

INSPECTION REPORT

PAINSLEY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Cheadle

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124456

Headteacher: Mr F R Tunney

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 24 – 26 March 2003

Inspection number: 249599

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Station Road Cheadle Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST10 1LH
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Downie
Date of previous inspection:	03 March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and students' achievements. How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9160	Mr K Baker	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?
32400	Ms M Champness	Team inspector	Sociology	
14596	Dr A Fidian-Green	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Special educational needs English as an additional language	
20619	Ms J Hazlewood	Team inspector	Business	
15051	Mrs L Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology and textiles Information and communication technology	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1994	Ms H Olds	Team inspector	Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
31680	Mr P Redican	Team inspector	Art	
3731	Mr W Robson	Team inspector	English 6 th Form Co-ordinator	
6432	Dr M Sewter	Team inspector	Biology Physics	
31192	Mr J Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education	

31838	Mr M Williams	Team inspector	French	
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The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Painsley Catholic High School is located in Cheadle, Staffordshire. It provides schooling for 1129 girls and boys aged 11 to 18 years, of whom 211 are sixth formers. There are approximately equal numbers of girls and boys in each year group. The school serves parts of rural Staffordshire and part of Stoke-on-Trent. The pupils come from many primary schools in the area, but mainly from one of seven Catholic primary schools. The school has Voluntary Aided status and is comprehensive. It is Roman Catholic and admission requirements try to ensure that at least 70 per cent of pupils come from families that follow the Roman Catholic faith. The school is very popular and has trebled in size during the last ten years. In 1997, at the time of the last inspection, 49 students were in a proposed joint sixth form; now 211 of the school's students attend the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre. This is a joint sixth form which the school shares with partner and associate schools. The percentage of pupils who claim entitlement to free school meals is below average. Very few pupils have minority ethnic backgrounds. A few have languages, mainly European, other than English as their first language; none is at an early stage in learning English. Very few leave or join the school, other than at the usual ages of 11, 16 or above. The percentage of pupils identified by the school with special educational needs is well below average. The percentage with statements of special need is broadly average; these pupils mainly have learning difficulties or physical impairments. The school contributes to the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Initiative. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is above average, overall. The school received DfES achievement awards for the last two years for its success in national examinations. It has Investor in People, Eco and Beacon School status and holds the Sportsmark. The school has applied for Advanced Specialist School status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Academic standards are well above average and pupils of all levels of competence achieve very well. The teaching is very good. The school enables pupils to become very mature and responsible. The leadership and management are excellent. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils of wide ranging levels of competence attain well above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is of high quality and relationships are excellent; the life and work of the school benefit greatly from the importance given to its sense of spiritual mission.
- The teaching is very good and enables pupils to learn successfully and achieve very well.
- The pupils' attitudes to work are very good and they behave in an exemplary manner; they take full advantage of the very good range of extra-curricular opportunities available.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher has vision for the school's future development; he and key staff ensure that educational standards and provision are sustained at the highest level possible.
- The school rightly has the overwhelming confidence and support of parents that it is caring and is helping their children to become mature, diligent, responsible and successful.

What could be improved

- The accommodation is barely adequate for the numbers of pupils in the school and the number of special rooms for science and physical education is insufficient.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its last inspection in March 1997, the school has improved considerably. The numbers of pupils have increased, but well above average academic standards have been sustained and pupils achieve very well at all ages. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour remain exemplary in lessons and around the school when they are not directly supervised. The teaching has improved and is now very good overall. The Moorlands Sixth Form Centre, which was new in 1997, has been very successfully developed to provide an impressive range of learning opportunities for sixth form students who consistently attain well above average standards. The few key issues of the last inspection concerned the accommodation where substantial improvement has taken place. However, the school's popularity and increased numbers of pupils have created new difficulties in providing

sufficient specialist accommodation to meet all needs. The accommodation in the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre has greatly improved and further developments have been approved.

STANDARDS

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

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

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.

Pupils achieve very well from entry to the school to attain well above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests. They attained well in these tests in comparison with the standards in similar schools in 2002. Standards have been sustained at a level well above the national average during the last five years.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. Pupils of differing competence and ethnic background attain standards in GCSE examinations that are well above the average of all schools and of similar schools. Pupils' standards were well above average in gaining five or more grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2002 and all recent years. The percentage gaining A* and A grades is double that of the national average. Every pupil, including those with special educational learning needs, gained at least six grades A* to G in GCSE examinations in 2002, a very high standard reached by only five per cent of schools in the country. Those who use English as an additional language also achieve very well. The school's impressive GCSE examination performances were recognised by DfES Achievement Awards in 2001 and 2002. Although boys attain well above average standards in GCSE examinations, girls reach even higher standards and the difference, in some years, is greater than the national difference in the standards reached by the sexes. In 2002, pupils achieved exceptionally well in ICT and gained over a grade higher in this subject than they did in their other subjects.

The school sets challenging targets and regularly reaches these.

In work seen during the inspection, in English, pupils wrote in a good range of different styles and chose words very well to make their descriptions vivid. In mathematics, pupils showed impressive command of algebra. They were very adept at practical investigations in science.

In the sixth form, students attained well above average standards in A-level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education) examinations in 2001, the last year for which validated national comparisons are available. Results were at least as strong in 2002. Year 12 AS-level examination results have enabled students to continue to Year 13 A-level courses with confidence and achieve well. GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications) Intermediate level examinations in business were above average in 2001. All these standards apply both to the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre and to the performance of students from Painsley who attend the Centre. However, in 2002, the results of the Painsley students were a little ahead of the Centre's average. Students reach and sometimes exceed the standards that might reasonably be expected of them from their earlier attainment in GCSE examinations. A large majority continue to higher education; some gain highly competitive university places.

