests. The few students with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well throughout the school. By Year 9 in English, for example, students make very good progress and use a wide range of vocabulary in extended writing that is often thoughtful and imaginative. Their standards in English in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 and 2002 were well above typical national standards. During the last five years, standards have improved considerably, and students' average overall point score in the National Curriculum tests has risen above that of the national upward trend. *(The average point score is the average of the overall points gained by students in Year 9 National Curriculum tests, and in GCSE and A-level examinations; it is often considered the best measure of the school's overall performance.)*
2. During Years 10 and 11, students continue to make good progress and they achieve well in GCSE examinations. The results that they attain in these examinations, overall, compare well with those of similar schools. In all recent years, they have consistently achieved very well in science by age 16, and often reach standards in this subject comparatively higher than those that they gain in their other subjects in GCSE examinations. Students' planning and execution of investigative work are especially strong, and were apparent in students' work seen during the inspection. Overall, the percentage of students who attained five or more grades A* to C in GCSE examinations was well above the average of similar schools in 2001 and 2002. Boys do not attain as high standards as those of girls in GCSE examinations, overall, but the difference between girls' and boys' standards is less than that found nationally. In some years - for example, in 2001 - boys have done particularly well and their performance has come close to that of the girls. In general, both boys and girls have positive attitudes to their work and want to achieve their best; most do so, as their examination results show.
3. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve well because the teaching that they receive is good and often very good and helps them to make the progress that they should. Almost all students have positive attitudes because relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students respond well and make the most of their opportunities for learning.

The leadership of the headteacher and governors is very good and has enabled the school to improve greatly since the last inspection.

4. The school has improved substantially since it was last inspected six years ago. Since then, the headteacher's energetic, rigorous determination to take the school forward has led to an improvement in the quality of the education that students receive. His leadership has also enabled students to reach higher standards because, for example, managing improvement in the quality of teaching has been very effective and students have benefited from this. Substantial progress has been made in dealing with the key issues of the last inspection. For example, the issue to improve the accommodation has been tackled effectively and new specialist buildings are helping to extend students' learning very well.

5. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and students. He has established good teamwork among the leadership group of senior staff and they work very well together to challenge any underperformance. Senior managers and departmental leaders and managers have confidence in the headteacher's leadership and have responded well to his high expectations of the standards that students should achieve. They and all staff work very hard to reach the higher standards expected. For example, very good departmental leadership in science has ensured that students consistently achieve exceptionally well in this subject in GCSE examinations. Equally, new departmental leadership in English has ensured great improvement in standards in this subject in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations in the last two years.
6. The headteacher also has the confidence and support of the governors and the parents, who recognise that his vigorous determination to take the school forward is enabling students to reach higher standards and helping staff to teach their subjects better still. There is absolutely no complacency in the school, although standards have already improved considerably since the last inspection. Students' standards in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations have risen considerably since 1996 because staff and students have responded very well to the leadership's high expectations and determination to drive standards upwards.
7. The checking on the quality of teaching and students' work has become much more rigorous in recent years. The headteacher and senior managers have used the performance data available very thoroughly to track the performance of staff and students. The information available has enabled the leadership to identify where there is underperformance. As a result, some teachers have left the school, and some underperforming subject departments and staff have been identified and given help to enable them to improve their work. Performance management has been effectively introduced and is contributing well to supporting teachers in extending their skills. It also effectively connects individual teachers' professional targets with whole-school planning for improvement. The impact overall has been to raise students' standards further because of the resulting improved quality of teaching and learning.
8. The governors make an invaluable contribution to the leadership of the school. Most members of the current governing body led the opposition to the plan to close the school when it was designated for closure by the local authority. At this difficult time, their leadership was crucial and proved a powerful factor in the school's survival. Their intense loyalty to the school and their unshaken tenacity in ensuring that the constant provision of education that the school has given to Staveley and the locality since the sixteenth century should not be snuffed out were essential to the school's continued existence. They led the successful campaign with parents and the local community to preserve the school. With the headteacher, they successfully gained Grant Maintained status for the school, managed funding very well, and improved the accommodation substantially. They have now determined that the school will have Foundation status, befitting its long traditions. Rarely are governing bodies faced with such weighty challenges; even more rarely do they surmount the obstacles and achieve the resounding success that this governing body has done. Their partnership with the headteacher is strong; there is a determination that improvement should continue, and governors and headteacher intend that standards should continue to rise.
9. The headteacher and governors have used the funding available to the school very well. Although the school's income is not generous, funds are very well managed and many good practices arising from the school's experience as a Grant Maintained institution continue. The school's leadership and management have had to manage scarce resources very well to maintain old buildings and choose the services best fitted to serve the needs of the school. Consequently, staff and students have been able to focus their efforts on the key tasks of raising achievement through good teaching. Management ensures that best-value principles are very well applied. The results that students achieve compare well with those of other schools. The challenge that students receive through the learning opportunities and experiences provided through the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities are good. Consultation with staff, students and parents is very good, and the school ensures that it gets good value for money for the services it purchases.

The teaching is good, with much that is very good, and helps students to achieve well.

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.

10. The teaching throughout the school is good, and almost one lesson in every four seen during the inspection was very good. The quality of teaching meets the needs of all students well and, as a result, they make good progress through Years 7 to 11 and achieve well in Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are all well taught. Girls and boys of differing levels of competence do equally well. Those with special educational needs achieve well and they are very well taught when they are withdrawn for extra help with literacy. For example, Year 7 students were seen to make very good progress in a literacy lesson in which the few students involved improved their spelling, reading and writing very well because of the very good teaching that they received. The good teaching also enables talented students to do well. For example, the proportion of students attaining A* grades in GCSE examinations is above average. The school's analysis of students' past performance over several years shows that the few students from minority ethnic backgrounds have consistently achieved very well. The students from these backgrounds currently in the school were seen to be well integrated in lessons and were achieving well.
11. Teachers plan and organise lessons well and ensure that students of all levels of subject competence make good progress. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson in which the students were reading an extract from the novel, *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Bronte, they were helped to respond to the teacher's effective questions about the ethical grounds on which the character, Rochester, keeps his wife in isolation. Talented students had good scope to give considered answers from their analysis of the ideas in the novel. Teachers' effective planning of lessons enables most to run at a brisk pace and students are expected to concentrate throughout. They listen intently to teachers in art lessons - for example, when explanations, analyses and demonstrations are presented to them.
12. Students are managed very well. Teachers have such very good relationships with them that the students respond well and work hard. For example, the teacher's very good humoured relationship with a Year 9 French class ensured that all students participated in the various competitive activities involved in the lesson. They achieved above average standards in confidently speaking and writing using the past tense. Very occasionally, teachers' management and control of students are less than satisfactory and this slows the rate of learning too much.
13. Teachers hold high expectations of what the students can achieve. The work that teachers present to their classes is usually challenging and increases students' knowledge and understanding very well. For example, the teaching in an impressive Year 9 music lesson enabled students of widely differing competence in playing musical instruments to make very good progress. Separate groups were formed and some higher attaining students were allowed and encouraged to work independently. The response of all students was very good and all came together for whole-class instrumental performance and singing. All students were challenged at their respective levels of subject skills and knowledge and made very good progress in playing an instrument.
14. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. This enthuses and, in the best lessons, inspires students to respond very well. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the reflection and refraction of light in a very good Year 11 science lesson, for example, held the students in rapt concentration and interest and helped them to learn very successfully from the experience. All teachers use their subject competence very well and their practical demonstrations help to illuminate topics for the students who then practise those subject skills themselves.
15. The good range of methods that teachers choose helps students to learn well. Teachers give clear explanations and respond directly to students' questions. For example, the teacher of a Year 9 class in a lesson on the personal, moral and social issues surrounding abortion, listened

and responded to the students' questions well, so that they gained confidence and maturity from the experience. In general, teachers' questioning is good and helps students recall earlier work, which is a particular strength in their learning of mathematics. Well-judged questions also help students to think more widely about the topics that they study and stimulate them to think independently. Teachers also demonstrate techniques well, as seen, for example, in art and music lessons.

16. Teachers assess students' work very well. It is marked effectively and valuable advice is provided for students on how to improve the standards that they achieve. Teachers also help students to evaluate the quality of their own work and the work of others in the class. This enables all members of the class to learn from each other and to gain maturity. Homework is used well to extend students' learning beyond the classroom, and helps them to work and research independently.

Relationships are very good. Almost all students have positive attitudes to the school and to learning. They behave well.

17. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. They are also very good among most students. These very positive relationships help teachers to manage their classes effectively. Students' personal development is very good. The vast majority have a mature outlook and want to take advantage of the learning opportunities provided by the school. Parents are rightly convinced that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. The very good relationships that are apparent across the school give students confidence in their teachers. They listen to them and respond well to the learning opportunities presented. Almost all students have positive attitudes to their work. They concentrate well in class and persevere with work that is often testing and challenging and extends their knowledge and understanding. In four out of every ten lessons seen during the inspection across Years 7 to 11, students' attitudes were judged to be very good or excellent. In the vast majority of lessons seen, their attitudes in class were judged to be at least good. Students' positive attitudes were also evident in the many extra-curricular activities in which they take part – for example, sport, music and competitive house activities. Students also behave well. They act responsibly in almost all classes and are generally sensible and responsible when not directly supervised.