In all years, pupils of varying competence across a wide range, where some have impressive talents and others have special educational learning needs, achieve very well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils concentrate intently and work very hard. They listen considerately to each other and respect the right of others to express views that differ from their own.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Exemplary. Pupils behave exceptionally well in class and when they are not directly supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils show impressive maturity. They respect and respond very well to others with whom relationships are often highly supportive to learning.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is very good and regularly much higher than in most secondary schools. There is no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

The school meets the varied needs of pupils and sixth form students very well. The teaching provides equally well for talented pupils, those who use English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, particularly in literacy. Individual students with physical impairments make very good progress from the teaching and individual care and support that they receive. Teachers are very skilled in managing pupils. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and challenge them to reach their best standard. English, mathematics and science are very well taught. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT is very good. Pupils learn very successfully. They have great confidence in the teachers because their relationships with them are excellent. They concentrate intensely and work very hard. Pupils respond very well to teachers' determination and enthusiasm that every individual will make the most of their opportunities to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Courses provide well for the range of pupils' needs. There is little provision for vocational courses. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' needs are very well provided for. Support assistants are used very well and contribute considerably to pupils' progress. The pupils with learning difficulties and those with physical impairments achieve very well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils involved use English skilfully and confidently and achieve very well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and greatly assists their personal development. Pupils also benefit from the very good provision made for their cultural development.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's care for its pupils is very good overall. They receive excellent personal support from staff who know them very well. Pupils are guided, helped and supported to achieve very well with the help of rigorous assessment procedures.
Partnership with parents	Excellent. Parents give the school overwhelming endorsement for the quality of education that it provides for their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher has clear vision for the school's future development and ensures that educational standards and provision are sustained at the highest levels possible. He and key staff ensure continuity by managing change very successfully to benefit all pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have guided the school with much skill and commitment through major changes. They set the priorities for planning and work closely with the headteacher to bring about improvements successfully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning take place. The school's academic performance is meticulously evaluated from very careful analysis of data. Explicit criteria to evaluate performance in planning for change are set and used systematically to review progress.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The restricted funding available is used to the best possible effect to maintain a high quality of educational provision and to sustain very good standards. The school gains the very best value for its resources. Its performance <i>compares</i> very well with that of other schools. It gives its pupils very <i>challenging</i> learning opportunities and regularly <i>consults</i> with parents and pupils, both of whom have great confidence in the school. <i>Competition</i> for services is managed to the best possible advantage. Specialist and general accommodation is overstretched for the numbers of pupils in the school.

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 has high expectations that their children will work hard and achieve their best. The school is very well led and managed. They are confident to talk to the school over problems concerning their children. The teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents think that their children do not get the right amount of homework.

Inspectors fully agree with the positive views expressed by parents. Homework is set regularly. Some younger pupils find the amount onerous, and occasionally the homework timetable is not followed by teachers and this makes difficulties for pupils in planning their work. Overall, the homework set extends pupils' knowledge and understanding very well and enables them to make very good progress.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

PAINSLY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL/THE MOORLANDS SIXTH FORM CENTRE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form includes girls and boys in approximately equal numbers. In 1997, 49 students were members of the, then new, joint sixth form centre. Now 211 of the school's students attend the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre that totals 350 students, from Painsley and two other schools. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Students have extensive choice of advanced academic and of some advanced vocational courses. Some Intermediate level courses are provided. Students are required to gain four or five grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in order to undertake advanced courses. Grade B is preferred for entry to some subject courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The Moorlands Sixth Form Centre meets the needs of all sixth form students from Painsley Catholic High School very well. Educational provision is very good and cost-effective. A-level standards are well above average and students achieve results well in line with, and sometimes above, the predictions based on their performance in GCSE examinations. The teaching is very good and some is excellent. It gives students the opportunity and stimulus to take much responsibility for their own learning. The leadership and management of the Moorlands Centre are very good. Clear vision and considered planning for the future development of this already highly successful cooperative venture are matched by a good sense of realism and very effective use of available resources.

Strengths

- Standards on advanced courses are well above average.
- The teaching is very good and enables students to achieve well.
- Students are impressively mature and responsible and contribute very well to their progress.
- The curriculum provides students who follow either advanced or intermediate courses with a very good range of choice to meet their needs.
- The leadership has clear vision for the further development of the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre and its rapid expansion is being very well managed.

What could be improved

- Specialist accommodation for science and physical education and provision for private study and dining are insufficient. The plans approved to provide further specialist accommodation await implementation.
- The system for review of standards and educational provision in subjects taught by teachers from more than one partner school is not rigorous enough to ensure that planning for improvement is fully effective.

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 13 subjects and courses that were inspected in full in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. All other subjects were also inspected from the sampling of the quality of provision and the standards achieved.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Standards are well above average. Good teaching enables students to learn well, although they are not encouraged enough to take responsibility for their own learning.
Biology	Very good. Standards are well above average. Teaching is very good. The planning of lessons is excellent and enables students to achieve very well.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Physics	Very good. Students' very positive attitudes help them to achieve well above average standards and make very good progress. Teaching is very good and teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject. Accommodation for physics is inadequate.
Design and technology (product design and textiles)	Very good. Excellent teaching in textiles lessons enthuses and inspires students to achieve impressive standards. In product design, standards are now above average. They are improving from a low base in recent years.
Information and communication technology	Very good. Students achieve highly. Standards are above average and improving. Very good teaching enables students to build very well on the skills and knowledge that they have gained in the main school.
Business	Very good. Students are achieving well as a result of very good teaching. Results are continuing to improve and standards seen are well above average.
Physical education	Very good. Results are consistently well above average. Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well.
Art	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Art makes a good contribution to students' cultural development.
Geography	Very good. Students reached impressive standards in the 2002 AS-level examination. Standards have recently risen considerably and those seen are now well above average because of very good teaching and management of the subject.
History	Very good. Standards are well above average. Very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes enable them to extend their knowledge very well.
Sociology	Good. Standards improved considerably in the 2002 A-level examination. Students achieve well. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and careful planning enable students to learn well in lessons.
English	Good. Results have been consistently very good until 2002. Current standards are average and subject performance is recovering very well from recent staffing difficulties. Good teaching enables students to learn well in lessons, in both English language and literature.
French	Very good. Standards are well above average because very good teaching meets students' needs very well. Students are enthusiastic and learn very well independently.

Work was sampled in seven other subjects. Teaching was always at least good. Some very good teaching and learning were seen in chemistry, drama, German, music, psychology and travel and tourism. In most lessons, students were achieving above average standards. They were well above average in advanced drama and chemistry courses.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Teachers provide valuable support and guidance for students whose progress is assessed and monitored very carefully. Clear and realistic targets are set to motivate them. Guidance about careers and higher education is

	excellent.
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Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Leadership has clear vision for the further development of the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre. Monitoring and evaluation of academic performance and educational provision are rigorous, but review of the quality of educational provision supplied by all the Centre's providers is neither complete nor regular enough to ensure that planning for improvement is fully effective. Students achieve at least as well as they should, and often better. The teaching is very good and some is excellent. Management gives students equal access to the best possible, highly cost-effective choice of learning opportunities.
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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"> • The teaching is good and challenging. • They are encouraged and helped to work independently. • Teachers are helpful and supportive when approached over problems with work. • They receive very good help and advice on what they should do when they leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think they are not treated as responsible adults and their views are not listened to enough. • The range of enrichment opportunities outside main courses is not good enough. • They are not well enough informed on their progress.

Inspectors agree that students' positive views are fully justified. Inspectors consider that students are treated as responsible young adults but teachers continue to be very demanding that work deadlines are met. The students' council and individual interviews give them the opportunity to express their views to the Director of the Centre and staff.

The Centre provides a good range of enrichment experiences beyond main courses, which give very little time for other activities during the timetabled day. However, students often choose not to participate in more activities because they have demanding workloads and outside interests.

Students are regularly well informed on their progress, but some want more information.

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

Pupils of wide ranging levels of competence attain well above average standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations.

** Similar schools are those with pupils of similar background.*

*** The average point score is the average of the overall points gained by pupils in GCSE examinations; it is often considered the best measure of a school's overall performance.*

1. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their levels of attainment span the full range. Overall, their attainment is a little above average. By the end of Year 9, when pupils take the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, their standard, overall, rises to be well above the national average. Usually, pupils' results compared with those of similar schools* are also well above average, as they were in 2000 and 2001. Standards in English and mathematics compared with those of similar schools were a little lower in 2002 owing to difficulties in staffing that have now been resolved. However, pupils' performance in science has consistently remained well above the average of similar schools, including in 2002. Both girls and boys of very varied levels of academic potential and ethnic background achieve very well in the National Curriculum tests. The very few who use English as an additional language also achieve very well.
2. Pupils' work seen in English during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 was very good. In particular, their written work was clear and fluent and they were able to write in a wide range of styles. They chose words with care and used them effectively in writing that was often imaginative and descriptively vivid. In mathematics, pupils had a command of algebra that was well ahead of that usually seen for this age group. In science, pupils were particularly successful in managing practical investigations and forming hypotheses from their findings, in part because they worked very well together and supported each other in gaining understanding.
3. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make very good progress. They attain well above national average standards in GCSE examinations in comparison with both those of all schools and also with those of similar schools. The most talented pupils attain high standards and the percentage of A* and A grades gained in GCSE examinations is double that reached nationally. Eight out of ten candidates in 2002 attained five or more grades A* to C and this standard has been maintained in all recent years. Pupils of all levels of competence achieve very well, and of particular note is the percentage who attain five or more grades A* to G. In all recent years, every examination candidate has reached this standard. In 2002, for example, every pupil gained six grades A* to G. This standard puts the school into the top five per cent of schools reaching this very high standard nationally. During the last five years, pupils' average point score attained in GCSE examinations has risen at a rate above that of the national upward increase.
4. The girls attain very high standards in the GCSE examinations; their results are regularly among the highest attaining five per cent of schools in the country. Boys attain standards that are well above the national average. Girls reach such high standards that the gap between their performance and that of the boys is, in some years, greater than the national average difference in performance. The school has worked very hard to raise the performance of boys even further. During the inspection, close observation of boys' work in English, where the difference in the performance between girls and boys is most apparent, indicated that the boys were achieving very well.
5. Pupils' record of performance is at least good in all subjects in GCSE examinations. However, their performance in information and communication technology (ICT) is outstanding. For example, in 2002 pupils gained over one grade higher in ICT than they did in their other subjects. In the context of the school's overall impressive performance in GCSE examinations, standards reached in ICT are remarkably high.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is of high quality and relationships are excellent; the life and work of the school benefit greatly from the importance given to its sense of spiritual mission.

6. The school has a powerful sense of mission. It holds fast to the Catholic faith and aims to ensure the spiritual, moral and social development of each individual within the learning community that it provides. Many pupils are not from a Catholic background, but the school treats every individual equally as a child of God, and gives each one equal access to the high quality of spiritual provision that it makes for their personal development. For example, pupils have the opportunity to attend retreats for reflection. There are regular services in the school's chapels and a strong spiritual input to assemblies and tutor groups. The school chaplain make a substantial contribution to the spiritual care of pupils and parents express much appreciation of his work on behalf of their children.
7. The spiritual provision for pupils' development relates closely to their moral and social development also. Pupils' personal growth - spiritually, morally and socially – shows in their diligent work and excellent behaviour throughout the school. Part of the school's mission requires pupils to respect others and to act in their interest both within the community of the school, and also in the wider local, national and international communities. Consequently, substantial work and fund-raising on behalf of charities take place, and many Year 11 pupils undertake community service with elderly people in the local community. Within the community of the school itself, pupils act in the interest of others. For example, there is a "buddy" system that ensures that Year 8 pupils give support to Year 7, where appropriate. Year 11 pupils willingly take on responsibility as prefects and help to make the school the very orderly and highly responsible society that it is.
8. Great support for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is provided by excellent relationships between pupils and teachers and among the pupils themselves. Mutual respect is apparent in the way that staff treat the pupils, in classrooms and throughout the school. Staff are themselves excellent role models for pupils. Their high expectations of pupils' commitment to achieve their very best and to respect others are equally apparent in their own diligence, exercise of responsibility and the respect that they, in turn, give to pupils.