The school uses data on students' academic performance very well to help them to improve their standards of work.

18. Since the last inspection, the school has made increasingly effective use of the available data on students' academic performance. The progress of each individual student is tracked from entry to the school onwards. Baseline information from primary schools, including the results of Year 6 National Curriculum tests, is supplemented by testing undertaken by the school soon after students enter. Their progress is measured closely as they move through the years, and target grades to be aimed for are made known to all students so that they can decide how best to raise their existing standard, where necessary, to reach their targets. Each point of assessment – for example, Year 9 National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments - extends the academic profile of each student. "Progress review days", when the timetable is suspended for all students to assess how well they are progressing towards their targets, are held each term. These opportunities are excellent practice in using assessment data constructively to support students' progress. Individual students are expected to share with tutors and teachers the responsibility for their own learning and progress so as to ensure that each student achieves what s/he should. The process of using information to help students to raise their standards is very effective and benefits are clear, for example, in improved results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations since the last inspection.
19. The headteacher and senior management also use the same data extensively to measure the performance of year groups. The value added at each stage of formal assessment to the standards attained by each year group is very closely monitored and evaluated. The information derived indicates the performance of individual students, individual teachers,

subject departments and year groups. Senior management, governors and heads of subject departments use the information to question and to challenge underperformance in any sector of the school's work and in its results. The collection and analysis of data have now become very powerful tools to enable the school to raise standards further. The use made of the findings arising from the assembled data is an example of excellent practice in how to make effective use of information to improve standards and to identify strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education provided.

The school has the confidence and overwhelming support of parents and the local community.

20. The school has no area designated by the local authority from which it is expected that most students will come. Although most students live in the area around the school, all are admitted by parental option. Without parents' confidence in the school, it would have no students. However, there are many more applications for admission at age 11 each year than there are places available. As shown by the pre-inspection meeting for parents to express their views about the school and returns of the parents' questionnaire, parents give the school a very high level of endorsement. Parents have confidence that the school has high expectations of what their children should achieve and that they are making good progress. They are very strongly of the view that the school is helping their children to be responsible and mature members of the community. Almost all recognise that their children like attending the school. They are very happy to approach the school with any problems concerning their children and some parents report that the headteacher has personally handled their concerns effectively. Parents are pleased with the good quality of teaching that their children receive. They recognise that not every student behaves well, but they rightly think that students' behaviour is good overall. The vast majority of parents consider that the leadership of the school is very good and properly recognise the headteacher's contribution to the school's success.
21. Individuals and groups also endorse the school's continuing contribution to the life of the local community. Former students, including many now resident abroad, give the school their support and work on its behalf. They meet regularly in school accommodation. The school's support for its local community is shown – for example, in the opportunities it is providing for parents and others to develop their skills in ICT. Evening sessions are provided so that adults can extend their ICT skills in a community where the residual effects of the end of coal mining are still apparent. Links with local primary schools have improved considerably in recent years and working relationships are now generally good. Good links are also in place with local higher education institutions and, for example, the school contributes to the training of new teachers from local universities.
22. The school's very long, unbroken and honourable tradition to provide education for the local community is as strong as ever, and does much credit to those who lead the school and maintain its impressive record of service to the community.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Students do not use information and communication technology (ICT) in enough lessons in Years 10 and 11 to help them to reach the standards that they could in the subject by age 16.

23. Although the provision for students to develop their skills in ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection and statutory National Curriculum requirements are met, students do not have enough opportunity to develop their skills in the subject in Years 10 and 11. They have insufficient lessons in which they must use a computer. Neither lessons specifically designated for ICT nor lessons when ICT is used in other subjects are providing sufficiently well for students to develop their ICT skills to the extent that they should. As a result, some students begin their AS sixth form courses from a lower base of subject knowledge than they should have gained by age 16. The school recognises this as an area to be improved and is

planning to increase the lesson time specifically allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 to help students to extend their ICT skills further by the age of 16.

Students and staff deserve better accommodation than that which must be used by some subject departments.

24. Since the inspection in 1996, the school's accommodation has greatly improved and, for example, accommodation for art and design and technology is good. However, the school recognises that further improvements to the accommodation are a priority. There is insufficient indoor accommodation for physical education and the school lacks a sports hall for the use of its own students and to benefit the local community. Accommodation for music lacks practice cells for the many lessons and the many individual instrumentalists who need these. The absence of accommodation for drama prevents teachers and students from using specialist facilities to enhance performance. Some laboratories are very old and provide only the essentials. Accommodation for dining is no more than basic, and gives no proper indication of the good quality and variety of food that are provided. Above all, some classrooms are old, worn and shabby huts, some of which date back to 1919. The quality of education in this accommodation is impressive, given the context in which the teaching and learning must take place. Staff and students deserve better.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. In order for the school to improve further the standards achieved and the quality of educational provision, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Main school (11-16)

- (1) Ensure that students' knowledge and understanding of ICT is further extended in Years 10 and 11 by ensuring that ICT is used in more lessons in these years. *(This issue is recognised in school development planning. See paragraph 23)*
- (2) Continue to improve the accommodation by providing more indoor space for physical education, a specialist area for drama, practice cells for music and permanent accommodation to replace the huts. ***(This issue applies equally to the sixth form. It is recognised in school development planning. See paragraphs 24; 61)***

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the standards attained in advanced courses further by continued monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and the standards achieved. Give further support to subject departments where standards should be higher - as in French. *(This issue is partly recognised in school development planning. See paragraphs: 26-29; 113-116)*
- (2) Provide students with their statutory requirement to religious education by including it in the curriculum for all students. *(See paragraph 40)*

In addition to the key issues listed above, the headteacher, staff and governors should also consider including the following issues for the sixth form in their action plan:

- (1) Provide students with their statutory entitlement to a daily act of collective worship. *(This issue applies equally to the main, 11-16, school. See paragraph 40)*
- (2) Give students the opportunity of sampling the courses that they consider following in Year 12 before they make their final choices by further extending induction arrangements. *(See paragraph 49)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	39
	Sixth form	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	0	9	23	6	1	0	0
Percentage	0	23	59	15	3	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	18	19	13	0	0	0
Percentage	6	34	36	25	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 – 11 as each lesson represents more than two percentage points; each lesson in the sixth form represents more than one percentage point.

Figures for the sixth form do not total 100 because of rounding.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	872	167
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	98	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	24	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	62	0

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

Student 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	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	75	77	152

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	51	54
	Girls	65	52	54
	Total	115	103	108
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (81)	68 (75)	71 (79)
	National	66 (64)	67 (67)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (42)	44 (45)	37 (43)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	49	52
	Girls	54	55	62
	Total	97	104	114
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (66)	68 (64)	75 (63)
	National	67 (66)	70 (69)	67 (65)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (28)	40 (31)	37 (22)
	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	61	83	144

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	29	55	59
	Girls	50	74	80
	Total	79	129	139
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	55 (58)	90 (92)	97 (94)
	National	51 (50)	87 (87)	95 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student (uncapped)	School	39.15
	National	39.0

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	25	24	49

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	32	33	65
	Average point score per candidate	15.1	14.6	14.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18.0	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	25	24	49	8	10	18
	Average point score per candidate	17.6	14.8	16.2	5.3	12.9	9.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

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
1020	88	4
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
12	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)	58
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	448

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.2
Key Stage 4	23.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2689531
Total expenditure	2696802
Expenditure per student	2638
Balance brought forward from previous year	110480
Balance carried forward to next year	103209

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.9 FTE
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.4 FTE

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

1039

Number of questionnaires returned

298

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	46	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	46	1	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	58	2	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	53	13	3	1
The teaching is good.	42	51	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	51	11	3	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	39	4	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	28	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	30	52	10	1	7
The school is well led and managed.	54	41	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	44	1	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	46	7	1	8

Some figures do not total 100 because of rounding.

Other issues raised by parents

Parents who attended the meeting before the inspection appraised the work of the school closely. Every entrant to the school is by parental choice and parents were highly supportive of it. They gave the school overwhelming endorsement for its work with their children, and expressed great confidence in the headteacher's leadership. Some concerns about the organisation of evenings when parents had the opportunity of consulting with teachers were expressed, particularly the difficulty of ensuring that conversations were private.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

26. Students attained average standards in A-level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) examinations in 2001, the last year for which nationally validated results are available. The percentage of grades A and B that students attained in 2001 was also broadly average. In 2001, boys did very well and outperformed girls in the A-level examinations. In 2002, results overall were similar to those of 2001. No nationally validated results are yet available for AS (Advanced Subsidiary) examinations, but in 2001, 84 per cent of subject entries reached, at least, a pass grade; 29 per cent were at grades A or B. In 2002, 90 per cent reached a pass grade or higher; 36 per cent were at grades A or B. Overall, satisfactory value is added to students' performance from the standards that they attain at age 16 in GCSE examinations, compared with their later results in A-level and AVCE examinations. Students achieve the standards that might reasonably be expected considering their GCSE examination results. However, some could achieve even higher standards and the school recognises this as an aim in its own planning for improvement. The school has challenging academic targets for results of sixth form courses shown in its planning for improvement; these targets have not yet been reached in all subjects.
27. Standards vary between subjects. In 2001, students attained very well in all three A-level science subjects and mathematics. Standards in geography were above average. Results in economics were below average. In 2002, results in chemistry, physics, mathematics and geography were again strong, with a good proportion of A and B grades attained. The examination results of the few students taking A-level French in recent years have been well below average, but in 2002, the four students involved attained better results. The school provides Intermediate level vocational courses in business and health and social care for students who attain grades below C in GCSE examinations. In 2001, students attained well below average standards in these Intermediate courses; results in 2002 were better. Although, overall, very few students do not complete the courses that they start, some students do discontinue Intermediate courses – for example, when jobs become available - and this adversely affects the course results. When students complete their Intermediate courses, they usually attain the qualification.
28. In the work seen during the inspection in the nine subjects inspected and reported in full in Part E of this report, overall, students were achieving the standards that might reasonably be expected from their previous results in GCSE examinations. Their performance varied from very good to unsatisfactory. In art and chemistry, they were achieving very well. In art, for example, students showed impressive maturity in their evaluation of each other's work; each student in turn was made aware from the evaluation of how well the work that was presented met the criteria of the A-level examination, so that improvement could be well directed. Although students achieve very well in English in the main school because new departmental leadership has had such a positive impact on standards there, achievement in work seen in the sixth form was average. Students achieve satisfactorily. However, given the improvement that has been possible in the main school, improvement in sixth form courses in English might reasonably be expected - if all staff work well enough with the head of department to secure the improvement possible. Only in French was achievement unsatisfactory. The few students following the courses in Years 12 and 13 lack confidence and practice in speaking in the foreign language and standards in this crucial skill were low. Students' written work was better, but not strong. Students lack enough experience in using the foreign language and are not achieving the standards that they should.
29. In the other subjects that were sampled during the inspection, students achieved well, overall. Achievement in economics was satisfactory. In sports studies, students were seen to be achieving particularly well and used ICT effectively in presentations. Students' achievement in the key skill of ICT was satisfactory, given the low base of subject knowledge that they have when they begin the key skills course.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

30. Students thrive at Netherthorpe School. Their attitudes to the sixth form and to work are very positive. They enjoy the sixth form and those joining from other schools are made welcome and settle in easily. Students work hard and are keen to succeed. They show commitment, respond and concentrate well in lessons. They are enthusiastic and work well both together and independently. In the lessons observed, the students' attitudes and behaviour were almost always at least good and in half were very good or excellent. The exception was in French classes (in contrast to Spanish) where students' responses in the foreign language were inhibited and unsatisfactory. Students behave very well and set a good example to younger members of the school. However, the school's very strict code of conduct led, on one occasion last year, to the exclusion of three students for a very short period. This is an extremely rare occurrence. Rates of attendance in the sixth form are above average.
31. Students' relationships, both with their teachers and with each other, are very good. They support and show respect for each other and for their teachers. They engage actively in class discussion and are able to debate with others and challenge their views in a mature and respectful way. Their personal development is very good. There are many opportunities for them to take responsibility and to show initiative. Some students help younger pupils with their learning - for example, with paired reading. Others run board games for the younger students at lunch times. They have their own committee and are encouraged to run their own affairs, such as organising the leavers' ball. Colours are awarded not just for sport but also for music, drama, public speaking and pastoral care. These are highly prized and recipients all show a considerable degree of commitment. Students play a leading role in the school council and the school parliament. They show concern for others by raising funds for charities, through both school initiatives and through the local Interact organisation's charitable work.
32. Netherthorpe sixth formers are very pleasant, confident, mature and responsible young adults with a strong social conscience.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

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.

33. The teaching is good in the sixth form and meets the needs of girls and boys of all levels of competence well. The needs of talented students and those with special needs are equally well met by the quality of the teaching that they receive. Many lessons seen were very well taught and a few were of excellent quality. None was unsatisfactory. In the nine subjects inspected and reported on in full in Part E of this report, the teaching of chemistry was outstanding and that of art, ICT and mathematics was very good. Geography was well taught. Business and health and social care were taught well, and in the AVCE courses, students' learning was equally good. However, a large Year 12 class in AVCE business made the teacher's task in supporting the learning of individual students difficult – for example, in helping so many students individually in the inadequate space available in the classroom. Teaching and learning were good in both the business and health and social care Intermediate courses. However, despite the teachers' best efforts in the health and social care GNVQ Intermediate course, students were still very dependent upon their teachers and not confident enough to work more independently in this first term of the school year. In English, the teaching and learning were satisfactory overall, but, in some lessons, the work was too closely directed by the teachers. However, some very good teaching was also seen. The key skill of ICT is well taught, and most students progress well from the low base of subject knowledge that they have on entry to the sixth form.
34. Overall, teaching is good and students make progress in lessons in line with the quality of the teaching that they receive, with the exception of French. In this subject, students' learning was unsatisfactory; they did not respond well enough to what, in one lesson seen, was good teaching and they lacked enthusiasm for and interest in the subject. Students are not provided

with enough opportunities to extend their experience of the French language and culture, and they are reluctant to take up what opportunities are available. Consequently, their learning is limited and they are not achieving the standards that they should.

35. Teachers are very successful in managing their classes. As in the main school, relationships between teachers and students are very good and students respond well in almost all lessons. There is good humour in many lessons and students usually enjoy the learning opportunities presented. This was apparent in a very good Year 12 English literature lesson on *The Tempest*, where excellent relationships encouraged students to express their ideas freely and confidently. A similar situation was seen in a very good Year 12 mathematics lesson, where very good relationships between teacher and students gave the learners the opportunity to work more independently on the demanding topic of integration.
36. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects enable them to arouse the interest of students in the work. Teachers' subject knowledge is also effective in helping students to manage difficult topics. For example, Year 13 mathematics students tackling difficult work on the topic of differentiation were guided through the stages of a demanding analysis by the teacher's very good understanding of the best order in which to deal with the topic. Teachers expect much of students and challenge them intellectually. The teaching in an excellent Year 12 chemistry lesson challenged students very well by giving them guidance and then the opportunity to work independently in a very carefully assessed practical activity. In a Year 13 graphics lesson, the teacher stretched the students' ideas and imagination by insisting that they find personal solutions to subject problems, rather than resort to existing ideas. Students usually respond well to these challenges and extend their own knowledge very well. Only in French did the students not respond positively to the challenges presented.
37. Lessons are well planned and the students usually follow a logical sequence of activities. Consequently, the pace of learning is usually brisk and carried along by teachers' use of a good range of methods. Discussion is used effectively, and teachers insist that views exchanged are based on the evidence of the topic. Students are encouraged to make presentations to the rest of the class on work that they have prepared; these were noted particularly in vocational studies. Teachers give good presentations of new work and respond well to students' questions with clear explanations. Suitable tasks are regularly set for students to tackle in their own time in private study in school or at home.
38. Teachers assess students' work very well. Some excellent practice was seen in lessons. For example, in art the teacher enabled the students to make the analysis and evaluation of each other's work into a very effective learning experience. The teacher encouraged all individuals in turn to have the confidence to present a portfolio of their work for others' criticism. This process of assessment and evaluation was shared and all gained greatly from it. Teachers' marking and assessment of written work are very good and helpful advice is often provided to ensure that students improve.
39. Since the last inspection, the teaching has improved. In 1996 it was satisfactory and now teaching is good and much is of very good or excellent quality.

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

40. The quality of the sixth form curriculum is good. The school provides a suitable range of courses, designed to build on the knowledge, skills and understanding students have already gained in the main part of the school. It provides equal access and opportunity and meets students' needs. There are 17 courses at AS and A-level, and two AVCE and two Intermediate level vocational courses. The school has responded well to students' requests and to local circumstances in its development of vocational courses. Four of the A-level courses have been added to the range in the last four years in response to students' needs, and psychology is planned for next year. All students are regularly taught the key skill of ICT in Year 12 to support their studies. In Year 13, all follow an A-level general studies course and the results are often particularly good. Numbers of students in some subjects are small, and occasionally

students in Years 12 and 13 have to share the same class, which results in their having fewer taught lessons. The great majority of students complete the courses that they begin. Overall, the allocation of time for lessons is satisfactory. The curriculum does not meet the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education and students do not receive the opportunity of a daily act of collective worship.