The teaching is very good and enables pupils to learn successfully and achieve very 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.*

9. The quality of teaching is very good* overall. Over half the lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 were very well taught and one was excellent. The teaching was of this impressive quality throughout the age range. Few lessons were not of at least good quality. The teaching enables both girls and boys of differing levels of competence to learn very successfully from the very good teaching that they receive. Very good teaching and learning enable all pupils to achieve very well throughout the school. Their progress from entry to the school to the Year 9 National Curriculum tests is usually very good and enables them to reach well above average standards. Their progress continues at a very good rate through Years 10 and 11 and all pupils fulfil their potential extremely well to gain impressive results in GCSE examinations.
10. Teachers are very skilled in the management of their classes. Relationships are excellent and pupils trust their teachers and respond very well to them. Temporary teachers were seen to manage classes very well – for example, in a Year 7 English class, a temporary teacher insisted successfully on pupils' full concentration and they worked very productively and learned successfully. Excellent management of pupils was seen in a large Year 8 music class where all pupils produced rhythms on different instruments. The self-discipline of the pupils matched the teacher's high expectations of them very well in a very successful learning experience.
11. Classes are managed so well partly because teachers plan their lessons carefully. They clearly identify what is to be learned and they share the purpose of lessons with pupils, so that every pupil is made aware of the sequence of what is to be learned in the time available. This makes lessons a joint learning experience between the teacher and the pupils and management of classes becomes even more effective. Teachers time their lessons very well and mostly end with very effective summaries that restate the key points that have been learned. Consequently, pupils are helped to remember the knowledge that they have gained and to deepen their understanding of it.

12. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations that teachers have of them. Teaching is very well adapted to the wide range of pupils' needs. For example, pupils who have difficulties with basic skills are taught very well. Very good practice was seen in the teaching of literacy to two Year 7 statemented pupils withdrawn for extra help. The activities followed were varied frequently and the teacher's patience, encouragement and expertise were very helpful to the pupils who worked very hard and gained greatly from the lesson. A Year 9 German lesson challenged the pupils very well when the teacher and the foreign language assistant used the foreign language constantly and expected the same of the pupils. Equally, in a Year 7 French lesson, pupils were expected to speak only in the foreign language, including for routine classroom activities, and this practice challenged them very effectively to think and speak in French throughout the lesson. Teachers make work challenging throughout the one hour lessons. Lessons run at a very brisk pace. Pupils are expected to concentrate throughout the full hour, and they do so.
13. Teachers use a very good range of methods to help pupils to learn. For example, the teacher of a lower attaining Year 11 geography class gave an impressive, fluent PowerPoint presentation on coastal erosion. The pupils responded very well and were later to undertake their own, individual analyses of the factors involved with use of computers. In a Year 9 geography class of higher attainers, the teacher rapidly organised the pupils to work in small groups and enabled them to be very productive in researching the topic of sustainable tourism. With the support of the teacher and each other, the pupils reached a very good understanding of the topic. Teachers and pupils in ICT lessons achieve an active partnership that results in very successful learning. Teachers use learning support assistants and trainee teachers very well to support pupils' learning. All support staff were seen to give very good support to pupils individually or in small groups. Learning support assistants know the pupils who have special educational needs very well and the excellent quality of individual education plans enables staff to target classroom work to the greatest benefit of pupils.
14. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are very good. They apply these very well to benefit pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 11 physical education lesson in gymnastics, the teacher's technical knowledge effectively enabled the pupils to learn how to improve their own technique. Teachers use their own command of subject matter and knowledge of examination requirements to assess pupils' work very well and marking gives very helpful advice to the pupils on how to improve their standards. Homework is set regularly and extends pupils' learning very well.
15. Overall, the consistently very good teaching that pupils receive enables them to make very good progress and to achieve very well at all ages.

The pupils' attitudes to work are very good and they behave in an exemplary manner; they take full advantage of the excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities available.

16. Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are very good and sometimes excellent. Their attitudes are remarkably mature and very positive towards their work and towards the school. They work very well in lessons. In eight out of ten lessons seen, pupils' attitudes to their learning were at least very good. In one in ten lessons, their attitudes were excellent. In almost all lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are at least good. Pupils of all levels of academic competence work very hard to achieve their best. They respond very well to the high expectations of teachers and concentrate, often intensely, to complete their work to their very best standard. They listen considerately to each other and respect the right of others to express views that differ from their own. They respond very well to teachers, by listening to them, answering questions thoughtfully and organising themselves quickly and cooperatively in class. They treat the learning resources provided for their use with care and consideration in a very mature manner. The diligence and determination of pupils with special educational learning needs enable them to make very good progress with the help of their teachers. Talented pupils are lively and interested in their work and highly motivated to achieve their best. Pupils undertake homework with determination; they improve their standard by working independently and helping themselves to achieve very well. The considerable numbers of Year 11 pupils who choose to stay on to continue their studies in the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre show the confidence that pupils have in the school and in their teachers.
17. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils across the range of attainment act very responsibly and usually behave in an exemplary manner. In no lesson seen was behaviour unsatisfactory. When they are not directly supervised, pupils also behave in a very mature manner and respond to the school's expectation that

others should be given respect. For example, the school's dining accommodation is overstretched for the numbers of pupils in the school, but they behave sensibly and considerately. Narrow corridors and stairways are often crowded, but pupils move around with much consideration for others. Pupils stick to the rules and act with impressive maturity. The standards of behaviour of pupils of all ages are exemplary.

18. Pupils' very positive attitudes and exemplary behaviour show, for example, in the take up of the very good range extra-curricular opportunities provided for them. The school provides very many opportunities for sport and music and very many other subject activities to enrich pupils' learning and worthwhile experience. Pupils' enthusiastic involvement and interest in making the most of the opportunities provided at the school itself and in residential experience abroad are evidence of their active commitment to learning and very positive response to meeting the high expectations of the school for their conduct and success.

The excellent leadership of the headteacher has vision for the school's future development; he and key staff ensure that educational standards and provision are sustained at the highest level possible.