41. The post-16 curriculum is in a period of transition, and the school has a forward-looking action plan. It sees the development of continuous 14-19 education as a priority and, in conjunction with Chesterfield College and local sixth forms, is working towards a North East Derbyshire partnership for the 14-19 curriculum. There are plans to introduce an Intermediate GNVQ course in leisure and tourism in 2003, as a follow-up to the existing GCSE course in Year 11.
42. In the questionnaire completed by the vast majority of sixth formers before the inspection, some students indicated that the provision of enrichment activities was inadequate. Inspectors found that there is a good range of activities available, including drama, sport and recreation, a thriving sixth form debating society, Young Enterprise, and evening social events – for example, with the strong former-students' association. There is ample opportunity to take on responsibility, in the sixth form committee, the school council and school parliament. Students contribute to the local community in local junior schools, hospitals and homes for the elderly. They can join the Rotary Club. Some enter public speaking competitions. However, there is no provision for sport on the timetable. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have appropriate time on their timetables for private study.
43. The school makes good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory, with some opportunities for students to gain insight into the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of others - for example, through Aboriginal art. Provision for students' moral and social development is very good. By the time they leave most students have firm views as to what is morally right and wrong, and they develop a strong social conscience. Some lessons provoke moral considerations – for example, a teacher posed the question, arising from Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre*, of how Rochester's isolation of his wife might be considered today. In geography, students were shown a comparison of responses to natural disasters between rich Canada and poor Bangladesh. The debating society broadens students' social skills well. They learn to stand up for their beliefs and this engenders respect for themselves and others. There is good provision for cultural development. Good examples of teaching about European culture were seen. For example, the modern languages department gives students good insight into European cultures; Spanish students benefit from teachers' experience of life in Chile, Colombia and Mexico. Students are also given insights into other cultures – for example, the art department presented an interesting multi-cultural exhibition of sculptures and paintings done by an Ishmaili student. The school makes students aware of the richness and diversity of cultures by serving food from different parts of the world each day in the canteen.
44. The vocational courses provide students with valuable experience of a work-related situation. However, work-related experience is not a requirement for all students. The curriculum provides a focus for all to consider careers and higher education opportunities, and students receive good support for the choices they make in higher education.
45. Since the last inspection, the range of courses has expanded, and planning to ensure cost-effective, coherent provision is in process. Religious education is no longer part of general studies provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

46. Assessment in the sixth form is excellent. The school provides a very comprehensive range of data on students' academic performance to all departments electronically, to help them to monitor the progress of all students. The data include information on special educational needs (where relevant), results of Year 9 National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.

Information on students who join the sixth form from other schools at age 16 is included. This information for all students is supplemented by commercial tests taken when students enter the sixth form and is used to predict outcomes for use in reviews of their progress. A "progress review day", is held during the autumn term to set targets for improvement based on the detailed data available. A further formal "progress review day" is held during the early part of the spring term. In the interim period, students are closely monitored to ensure that deadlines for work are met and that their attendance and progress are maintained. If students or the school express concerns about subject choices or overall progress, parents are immediately involved, and formal interviews take place.

47. The procedures for monitoring the academic standards of students are very good. In the very best instances of assessment, monitoring and recording of standards, departments regularly test students to support and inform their progress. Some departments record data electronically, and these also include effort grades. Mentoring is provided where underachievement is identified. This involves parents and is managed by the senior management team. Assessment is also used to identify weaknesses within curricular provision. In the mathematics department, for example, the performance of the lower attainers was identified as a concern; their studies are now supplemented with additional textbooks and a computerised tutorial system to support their revision of work. Students are fully aware of the assessment procedures and the light they shed on their progress.
48. Since the last inspection, assessment arrangements have much improved. They now provide an informed commentary upon the effectiveness of teaching, learning and curricular provision.

Advice, support and guidance

49. Teachers' knowledge of their students and the very good relationships that they have with them form the basis of the good care and guidance that they receive. A sixth form induction day at the start of the school year in September for outdoor pursuits and team building helps students who transfer into the sixth form at 16 from other schools to settle in quickly and easily. However, there is insufficient opportunity for students to sample the courses that they select to follow in the sixth form before they make their choices. Personal development is carefully monitored and students' achievements both in school and outside are recorded on file. Students who are considered to be underachieving are mentored by senior staff. Students speak highly of their teachers and appreciate the help and advice that they are given. They have a range of supportive listeners available, including form tutors and subject teachers. The school nurse runs a useful weekly drop-in clinic for students. Careers advice is readily available for students to access if they choose. Students wishing to enter higher education are very well catered for. Those seeking jobs or vocational training have to use more initiative, but the advice can be found.
50. Measures to ensure child protection and health and safety cover the whole school. All staff are informed about child protection procedures and are aware of the need to be vigilant. An appropriate health and safety policy is in place. Electrical appliances are tested annually. Risk assessment is routine. First aid arrangements are good. Internet safety is secure.

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

51. The school's partnership with parents is excellent and one of its strengths. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire and especially parents at the pre-inspection meeting were overwhelmingly supportive of the school, which is heavily oversubscribed. They have great confidence in how the teachers assist their children's learning and personal development. The school regularly surveys both parents and students for their views and, where it is reasonable and possible, tries to act on them. The Friends of Netherthorpe are active fund-raisers who manage many social events and give generously of their own time and money to benefit the school.

52. A large majority of sixth form students completed responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The vast majority indicated that they enjoyed the sixth form. They considered that they were well taught and helped to do their best. They thought that teachers were readily available to give them individual help if they asked for it. Their main concern was about how well they felt they were informed about their progress. Inspectors saw no justification for this concern because information is always available on request and regular progress reviews take place. A minority felt they would like to take part in a wider range of opportunities outside their main subjects. Inspectors found that enrichment and extra-curricular activities were well catered for and the burden of main courses left little time for much more. Some students wanted more careers advice, but this is available for those prepared to seek it in school. However, inspectors did agree with the students who would like to sample sixth form courses at the end of the summer term, so that students could be better informed and more secure in their choices by September. Another minority view was that the school did not listen to their views enough. However, most thought that the school responded well to their views; some students interviewed said the school's response was often "impressive".
53. Overall, students are very satisfied with provision in the sixth form. They appreciate the help and support of their teachers and are proud of the school.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management

54. The leadership of the sixth form by the headteacher and senior staff is very good. They form an effective team. Leadership ensures that students have equal access to the educational opportunities available and responds to their needs very well. The head of sixth form provides effective day-to-day management. Leadership and management ensure that students achieve the standards at A-level that might reasonably be expected from their performance in GCSE examinations, and that the quality of the teaching they receive is good. Although standards in the sixth form have been well maintained since the last inspection, there is a determination to improve these further. The school's development planning recognises that further improvement is possible and the intention is to lead staff and students to higher achievement.
55. The headteacher has a clear vision of the development of the sixth form. The curricular opportunities available to students are being planned to cover Years 10 to 13 as a whole, so that students of all levels of competence will have the opportunity to add to their qualifications and worthwhile experience. The headteacher and his senior colleagues are exploring ways to maximise students' opportunities by working more closely with other institutions to ensure that additional provision is cost-effective.
56. The governors are very effective and are supportive of the headteacher's leadership and management of the sixth form. They fought hard to keep the school open when it was designated for closure, and the sixth form is an important part of the tradition of educational provision in Staveley that they are determined should continue. They fully endorse the intention to raise standards in the sixth form further, and share decisions about priorities in planning for the sixth form's development with the headteacher and staff. They do not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education nor do they provide students with a daily act of collective worship.
57. Senior management and heads of departments check closely on standards of students' work and the quality of teaching. Data showing students' performance in examinations are collected and analysed with great care and the outcomes of teaching are closely tracked. Performance is evaluated and any underperformance is identified and challenged. The headteacher and other members of senior management observe teaching and learning, and support is provided for teachers where necessary to overcome weaknesses in performance, as, for example, in the AS and A-level economics courses. Performance management is used effectively and links individual teachers' priorities for their professional development well to those of the school. However, there is no system yet in place for the evaluation of the work of staff other than

teachers, or arrangements for their professional development. The head of the sixth form is not a member of the school's senior management team and, therefore, although consulted, does not share in planning at an early stage.

58. The school uses the funding available very well to enhance provision for the sixth form. Financial resources are clearly identified as part of planning for the sixth form's development. The principles of best value are applied well. The school's academic performance compares satisfactorily with other schools, and students achieve the standards to be expected, given their previous attainment in GCSE examinations. There is good challenge in the curriculum and extra-curricular learning opportunities that the school provides; only in French are enrichment opportunities insufficient. The headteacher ensures that staff, parents and students are consulted on proposed changes. For example, students have been fully consulted on sixth form provision and they recognise how well the school has responded to their concerns. Financial organisation is very efficiently managed and, for example, the school's experience of managing its finances as a Grant Maintained institution enable it to make full and effective use of procedures, such as that of competitive tendering for services. However, although there is regular external scrutiny of accounts and very close monitoring by governors, the local authority has not yet conducted a full external audit.
59. Since the last inspection, the leadership and management of the sixth form have ensured the maintenance of standards and improvements in the quality of teaching. Leadership has the confidence of the students and there is very good vision and planning for the further development of the sixth form.

Resources

60. Staff are well qualified and very well matched to teaching the range of courses available; the quality of their teaching is good and many lessons are very well taught. Suitable induction arrangements for new and newly qualified staff are in place. Staff who are not teachers make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school. The school intends to provide better access to training for them.
61. The accommodation for the sixth form is good. Since the last inspection the sixth form centre has been refurbished, and a private study area has been well equipped with computers, enabling students to work independently. The newly created sixth form common room and a recreation area further enhance the accommodation. Students also have lessons in the many other refurbished and improved areas of the school such as the new art block. The library has been enlarged but space is still restricted. The accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory. The lack of a sports hall severely restricts the range of indoor activities that can be followed, and sixth form students have no recreational sports activities on timetable, although there are good extra-curricular opportunities. Some areas are not easily accessible to wheelchairs, but no students whose mobility is impaired are currently on roll; the school recognises the need to improve access, within the limits of its available resources. As in the main school, students lack specialist accommodation for drama and practice cells in music. Many have lessons in old, worn and shabby huts, some of which date back to 1919, and staff and students deserve better.
62. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. All departments receive funding which is adequate for their needs, and the provision of computers is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. The school recognises the need for more books and other library resources to enable students to read more widely in their subjects.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are validated.

GCE AS (Advanced Supplementary) level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Information and communication technology/computer studies	2	50	74	0	13	0.5	1.8

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
Mathematics	15	87	87	73	43	7.1	5.8
Chemistry	10	100	90	60	43	7.4	5.9
Business (AVCE)	14	NA	NA	NA	NA	9.4	10.5
Information and communication technology/computer studies	9	89	86	22	23	4.7	4.6
Health and social care (AVCE)	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	18.0	10.8
Art	6	100	96	33	46	6.3	6.6
Geography	19	100	92	37	38	6.1	5.7
English literature	15	100	95	27	37	5.5	5.9
French	3	67	89	0	38	2.0	5.6

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	6	0	NA	0	NA	0	NA

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

63. The focus was on mathematics and chemistry, but biology and physics were sampled. In a Year 12 biology lesson, teaching was good. The teacher planned a range of activities and resources so that students increased their understanding of human respiration. In a Year 13 lesson, very good teaching allowed students to develop their understanding of the process of meiosis and their use of specialist language. A-level biology results were well above average in 2001, showing a considerable improvement from previous years.

64. In physics in the 2001 examination, A-level results were above average and students achieved the standards to be expected from their previous performance in GCSE examinations. Good teaching in a Year 12 physics lesson allowed students to carry out practical experiments on different aspects of mechanics and investigate questions that arose from these. In a very good Year 13 lesson, the teacher made very good use of computer simulation, laser demonstration and overhead transparencies. As a result, students made very good progress with their use of Young's Slits formula to investigate the constructive and destructive interference of light.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Competent students reach high standards.
- Students attain very well in AS examinations.
- Assessment of performance is thorough and is used well to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- Less competent students could attain higher standards.

65. In 2001, students' A-level results were excellent. Eleven of the 15 candidates gained A or B grades. This was a significant improvement on results of the previous four years. Provisional 2002 A-level results from a larger entry of 25 students were not as good and fewer students gained A or B grades. Provisional further mathematics A-level results in 2002 show that all students gained pass grades and five of the six gained grades A or B. Although more boys than girls study the subject, results indicate no significant gender difference in outcomes. A-level attainment has improved overall since the last inspection. Most students conclude their courses and achieve, at least, the standards to be expected from their results in GCSE examinations.
66. Results in the Year 12 AS-level mathematics examination in 2001 were strong, especially in the attainment of grades A and B. Thirty-two of the 34 candidates passed the examination. The provisional 2002 results indicate a significant improvement on 2001, both in A and B grades and grades overall.
67. Standards of work seen reflect the improved pattern of results. Written work of students in Year 13 indicates full coverage of the course content, and students are able to work quickly and accurately. Some students join the course from other schools and, overall, their work indicates that the transition has been successful. Students have a good grasp of subject concepts. They identify the different types of sequences well and they solve equations securely with good understanding of trigonometric functions and identities. Year 12 students are in the first term of the course, but gaps in their understanding left from the GCSE course have been addressed and they show good understanding of new mathematical techniques. However, written work generally shows a lack of structured note taking and insufficient examples to work from.
68. Teaching and learning are very good and, in some cases, excellent. Teachers present new topics confidently and in a way very well adapted to students' needs. They adapt the pace of learning very well in recognition of the difficulties that students understandably experience. The students appreciate teachers' commitment and their readiness to assist outside of lessons. A good rapport exists between students and teachers, and teachers show much patience in helping students to learn. In some instances, the teaching is of a higher standard than the learning. This occurs when students are unsure of the correct technique to adopt when confronted with a range of problems; however, teachers give them appropriate cues to help them to apply the skills that they have already been taught. Students recognise this difficulty and give the effort, revision and practice to their work to ensure that they improve. All Year 12 and 13 students are aware of their past, current and predicted grades and their books contain considerable evidence of examples of examination papers and other test materials. Teachers prepare them very thoroughly for the examinations.

69. In an excellent Year 12 lesson, students were introduced to areas under a graph, having first been presented with the principles of the topic of integration. The teacher carefully judged students' exposure to the technique and used effective questioning to ensure appropriate participation by the students. The class represented a wide range of subject competence but progressed with understanding and faultless application of the technique. At the end of the lesson, many students were confidently able to explain their reasoning, and their written work supported their secure understanding of this aspect of calculus.
70. The subject is well managed and popular. All teachers work very hard. The department meets the needs of students of all levels of subject competence by providing additional textbooks with worked examples linked to ICT support materials. This is in response to the identified need to improve the attainment of the lower attainers further.

Chemistry

Overall the quality of provision in chemistry is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards in AS and A-level examinations are well above average.
- Students are very interested in the subject and concentrate well in lessons.
- Teaching is excellent and leads to exceptional learning.
- The head of department's leadership and management are exemplary and strongly contribute to the success of the subject.
- The assessment of students' attainment and progress are very good and outcomes are used effectively.

Areas for improvement

- The standard of some laboratory accommodation is well below what staff and students deserve.

71. By the end of the Year 12 AS course in 2001 and 2002, approximately one in three students attained grades A or B and all gained a pass grade. On the Year 13 A-level course in all recent years, students made very good progress to achieve their predicted grades, considering their results in GCSE examinations; many did much better and achieved good value added to their standards in the subject. The proportion of candidates gaining grades A or B in the 2001 A-level examination was well above the national average. The 2002 results were less good. In the period 1999-2001, results have varied from average to well above average and current students are working at the higher level. However, even in this high attaining subject, standards could be more consistent. Once students have begun either AS or A-level courses, most complete them.
72. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average, and indicates that examination results at the end of the year are likely to be strong. Students' achievement is very good. In both year groups, students showed that their earlier learning of chemistry was secure and that their knowledge and understanding of concepts were well established. Students in Year 12 understood very well the importance of working safely, in their investigation of the chemistry of magnesium and calcium. In Year 13, they understood well the patterns of fragmentation in mass spectroscopy. They cope very well with the considerable demands of both AS and A-level courses and take and make thorough notes to support their later revision. Students' communication skills are well developed and they enter spontaneously into informed discussion and debate.
73. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers are very experienced and their expectations of what students should achieve are high. Students respond very well and try hard to meet these. The teachers have exceptional subject knowledge and understanding. They have very good relationships with the students and use time and resources effectively. The range of teaching methods is wide and students respond well to the good variety of learning in lessons. For example, Year 13 students' confident responses were very well focused and mature in a

demanding lesson on isotopic analysis using mass spectrographs. In all lessons seen, the teachers' planning and preparation were excellent and resulted in excellent learning; students were aware of the aims of the lesson and were fully engaged with the new material. Students are attentive and work productively in lessons, which run at a very brisk pace. Year 12 students in their first term of the course have a clear understanding of the requirements of practical assessments and safe working practices. In Year 13, there is a general air of increasing maturity and responsibility. Students are active in self-assessment, which supports their progress well. Teachers' regular assessment of work and the supporting commentary that they provide for individual students is exemplary so that students feel well informed and recognise that their learning needs are well supported.