19. The school's leadership is excellent. The headteacher with the full support and endorsement of the governors has led the school from a very low point over ten years ago, when the numbers of pupils had dwindled to be well below 400, to become the very good and successful school that it now is. Parents rightly have great confidence in the school's leadership. A notable feature of the school's leadership is the absence of complacency. Standards are well above average and pupils behave in an exemplary manner, but the intent to move the school forward remains constantly determined, purposeful and vigorous. Every pupil is prized equally as an individual with the right to receive the very best education that the school can provide. The headteacher expects the highest performance possible from both the staff and from the pupils. All respond positively. High morale and very good teamwork enable all to strive for their best standard of performance. However, when difficulties occur for any member of the school, friendly, sympathetic support is at hand. Leadership strongly upholds the school's powerful sense of mission to value each individual as a child of God, whose talents must be used to the full to enable each person to achieve spiritual, moral, social and intellectual potential.
20. The headteacher and governors have worked in partnership with the neighbouring high school to develop further the initiative of the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre. Combined leadership has steered the Centre to become a very successful and popular provider of sixth form education in Cheadle. There is clear vision for the Centre's further development through curricular initiatives with more institutional partners.
21. The school has also been very effectively led to gain national recognition of its success. For example, it is an Investor in People; the contribution of all staff is highly valued and they respond to the strong leadership that they get by working with enthusiasm and a keen sense of purpose to benefit the pupils. The status of an Eco School, the Sportsmark and the beneficial influence to educational provision locally of the school's standing as a Beacon School further reflect the absence of complacency. Currently, application is planned to gain Advanced School status.
22. Management at senior level has changed recently arising from two promotions out of the school to headships. However, the senior team is reforming under the headteacher's leadership and they, with departmental and year managers, ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of performance are very good. Departmental reviews are thorough. The quality of teaching is rigorously evaluated by a system of observation of lessons by senior management and by effective working of a system of performance management. Planning for change is managed very well and criteria to evaluate developments are clear.
23. The funding provided for the school is well below average. However, it is used very effectively to ensure that standards and provision of education are very good and often excellent. Best value principles are applied to the full. The school's performance compares very well with others; the educational challenge it provides is impressive, through the very good quality of teaching by staff who also provide a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities to benefit pupils. Regular consultation with pupils and parents takes place; competition for the services that the school buys is very competently managed.

The school rightly has the overwhelming confidence and support of parents that it is caring and is helping their children to become mature, diligent, responsible and successful.

24. The parents rightly have overwhelming confidence in the school. Over 60 per cent of parents returned the questionnaire before the inspection (see Part C of this report). The return gave the school great endorsement for its work in all respects. For example, parents almost universally recognise that the

school has high expectations that their children will work hard and do their best. They are also convinced that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. They recognise that the school cares greatly for their children and they are very confident to approach it with any concerns about their children's wellbeing and progress.

25. The meeting for parents held prior to the inspection fully endorsed the views expressed in the questionnaire. Parents expressed much appreciation for the work of the school and its leadership in helping their children to be diligent workers who took much responsibility for their own progress. Several parents emphasised that their children were very reluctant to miss school because they enjoyed the challenge of learning so much within the very supportive community that the school is.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The accommodation is barely adequate for the numbers of pupils in the school and the number of special rooms for science and physical education is insufficient.

26. At the last inspection in 1997, the only key issues were concerned with the insufficient and poor quality of the accommodation for the numbers of pupils in the school. Since 1997, major improvements to the accommodation have taken place. Also the governors have reconsidered the admission requirements, but they are reluctant to refuse entry to the pupils of those parents who appreciate the school's mission and its fundamental purposes. Nevertheless, governors are in negotiation with the local authority to try to ensure that a better balance of provision is available locally.
27. Since 1997, an additional 134 pupils have joined the 11-16 school and the buildings are again insufficient to accommodate the numbers of pupils who are attending the school. The inadequacies are most apparent in science and physical education, both of which require special accommodation to make teaching and learning fully effective. Many science lessons take place in general classrooms rather than in laboratories; this places restrictions on teachers' planning of work and the management of practical investigations. The specialist accommodation for physical education is inadequate for a school of this size. There is one old gymnasium and the hall is used for physical education and gymnastics. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities in games and sports, as well as general physical education and a course leading to the GCSE examination. However, the lack of more specialist accommodation for physical education is unhelpful to maintenance of the best provision and standards.
28. Many general classrooms are small for the numbers of pupils in some classes and present difficulties for teachers to move about to give individual support to pupils in some cases. Some corridors and stairways are narrow, and only the excellent behaviour and sense of responsibility of the pupils ensure safe movement at busy times at change of lessons.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

Main school (11-16)

- (1) Either extend further the subject specialist and general accommodation for teaching and learning, or reduce the numbers of pupils attending the school. Therefore, either seek additional funding from all appropriate sources for extending the accommodation, or revise the practice concerning admission. (The school recognises this matter in its own development planning. See paragraphs: 26, 27, 28.)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the specialist accommodation at the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre for science and physical education and also that for private study and dining, by implementing planned improvements for science and by seeking additional funding for further development. (See paragraphs: 73, 91.)

- (2) Further co-ordinate subject reviews of standards and quality of provision with all the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre's providers, so that shared planning for improvement is more effective overall. (See paragraphs: 31, 70, 97, 144.)

In addition to the key issues for improvement stated above, the school should consider including in its action plan the following issue **for the sixth form**:

- (1) Ensure that sixth form students use ICT (information and communication technology) more to enhance their learning further. (See paragraphs: 79, 84, 89, 102, 114.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	48
	Sixth form	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	1	27	14	6	0	0	0
Percentage	2	56	29	13	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	8	28	25	5	0	0	0
Percentage	12	42	38	8	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 two percentage points. For the sixth form, each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	918	211
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	51	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	70	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9 in 2002)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	107	93	200

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	94	100
	Girls	85	78	86
	Total	164	172	186
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (89)	86 (88)	93 (89)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (66)	60 (68)	60 (63)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	97	105
	Girls	83	81	90
	Total	165	178	195
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (91)	89 (90)	98 (93)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (66)	62 (71)	66 (65)
	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 in 2002)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	90	84	174

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	62	90	90
	Girls	78	84	84
	Total	140	174	174
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	80 (80)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	53.8
	National	39.8

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13 in 2001)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	47	57	104
	Average point score per candidate	20.6	21.0	20.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	7	7	14	47	58	105
	Average point score per candidate	11.1	12	11.6	22.3	22.1	22.2
National	Average point score per candidate	9.8	11.4	10.6	16.9	18	17.5

2001 is the last year for which validated national comparisons are available.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - 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 pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1090	23	0
2	0	0
12	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
11	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7- Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

Education support staff Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	366

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.82
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	21.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	2377170
Total expenditure	2464919
Expenditure per pupil	2243
Balance brought forward from previous year	372860
Balance carried forward to next year	298042

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on contracts of less than a full school year (FTE)	4.56
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	1120
Number of questionnaires returned	687

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	44	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	42	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	43	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	51	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	59	39	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	41	6	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	40	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84	16	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	44	6	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	72	27	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	34	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	37	3	1	2