74. Students' learning is exceptional. In the lessons observed, the quality of work was very high. They take a keen interest in scientific investigations. Assessed practical work and projects show well-developed skills of practical investigation, competent handling of apparatus and equipment, confidence in written work and the capacity to follow detailed instructions. Students generally show good understanding and their written work and recording of practical work are properly organised, well presented and up to date. The standard of work seen in lessons was well above average and students made very good progress. The careful guidance and advice from teachers are effective and students take considerable pride in maintaining their folders to a high standard.
75. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent and there is clear direction for further development. The head of department is head of science and supports staff and students with considerable skill, and this directly benefits students' learning. Regular assessment is very effective and the tracking and recording of students' progress are very good. Since the appointment of the head of department, the number of students taking the subject has increased and standards have improved. Subject documentation is very well organised and schemes of work and teaching strategies have been thoroughly revised and are well supported by new texts and resources. Although, currently, all aspects of teaching and learning are exemplary, some laboratory accommodation is old and worn, and staff and students certainly deserve better.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

76. One lesson of the Year 12 product design/textiles course was observed. This is the first time that the school has prepared students for the AS examination in this subject. Students are making good progress and are achieving above average standards. Good teaching enabled students to learn at a good pace in this lesson. The students made good use of digital cameras to record stages in the disassembly of two pairs of jeans. The teacher's good questioning skills ensured that students began to analyse insightfully the reasons for manufacturers' choice of material and fabric.
77. One Year 13 A-level graphics lesson was observed. Teaching was good, positive, authoritative and helpful, stretching students to produce original responses to a range of design projects.

BUSINESS

78. The school provides vocational courses in business studies at different levels. Year 12 includes a GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) Intermediate course group, taught separately, and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) groups where students are studying for both the single and double awards, equivalent to one or two A-level subject qualifications respectively. Year 13 has similar AVCE single and double award groups. All courses in this curriculum area are reported on below.
79. AS and A-level economics was sampled. A-level results in 2001 and other recent years have been well below average. However, current standards in Year 13 are close to average and students are building well on their success at AS-level. In the lesson seen, the teacher supported students as they used their initiative to prepare individual ICT presentations about

world fiscal policy for a national competition. In the satisfactory teaching and learning seen in the Year 12 lesson, the students were closely led by the teacher to compare the motives of public and private companies. Their standards were close to what might be expected at this early stage in the course.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning, particularly on the AVCE courses, usually lead to good levels of independent learning.
- Students achieve well in comparison with their predicted grades.
- Resources for learning, especially computers, are good, and students use them very well in all their work.
- Assessment procedures are very good; students receive good guidance about how to improve.

Areas for improvement

- The Year 12 class is much too large for teachers to help students well enough to develop the independent learning skills expected by the course.
- Resources for teaching - for example, whiteboards and projectors - are inadequate, so students cannot see well enough what the teacher is presenting

80. Results have been below average in recent years. However, in 2001, however, girls' results were above average and boys' below and overall attainment was only just below the national average. In 2002, results were similar overall to 2001. In all recent years, most students achieved the standards predicted on the basis of their earlier results in GCSE examinations, and many achieved higher than had been expected.
81. Currently, Year 13 students are attaining below average standards, especially those studying for the double AVCE course. There are very few high attaining students in the group, with more likely to attain grades below average. These grades are in line with or, in some cases, better than expectations from students' earlier GCSE attainment. When both single and double subject option groups are taught together, the current Year 12 AVCE group, of 28 students, is excessively large for this type of course and has a broad range of attainment which is similarly skewed towards the lower end. The Year 12 GNVQ Intermediate level group is small and shows a wide range of standards. Attainment is below expectations for the course, but in line with these students' very low predicted outcomes, based on their attainment at the start of the course.
82. Most students on business studies courses achieve well given their levels of attainment on entry. However, some students under-achieve because of lack of motivation, which leads to their failure to meet targets in their work. The department assesses and tracks these students very carefully and puts support in place where possible. Those who fall below expectations are those who fail to respond to this help, do not produce the volume of work expected and show weak commitment to their studies. In the main, students produce a large volume of work and use ICT highly effectively to present it. Their folders show good commitment and rigour, which contribute well to their success in the subject.
83. Students are generally very positive about the subject. Even in the very cramped and crowded classroom conditions of the large Year 12 class, students work very well, co-operate very effectively in groups and pairs and have very good relationships with teachers. This results in an easy, relaxed atmosphere for learning, particularly in the AVCE groups, where the high expectations on students to become independent learners are fulfilled well. The GNVQ Intermediate course group is much more dependent on teachers, and some students' attitudes fall short of expectations. The school and the department have been quick to act on these concerns and sanctions have already been applied. However, these are exceptions. Students mainly value the opportunity of the fresh start the subject provides in Year 12 and often gain significant personal development and maturity through their work. They use the experience of

their part-time jobs effectively in their studies, both in lessons and in written assignments.

Those who cannot develop the expected degree of independence in their ways of working are the ones who drop out of the courses because of these necessarily high expectations. Most students who follow the AVCE courses complete them.

84. Almost all teaching is good and students learn well. Teachers have a very good understanding of the special learning needs of students who follow the vocational courses. Key skills, especially ICT, are very well incorporated into courses, especially into AVCE work. Students' portfolios show very good use of all types of programs and applications of ICT skills. Very good access to up-to-date computers that give students immediate access to the Internet for research enable them to make maximum use of the resources available. Effective teaching of the very large Year 12 group ensures that students are not significantly disadvantaged, but this places significant strain on resources and on teachers. Teachers introduce lessons well and review work effectively, giving time for students to develop and consolidate their learning. Assessment is very good. Work is well marked with good guidance to help students to improve. The high expectation that teachers have that students will use their skills to work independently leads to concentrated effort in most lessons, as students work at the computers. Students feel well prepared for the type of independent learning which they will encounter at university. They greatly value the courses and appreciate the skills of teachers in enabling them to work in this way.
85. The department is well managed. Students are monitored effectively to ensure that their work matches or exceeds expectations. Good support is provided for less experienced staff. Although resources for learning are good, resources for teaching are not. Lack of a whiteboard or projector in the classroom, for example, means that students cannot satisfactorily see what the teacher is presenting. For this type of course, digital projection from ICT is a good mode of presentation, but students have no such opportunity. The high number of students in the single class in Year 12 hampers teaching and hinders students' learning and progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

86. The focus was on AS and A-level computer studies. Key skills were also sampled; all Year 12 students follow a course in ICT. Students' ICT standards in key skills lessons were lower than expected for students in Year 12. Although they are able to use basic word processing, students lack depth of knowledge in using the software. However, they have made use of word processing in Years 10 and 11 for project work. Nevertheless, most sixth form students' lack of enough formal tuition in ICT when they were in Years 10 and 11, as a core or GCSE subject, shows in Year 12, where they were seen to be applying skills often expected of younger students. Those students who join the sixth form from other schools and who have taken the full or short GCSE ICT examination courses have skills and knowledge commensurate with their age. They make better use of the software; they can use clip and word art, and understand how to create a formal business letter quickly.

Computer studies

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

Strengths

- The teaching is very good.
- The relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The range of courses available is not extensive.
- The technology available for teaching could be used more.

87. Results in AS examinations in 2002 improved on the results of the previous year and nearly one quarter of the students gained A or B grades; all students gained pass grades. In the A-level examination in 2001, the last year for which national results are validated, standards were average, both in the attainment of grades A and B and the pass grades of A to E. In the 2002 A-level examination, only one student gained an A or B grade, but all gained a pass grade.
88. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average in both AS and A-level courses. Year 12 students taking the AS course have a satisfactory understanding of both flat and relational databases. They understand what is meant by primary keys and attributes, and can identify these in examples taken from examination questions. Students are able to create programs in visual basic because they understand operators, and are at present working on a program to calculate areas of rectangles and triangles.
89. In Year 13, standards seen were average. Students understand computer architecture, operating systems and file management and they are able to create pseudo-codes to create programs to complete both linear and sequential searches. They have sensibly selected practical topics, such as computer room booking and coach company travel, for their major projects.
90. Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which gives students the essential information they need to make very good progress. The working atmosphere in classrooms is good and lessons are purposeful. Students contribute to their own learning by the very positive attitudes that they have towards their work. However, little use is made of the technology usually expected in ICT rooms, with a lack of data projectors and interactive whiteboards. Students are well challenged to extend their understanding in lessons. Good use is made of key word cards, which give students the opportunity to share their knowledge. The marking of students' work is good, because students are given information on how to improve their work and to gain higher grades.
91. Students of all levels of attainment are making good progress. They meet the demands of in-depth projects for both AS and A-level examinations well and use a wide range of skills. Students are achieving well, considering their lack of background in the subject, as few have taken a GCSE course in ICT. There is very good achievement in Year 12 as students learn how to use visual basic programming language.
92. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Courses are well managed. Although the present computer studies course meets current students' needs, it is the only subject option provided. There is good provision of computers, in both ICT rooms and in the sixth form centre. Considerable support is given to the department by a governor and the technician who together build and maintain the school's computers. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained, students continue to be very positive about the subject and most complete the course. Teaching is consistently very good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

93. No subject was inspected in full in this area. The advanced physical education course was sampled. In the AS course, students were studying sensory deprivation and its effect on skills performances. They made very good use of power-point presentations to explain a series of experiments done in the gym to show the effects of this. They had a good grasp of the issues and showed understanding of the difficulties disabled people face when taking part in sporting activities. Students are involved in house matches and there are some school teams in major sports, but there are no timetabled opportunities for recreational physical education.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

94. The health and social care courses were inspected and reported on in full below. The school provides single and double subject Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) courses in health and social care in Years 12 and 13. These are equivalent to one and two A-level subjects, respectively. There is also a General National Vocation Qualification (GNVQ) course currently in Year 12.

Health and social care

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

Strengths

- Students achieve standards above those predicted from their earlier standards in GCSE examinations.
- Good teaching promotes good independent learning, especially in AVCE courses.
- Students' positive attitudes contribute to their very good personal development.
- Students make good use of ICT.
- The provision of the Intermediate GNVQ course for lower attaining students is a valuable opportunity.

Areas for improvement

- There is no specific appointment for the leadership and management of the subject.
- There are too many units of work for students to study concurrently.

95. In common with the national trend, it is mostly girls who choose the health and social care courses. When there have been numbers high enough to compare with national results, AVCE results have been well above average. In 2002, results at the AVCE level were generally good, and likely to be confirmed as above average, when national results are validated. These results represent very good achievement for the students, whose predicted grades - based on their earlier performance in GCSE examinations - were all significantly lower than their actual final grades. The current Year 13 students gained an average range of results, and those whose grades were well below average discontinued the course at that stage. However, retention of students on the specific AVCE courses followed is usually satisfactory.
96. Students' current attainment in both years is in line with the expectations for the different courses. In a few areas, attainment seen was above average - for example, in the anatomical and physiological aspects of the AVCE course, where students have the benefit of a science specialist to teach these units. By Year 13, students' attainment in their coursework is often above average, but their externally tested examination units frequently depress overall results. Achievement is good, with most current Year 13 students also exceeding predictions based on their earlier attainment in GCSE examinations. Year 12 students' achievements are currently only in line with these predictions, because it takes them some time to become accustomed to the expectations for the independent learning required on this type of course. Their effort grades are good, and their attitudes indicate that they are well on the way to better achievement by Year 13 than is currently anticipated.
97. Intermediate GNVQ course students in Year 12 are very low attainers, whose weak GCSE performance made standardised predictions of what they might achieve impossible. However, these students are doing well. All are in line to pass, some at the higher, merit and distinction, levels.
98. Discussions with Year 13 students show that they have achieved much more than can be measured by test or examination results. All have gained very significantly in the aspects of personal development which these courses promote. Students work diligently and complete a very good volume of coursework. They speak eloquently of the value they place on aspects of their development, such as the need to work independently. Their career aspirations in the areas of health, or the social care areas of working life, have been well advanced by their studies. The moral and ethical dimensions of the curriculum are well developed in students'

experience. Learning from their work placements in various associated health and social care settings is effectively integrated into their coursework. Many opportunities to present findings to others - for example, about the research that they have done - develop students' confidence to speak in public.

99. Teaching is good overall, and some very good lessons were seen. The allocation of units to staff is very effective in providing specialists or semi-specialists to teach appropriate aspects of the courses. Teachers have either very good subject knowledge, or very good understanding of the requirements of vocational learning, or both. Basic skills, especially of ICT, are very well taught and well integrated into students' work. Lessons are always well planned and resourced, and teachers use interesting and very effective methods in promoting the type of independent learning expected. Students themselves say that they do not encounter this approach elsewhere in their curriculum and recognise how useful it is. Teachers provide well-judged intervention and support, but leave students to work things out for themselves wherever possible. AVCE students are very capable of this, but it is taking much longer for the Intermediate GNVQ students to lose their dependence on staff, despite the teachers' best efforts to encourage their independence. However, they are gradually doing so and they too are beginning to develop appropriate learning skills. Teachers' marking and assessment of students' work are strong, giving them clear understanding about what to do to improve.
100. Management of the courses is good. A member of the senior management team has assumed this responsibility because there is no head of department. Although an appointment to this post is under consideration, current arrangements create difficulties for the subject manager, given other whole-school responsibilities. Some issues of curricular organisation are unhelpful to learning - for example, the many different units that students study at any one time. They are often confused because they have six to eight units running concurrently and find it difficult to retain focus on aspects of each one.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

101. The focus was on AS and A-level art. In the one Year 13 A-level music lesson sampled, the teaching was very good. The teacher used ICT to provide clear guidance on composition and writing in the style of a popular musical.

Art

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

Strengths

- A-level results in 2002 were very good and improved on those of 2001.
- The teaching is very good.
- The subject is very well led and provides students with a good range of art experiences.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not yet used extensively enough.
- The subject accommodation has no specific area for students to use for practical work in their private study time.

102. In the A-level examination in 2001, all six candidates passed, and two attained A or B grades. The overall result was at the national average. In 2002, all ten candidates passed and half of them attained A to B grades, a good improvement over the previous year.
103. In the 2002 AS examinations, eleven students entered and passed, and seven of them attained grades in the A or B range. The 2002 A-level and AS-level students attained high grades in their earlier GCSE examinations and maintained high standards at A and AS-level, representing good achievement. Students who begin advanced courses usually complete them.

104. Standards of work of current A-level students in Year 13 are above average and almost all the group, which consists of nine students, are on course to gain high grades. They are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment in GCSE and AS examinations. Portfolios of personal studies provide abundant evidence of well developed painting and drawing skills and very good observation of detail. Visits to galleries have been fruitful, inspiring study of a substantial range of artists' work which is linked to students' own work. For example, some very good sketches, paintings and writing inspired by studying the work of Freud culminated in a very good portrait in oils of one student's sister, in the style of Freud. A small number of portfolios would be improved by including more paintings.
105. The work of students in Year 12 following the AS course is also above average. The students are moving on from very good GCSE examination grades and achieving well. All are engaged on mixed media projects in two or three dimensions which show good imagination, well developed skills and good attention to detail.
106. Teaching is very good. For example, the Year 13 group achieved very well as a result of very effective teaching; they offered constructive criticism of each other's personal studies with a degree of maturity and rigour which would not have been out of place in higher education. All students are very well involved in learning. Teachers have excellent knowledge and skills and give confident demonstrations. The department is fortunate, too, in having a technician who is qualified to degree level in ceramics and can therefore provide expert and valuable support to this aspect of work. Lessons are well timed with clear objectives. Planning and methods are very effective. ICT is used but there is scope for further exploration and development of its creative potential. A few students in Years 12 and 13 are regarded as gifted and talented. These students do very well and examples of their work show above average attainment.
107. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and ensure clear direction for developing the work of the department. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements are very good. The newly built accommodation for art is good. However, it is in constant use and this poses problems for art students looking for somewhere to work on their own, outside of timetabled lessons. Good use is made of visits to London galleries to support their learning.
108. The last inspection report indicated that results were average; they are now much higher. Teaching was then described as satisfactory and it is now very good. The accommodation has greatly improved. Overall there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

109. The focus was on geography but history and religious studies were sampled. In the two sampled lessons of history the teaching was good. Teachers provided good support for students, who were preparing written assignments. In Year 12, students worked well in groups to structure their work and identify key points relating to the Weimar Republic. Some lower attaining students found parts of the text difficult to comprehend. Students in Year 13 discussed the success of Castlereagh's foreign policies. Gifted and talented students had very good recall of their prior learning and readily compared events in different parts of the world. A-level results in history have been average or higher in recent years, but there were no candidates in 2001. One in three candidates attained A or B grades in the 2002 A-level examination and almost all passed.
110. One Year 12 lesson of religious studies was observed. The teaching through video and discussion was good. Students made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of Islam through the eyes of Muslim children. Students discussed differences between their own and Islamic education and culture with understanding. A-level results were weak in 2001, but all ten candidates passed in 2002, and achieved the standards that could reasonably be expected from their GCSE examination results.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards on the A-level and AS courses are above average.
- Students achieve well; they have a good knowledge of physical and human geography and their fieldwork is of a very high standard.
- The teaching and learning are good; teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are well structured.
- The subject is very well led and students' progress is well monitored.

Areas for improvement

- Lower attaining students provide too few examples to support their arguments.
- Students do not know well enough how they can improve their work.