Other issues raised by parents

The parents who attended the meeting before the inspection gave the school overwhelming endorsement for the high standards that it enabled their children to achieve and its success in enabling them to become mature and responsible.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

30. In 2001, the last year for which nationally validated A-level results are available, Painsley students attending the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre attained results well above the national average. Female and male students both attained this standard. Students' performance was also well above average in 2000. Results in the AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) in art and business were also well above average. In 2002, A-level and AVCE results were ahead of the impressive standards of recent years. Almost half the grades attained were A or B and almost every subject entry reached, at least, a pass grade. No nationally validated results are yet available for the AS examinations of 2001 and 2002. One in three students gained A or B grades and over 90 per cent passed these examinations. Those who chose to do so were able to continue their studies to A-level with confidence. The results of the Intermediate level GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) examination in business in 2001 were above the national average. Overall, during the last three years, the well above average standards attained by Painsley students have been matched by the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre as a whole. However, in 2002, the A-level examination results of the Painsley students were a little ahead of the Centre's average. Students reach and sometimes exceed the standards that might reasonably be predicted from their earlier attainment in GCSE examinations. A large majority continue to higher education and some gain highly competitive places at university. The school sets challenging targets for individual subjects, and these are usually reached or exceeded. Very few students do not complete their courses.
31. There is some variation in the standards that students attain in different A-level subjects. In the 2001 A-level examinations in the 13 subjects reported in full in Part E of this report, in subjects where the numbers of candidates enable statistical comparisons to be drawn, students attained very high standards in English language, history and physics. They attained very well in the mechanics papers of mathematics, but results in statistics were below average. A-level results in English literature and physical education were well above average. Standards in biology, French and sociology were above average. Results in business studies were below average. Those attained in geography were well below average. In product design, standards were very low. Difficulties in staffing contributed to the results in business studies and geography. New departmental leadership and improved teaching in both subjects contributed to the greatly improved standards attained in 2002. In product design, the system for reviewing the standards and the teaching provided by all partner schools is not yet rigorous enough to ensure that planning for improvement is fully effective. During the last three years, the performance of students in A-level information and communication technology (ICT), compared with the standards that they attained in their other subjects, were remarkably high. In A-level examinations in 2002, almost every student passed the examinations for which they entered in every subject.
32. In the AS examinations in 2001 and 2002, students' results in English language and English literature were below those in most of their other subjects and were adversely affected by staffing changes. Students were least successful in product design in 2001, but standards improved considerably in 2002. In the new textiles course, students attained very well. Results in AS-level geography improved greatly between 2001 and 2002. In 2002, more students attained grades A or B in the AS geography examination than in any other subject.
33. In the work seen during the inspection in the 13 subjects reported in full in Part E of this report, students were achieving higher standards than might reasonably have been predicted from their previous performance in GCSE examinations. In most subjects they were achieving very well. In mathematics, students were competent users of geometric progressions, and their very good understanding of algebra continues in the sixth form. In both physics and biology, students' subject knowledge was high and, for example, the heart's function in the circulation of blood in the body was very well understood. In physical education, students had very good understanding of the social and political influences on the development of sport since the eighteenth century. Meticulous research was observed in art, but little work seen was of a broad enough scale; the painting and drawing were not always bold enough for students to maximise their skills. In business, students were seen to have very good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics, but their use of ICT was insufficient. Students made mature and considered responses to questions in history and showed an impressive depth of understanding. The

rapid improvements in geography results in recent years were equally apparent in the very good standards seen in lessons, where students applied their skills very well to increase their understanding of environmental problems. Students plan their projects very well in ICT, but evaluation of the effectiveness of these for end-users is less secure. In sociology, students use subject words and ideas with increasing understanding, but some lower attainers do not respond to questions or volunteer information enough. In product design, standards are rising as students increasingly enhance and apply their research and design skills, and in textiles, they use a wide range of media to design and produce outcomes of the highest quality. In English, students can readily identify the literary techniques that writers use, but only higher attaining students are confident in the more precise analysis of how these are used to create meaning and effect. Students' skills of speaking and listening are very good in French, but their writing is not always grammatically exact.

34. In other subjects that were sampled during the inspection, students were seen to achieve well, and often very well. Very good teaching enabled students to achieve very well in most of the lessons seen.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

35. Students show extremely positive attitudes towards work. They are pleased to be at the Moorlands Centre and are keen to make the most of what it offers. Most are highly motivated and eager to produce their best work. They have a real thirst for knowledge and produce stimulating work, as seen in textiles, for example. In lessons, they concentrate hard and sustain interest. Inspectors were frequently impressed by their mature attitudes and their capacity for independent work. For example, Year 13 students prepared and delivered presentations on agrarian reform in history very well; students' care and precision in drawing up their decision-trees in business education were equally impressive.
36. There is a very purposeful climate for learning in the Centre. The behaviour of students is exemplary in classrooms and in all parts of the Centre. The accommodation and resources are respected and maintained at a high quality. Students are polite and courteous. The Centre is a calm and orderly community. Excellent relationships exist among the students themselves and between them and the staff. These relationships have a powerful and beneficial impact on their performance. They listen to one another's opinions with respect and consideration. Attendance levels are high.
37. The Centre's strong sense of purpose does much to promote the personal development of the students. They are expected to act as adults and they are treated as such. They respond well to the encouragement given to them to play an active part in the running of the Centre. For example they took the lead in planning and organising a very successful Rag Week during the week of the inspection. The fun enjoyed within the bounds of self-imposed restraint was an excellent example of the students' maturity. Overall, the expectations of students are high and most cope very well with the pressures and demands placed upon them. When interviewed by inspectors, they engaged fully in mature discussion and expressed their views clearly and intelligently.

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. The teaching seen was confined to that of the staff of Painsley Catholic High School and those based in the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre. The teaching of staff employed by the other partner institutions contributing to the Centre was not part of the remit of this inspection.

38. The teaching is very good, overall. It meets very well the needs of both female and male students of wide ranging competence. Of the 66 lessons seen, 28 were of very good quality and eight were excellent. Few lessons were not of at least good quality. Of the 13 subjects inspected and reported in full in Part E of this report, English, mathematics, art and sociology were well taught. Some very good teaching was also seen in these subjects, but in a few lessons, some inexperienced teachers were less effective in enabling students to learn as well as they can do when they were taught by more experienced staff. However, these less experienced staff were talented and their skills and practice showed much promise. The other nine subjects were very well taught. The teaching of all other subjects provided in the Moorlands Centre was sampled, and this was also of consistently very good quality. As a result of the very good teaching that students receive overall, they learn very successfully and make very good

progress in lessons. Where students' examination results call into question the quality of teaching, as in product design, staff changes have been beneficial in ensuring that the teaching matches the very good overall quality. In no subject was there any unsatisfactory teaching.