111. Standards of attainment are above average. In 2001, A-level examination results were above average. All of the 26 students gained a pass grade and over a third gained A or B grades. In 2000, girls performed very well when two-thirds of them achieved an A or B grade. Overall, results were similar to the national standard. However, in 2002, boys performed better and all students were successful. In recent years, attainment has often been above average although the relative performance of girls and boys has fluctuated. The 2002 A-level results were due at least in part to a strong performance on one modular paper and the very high standard of residential fieldwork. However, there were weaknesses in their final assessment. AS examinations started well in 2001, when all students were successful. Results were similar in 2002. Nine of the 30 students gained grades A or B and most were successful, with the exception of three students who did not attend regularly. Geography is popular and students generally finish the courses that they start.
112. The work seen during the inspection confirms that the standards being attained by current students in both year groups are above average. These standards represent good achievement, considering students' earlier results in GCSE examinations. Students show good knowledge and understanding of introductory topics in physical and human geography. In Year 13, they consider the technological advances in predicting natural hazards, such as earthquakes. Each student has prepared an individual mini-power point presentation. Higher achieving students speak with confidence and need little resort to notes. The very few students with special needs participate fully and explain their work with humour. They make good progress from questioning one another, although this can take up a great deal of time. Students use their subject skills very well and, as in the last inspection, these are of a consistently high standard. Use of the Internet for research is good and it is used freely for independent work. However, students who find the course more difficult are not selective enough in the information they acquire. In oral discussion, students link the theory with worldwide examples, but these are less integrated in their written work, which sometimes lacks sufficient evidence to support their arguments.
113. Overall the teaching and learning are good. There were some very good features in the three lessons observed. The very good subject knowledge of teachers ensures that lessons have a clear structure. Lessons are very well planned and the stated lesson objectives help the students to learn quickly. Teachers use their marking of assignments effectively to review the students' prior learning of demographic changes. In Year 13, students work well in groups and annotate graphs to compare the effects of change in more and less developed countries. Purposeful question and answer sessions encourage students to think for themselves and use distinctive, colourful vocabulary to describe affluent city environments. Classroom teaching makes very good use of the students' fieldwork experiences. This extends their learning well. Students are attentive and interested because of the good quality of the teaching. Resources, in the form of text, ICT, maps and the students' existing knowledge are used very effectively.
114. The subject is led and managed very well. The head of department has the support of a professional team. Teachers share their experiences from the new A-level units and this contributes significantly to the high quality of teaching and learning. Students' progress is

monitored and reviewed regularly and target setting for students is undertaken well. However, students do not identify sufficiently their own targets for improvement. Schemes of work are sequenced to include up-to-date case studies.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

115. The focus was on English and French, but Spanish was also sampled. Too few students have entered A-level examinations in Spanish in recent years to make meaningful comparisons with national averages. In the lesson seen, the teaching was very good. The teacher's expert knowledge and preparation of interesting, challenging resources enabled students to think for themselves and express their opinions in Spanish. They improved their speaking and listening skills through their constant use of Spanish to discuss life in Chile under a dictator.

English language and English literature

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A-level English literature results have improved in recent years. ▪ The recent introduction of English language extends students' subject choice well. ▪ Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject and provide clear explanations to develop students' understanding. <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students could achieve more in relation to their prior attainment, especially in English language. ▪ Teachers do not encourage students to take as much responsibility for their own learning as they should. ▪ Teachers use too limited a range of teaching methods in most lessons.
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116. A-level results in English literature in 2001 were close to the national average. They improved in 2002, when all students gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was a little above average. Students achieved a little better than expected, by comparison with their previous GCSE results. The English department offered English language as a subject for the first time in 2001. The results of the 2002 examination for this first group of students are likely to be well below average when national comparisons become available. Students did not achieve as well as expected from their results in GCSE examinations. In AS examinations for English literature and language in 2002, most students passed. Nearly half gained the highest grades in English language. Although the AS courses equipped most students to continue their studies to A-level, students did not achieve quite as well as expected in either subject. Once committed to AS or A-level courses, nearly all students complete them.
117. Current standards of Year 13 English literature students are close to the national average and they are achieving in line with expectations, based on their AS results. They read set texts with good understanding, as shown in a lesson where they discussed and interpreted Keats's use of imagery in *Isabella*. High attaining students confidently discuss Shakespeare's use of language for effect. For example, they showed how Othello's loss of self-control is emphasised by the use of repetition and staccato statements. However, average and lower attaining students have difficulty in structuring their essays and adopting a formal writing style. They make reference to the text but do not use quotations in their essays very well. In English language, current standards in Year 13 are just above average and students are achieving as well as expected. Many students are able to adapt their writing skilfully for specific audiences and purposes. For example, a high attaining student produced an impressive script of an audio guide for visitors to a museum, in an appropriate tone and style. Higher attaining students are beginning to use specialist vocabulary confidently when analysing texts. However, students' skills of independent research are not well developed and they are very reliant on teachers for information.

118. Standards of current Year 12 students are above average in English literature and average in English language. Many students following the literature course are developing the confidence to express their own ideas about difficult texts and make close reference to the text to back up their views. Students on the language course are developing their knowledge of frameworks and specialist vocabulary for analysing texts successfully.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of their subject. This enables them to provide clear explanations and prepare useful resources and information sheets that develop students' knowledge and understanding well. Teachers' marking is very good and supportive. They provide detailed notes and advice on most pieces of assessed work so that students know how to improve. Teachers plan the content of their lessons carefully but do not make enough reference to course assessment objectives, so that students are sometimes unsure about what they are expected to achieve. Teachers use a limited range of teaching methods. There is too much teacher-dominated discussion, which slows the pace of learning and limits students' opportunity to contribute to lessons. Teachers do not encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning often enough. For example, they rarely set homework that asks students to carry out their own research or present findings and ideas to the class. However, one very good English literature lesson was observed in which students developed confidence and personal responses to the characters of Caliban and Ariel in *The Tempest*. The teacher managed the discussion sensitively, accepting students' views, but insisted on close reference to the text to challenge students to develop their ideas further. Excellent relationships with students, shown in several humorous exchanges, helped maintain their concentration on and interest in the play.
120. Students are attentive and conscientious. They enjoy both subjects but some think that there is a lack of variety in lessons, compared with the work that they do for other courses.
121. Provision for English has improved since the last inspection. Standards in A-level English literature have improved, especially in the last two years. The department has also introduced English language as another option. Standards are also improving in this course, although not all students are yet achieving as well as expected, and schemes of work need further development.
122. Since his appointment less than two years ago, the head of department has provided very effective leadership. Until now, the priority has been the improvement of standards in Years 7 to 11 but appropriate areas for development have now been established for the sixth form as well. However, a lack of teamwork in some areas of the department's work makes the monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning difficult. For example, teachers do not observe each other teaching and this makes it difficult to share the very good teaching that takes place in some lessons. The availability of set texts for students is good, but there are insufficient reference texts in the library to encourage students to carry out personal research or read widely.

French

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

Strengths

- Teachers are good linguists and use French well in lessons.
- Teachers plan lessons well and use authentic resources.

Areas for improvement

- Development of fluent oral skills.
- Teaching methods which require students to use French more creatively.
- Enrichment activities to enliven the curriculum and inspire students.
- Contacts with French-speaking countries, through email or letter, student exchanges, work placements or extended study visits.

123. Results in A-level examinations in recent years have been consistently below average and higher grades are rare. A-level results improved in 2002, but AS results remained weak. French is not a popular choice in the sixth form. Since the last inspection the average group size has been four, and only two boys have chosen to study French. The few students who begin the courses usually finish them.
124. In work seen during the inspection, standards were below average overall. Students' oral skills in both Year 12 and Year 13 were well below average and were very poor in one Year 12 lesson seen. Students cannot hold everyday conversations in French with any degree of fluency. Their written French is much better than their spoken French, but in Year 13, students' knowledge of grammar is weak. Creative writing and essay writing skills are not well developed in Year 13. Written work still consists mainly of short exercises. In Year 12, students are developing a sound grasp of grammatical theory, but are less competent at using this knowledge in communicating in the language. However, they have begun to write competently about challenging topics, such as hunting. Listening comprehension skills are satisfactory in Year 12, but weaker in Year 13. Students concentrate well in lessons, but show little sign of enjoyment. Their low level of fluency slows the pace of lessons, which become dull.
125. Teaching is satisfactory overall, though response from students is inadequate. Learning is unsatisfactory and students are not achieving as well as they should. Teachers use French well and plan lessons well, using authentic learning resources. One teacher provided a prompt sheet, which supported less competent Year 12 students and enabled them to participate in a discussion on school subjects. However, in the Year 13 lesson observed, students were not challenged to use the language creatively and relate the topic to their own experience, which resulted in a dull lesson. Teachers set useful tasks for homework, which consolidate what has been learned in class. Year 13 students work independently to prepare texts for classwork. They use the Internet well for research, but prefer to use English sources rather than French. Students lack enthusiasm and are not well motivated. The Year 13 students, for instance, have never experienced a study visit to a French-speaking country, and have no plans to do so. They have done no wider reading.
126. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was generally sound, and remains so. Standards at A-level were reported as above average. Results have not maintained that standard and improvement is therefore unsatisfactory. The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory and does not yet have a clear vision of how to improve standards. Although numbers of students on courses are small, the department does not monitor the progress of individuals closely enough, in order to identify underachievement early. Monitoring of classroom teaching is at present carried out only on an annual basis, not frequently enough for good practice to be shared and for in-service training needs to be identified. There is little curricular enrichment to inspire sixth formers in their studies or to attract students to the course. There are no contacts in French-speaking countries to make their studies relevant and meaningful, no contacts with other French A-level students, and no opportunities for work placements abroad.