39. Excellent relationships between students and teachers contribute greatly to students' success in learning. Teachers lead and manage their classes exceptionally well because of the trust and confidence that students have in them. Good humour and good rapport are often apparent. For example, in a Year 13 geography lesson on managing urban environments, the teacher's relaxed humour provoked a very positive response from the students. Mature humour was equally effective in a Year 13 ICT lesson in getting students' attention and focusing them on the work. Excellent relationships give students confidence to work independently because they know that teachers can be relied upon to provide individual help and support when necessary. For example, a Year 13 music student handled the teacher's critique of her earlier practical performance very well. She showed considerable maturity in learning from the criticism because she had great confidence in the teacher and knew from their unspoken, mutual understanding that their combined purpose was to enable her to improve and to achieve her best.
40. Lessons run at a very brisk pace and the hour periods are used to the full. Teachers share with students what is to be learned and lessons are planned in detail. For example, a very good Year 13 biology lesson on behaviour and populations was meticulously planned so that a good pace of learning was sustained. In general, students respond very well to teachers' effective organisation of lesson time and make very good progress in the time available.
41. The teachers have high expectations of the students and lessons are very challenging learning experiences. In French, for example, students are challenged to use the foreign language constantly so that they learn to think and speak in this medium. In a Year 12 ICT lesson on data protection, the teacher presented the class with a questionnaire that included personal information and challenged them to judge what information it was right and proper to expect people to supply. Very successful learning arose from the purposeful discussion that followed and the students devised key principles to guide the practice of data protection.
42. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. They have considerable depth of understanding of subject matter and apply this in all aspects of their work. It is apparent not only in the planning of lessons, but in contributing to students' learning as lessons develop. For example, in an English language lesson in which students were learning about the acquisition of language by children from Kroll's theory, the teacher's very good knowledge of the topic enabled students to produce better analyses for themselves because incisive questions focused their work very well. The teacher's very good subject knowledge in a Year 13 lesson on deviance in sociology made the topic challenging and informative and provoked a very good response from the students.
43. Methods are adapted very well to students' needs. Work in small groups is effective in drawing the most reticent student into discussion. Whole class discussion is often successful because all students are involved and have confidence to speak to both the teacher and to their peers. Teachers review earlier work well and require a response from the students to reinforce their prior learning. Questioning of students about new areas of learning is well directed and demanding, and students are expected to explore new ideas and search for their own answers. Teachers require a response from students that takes learning forward and resist the temptation to answer their own questions.
44. The marking of work is very good, because it often presents a different perspective to students to deepen their understanding of the subject. It does not only correct their mistakes. Students derive targets to enable them to focus improvement from teachers' very good marking of work, although all teachers do not follow these up with equal rigour.
45. The impact of the very good teaching on students is to make them enthusiastic, committed and very well motivated learners. Consequently, their success in learning enables them to achieve very well and attain well above average standards in examinations.

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

Statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship were inspected and reported separately.

46. The quality of the curriculum is very good for those students who join the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre. Provision is exceptionally well co-ordinated with partner schools in this very successful, highly cost-effective joint venture. There are plans to extend the curriculum with vocational courses at Intermediate level in the context of local provision in conjunction with Leek College. A very good range of AS and A-level subjects is provided, together with AVCE in art and travel and tourism. There is also an Intermediate level course in business. All courses enable students to build very positively on their academic success in GCSE examinations. The curriculum is very well designed to meet the needs of current students. A large majority of Year 11 students choose to continue their education in the Centre. The few students who do not join the sixth form are offered very good advice from the school and the careers service on educational opportunities elsewhere.
47. Almost all students who begin sixth form studies in the Centre complete a two-year course, beginning with four AS-level subjects in Year 12. Students continue with three or four A-level or AVCE courses into Year 13. Additionally there are certificates and diploma courses in Catholic studies. General studies extend provision very well. All courses receive an adequate time allocation. Some provide a residential experience. For example, there is a geographical field studies week in North Wales and joint courses with the modern foreign languages and ICT departments to Disneyland in Paris, where students learn about the use of technology within the theme park.
48. Private study facilities are limited in the Centre and there are too few opportunities for many of Year 12 to use them in the little time that is available beyond lessons; students have demanding workloads and outside interests.
49. Students expressed some concerns about the provision of opportunities and activities beyond their main courses. However, inspectors consider that the Centre provides a good range of worthwhile activities and courses to enrich students' experience. For example, they can engage in Young Enterprise and debates. They all have access to a residential experience at Bangor University, financed by themselves and their activities in Rag Week, to help them to learn more about opportunities in higher education. However, the lack of specialist indoor accommodation for sport restricts students from enjoying a wider range of opportunities for physical recreation at the Centre. Rag Week was held on the week of the inspection. This included a video made by a group of students in the Peak District who filmed their own 'candid camera' following a series of "dares" in the previous month. The lunchtime film show raised over £100 for the Samaritans and over 200 sixth formers enjoyed some hilarious scenes of students in an inflatable dingy, and others eating 'Felix' sandwiches.
50. Students have satisfactory opportunities for work-related education. The excellent support provided for choice of careers and higher education helps them to organise first-hand experience of work where appropriate.
51. The school's provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is outstanding. It is firmly rooted in its spiritual foundation, which underpins everything it does. The school's mission statement exemplifies the value it places on each individual, and the responsibility it expects everyone to exert for the good of the community. As indicated above, every student works towards the certificate of Catholic studies in Year 12 and the corresponding diploma in Year 13. Each subject department has identified opportunities to support these studies across the curriculum through consideration of various issues such as poverty and social exclusion in modern foreign languages and genetic modification and bioethics in the sciences.
52. Separate tutorial periods in the Centre for Painsley students regularly address the social and moral issues arising from the daily planned Bible readings and prayers. The chaplain plays an important part, both formally and informally, in providing help and guidance to all, whether they are practising Catholics or not. Designated rooms and chapels are available for regular celebrations as well as for private prayer and reflection. Several students and members of staff have been appointed as Eucharistic ministers by the Archbishop of Birmingham and may, therefore, play a major role in the Mass. Regular spiritual retreats provide opportunities for more profound reflection away from distractions. Throughout the school the "world faith calendar" accords due respect to the significant celebrations of major religions, helping students to appreciate what motivates others as well as themselves.
53. Students contribute to the running of the Centre through membership of the students' council. This includes taking the lead in raising significant funds for local and national charities. Students themselves

provide good role models for younger pupils and regularly help the less fortunate in the community. They regularly visit, for example, the local Methodist home for the elderly.

54. Cultural development through the breadth of the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, especially for the arts, is very good overall. Cultural diversity is well provided for through art, history, geography, modern languages and English. Links with students in Martinique, for example, broaden

students' horizons. Preparation for life within an ethnically diverse society is less strongly developed, but a range of visitors from other countries, for example Kenya, has provided positive and enlightening experiences.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

55. The practice of assessment is very good. The school provides a very comprehensive range of raw data, which is electronically accessible and helps to monitor academic progress of all students. This includes all information of students' prior attainment when they enter the sixth form. This information is further supported by commercial tests applied at the start of Year 12 to make predictions of future performance and to provide a benchmark for review. During Year 12, students undertake tests in the autumn and spring terms followed by interim reports. These provide information on overall progress and confirm or lead to amendment of targets set. In addition to information on individuals, the students are placed into one of three target groups, which identify progress over all the subjects studied. These are regularly monitored and any underachievement can be effectively identified.
56. Assessment procedures within departments are good overall. Some departments electronically record data and students are made well aware of their expected grades. In many instances this includes self-assessment; marking is usually diagnostic and provides good guidance for improvement. Overall, students are well aware of the rigorous assessment procedures and the effective commentary they provide on their progress.

Advice, support and guidance

57. Students in the sixth form are given very good support and guidance. They feel comfortable, but secure, in a friendly environment. The personal tutors and all staff know the students well and clearly understand the duty of care that they have towards them. A close watch is kept to ensure that students attend regularly.
58. Students are prepared well for the sixth form. Staff ensure that appropriate information is available about sixth form subjects and courses. Students confirm that the details received are clear and helpful. Before they start in the sixth form there is a well-thought out programme of meetings and counselling, including consultation with parents. Every effort is made to ensure that students choose the subjects and courses that best fit their needs, aptitudes and interests.
59. The educational and personal support for students is very good. Students are not allowed to drift. They find that most staff are very accessible to help with any difficulties with work and are generous in the time they give to help students improve their performance. However, some report occasional difficulties of communication with teachers from partner institutions. Personal support for students through the well-developed tutorial system is very good.
60. The educational and vocational guidance available to students to help them plan for the future is excellent. Careers information is readily available in the careers library. Very effective arrangements are in place for students to receive all the advice and guidance that they need for future courses of study and career opportunities. Past and present students are unstinting in their praise for the outstanding support they receive from the Centre's careers advisory service, especially in the preparation for their applications to university and preparation for interviews.

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

61. Parents regard the sixth form highly and believe it has a justifiably very good reputation. They are very satisfied with the high expectations that staff have for their children and the progress that they make in consequence. Staff work closely with parents during the time that their children are at the Centre and communication with them is very good. Parents appreciate the specific meetings arranged occasionally for them on matters affecting their children's education, such as a recent one on student grants.

62. Most views expressed by sixth form students about the provision made for them were positive and inspectors agree that students' positive views are fully justified. Sixth form students appreciate the choice of courses on offer, the challenge of the teaching, the way they are encouraged to work independently, how well their work is marked and assessed, the accessibility of the staff, and the help and advice that they receive when needed.
63. The main concern of some students was that they are not treated as responsible young adults and the Centre did not listen to their views enough. However, the inspection provided little evidence to support these views. Students are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and to make full use of the facilities available at the Centre. Good opportunities are available for students to express their views to the Director of the Sixth Form and to staff, especially through the lively discussions of the students' council. The students who were interviewed during the inspection commented that the high standards expected might at times seem hard to cope with, but they are always helped by staff to respond to them in a mature and responsible way.
64. Some students thought that they were not well enough informed of their progress. In general, inspectors consider that, although students are not always fully aware of their standards before points of assessment, they are kept well informed about their standard of work and targets for improvement. The inspection showed that subject teachers and tutors monitor the progress of students carefully, and regular progress reports are provided for them and their parents.
65. A minority of students reported that they were not satisfied with the range of enrichment opportunities beyond their main courses. However, inspectors found that there was a good range of activities available, but the lack of accommodation, for example for sport, imposes restrictions on what can be provided.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

The remit of the inspection was to judge the quality of the leadership and management of Painsley Catholic High School, as an equal partner in the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre. The leadership and management of the Centre's director were also inspected and are reported below. It was not part of the remit of the inspection to inspect Cheadle High School's part in the leadership and management of the Centre.

66. The leadership of the sixth form is very good. The headteacher and governors of Painsley Catholic High School worked closely with their partner school to establish the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre six years ago, six months before the school's last inspection in 1997. Until then, Painsley had no sixth form provision. The headteacher and governors recognised the need for sixth form provision for the school's pupils locally, so that the fundamental spiritual mission of the school could be realised for all students up to age 18. They had the vision to see what was possible and the strength of purpose to work in partnership with the neighbouring high school, which already had sixth form provision, to establish the joint venture of the Moorlands Centre. Progress during the last six years has been outstanding. The school's spiritual mission has extended into the sixth form and remains alive with the school's students until age 18. The standards attained by Painsley students on advanced and intermediate courses have regularly been well above the national average. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and some is excellent. However, six years ago the school had no tradition or practice in teaching the 16-18 age group.
67. The headteacher works closely with the headteacher of the neighbouring partner high school and with the Centre's director to ensure that standards and provision are the best possible. Working relationships are very good, although the ethos of the two schools is different. The director, as a member of the leadership groups of both schools, has a key role in ensuring that standards and provision meet the needs of both schools and manages these very well. An associate school, Moorside High school, has also recently joined the Centre, extending further the director's remit. He ensures that these and all students are well integrated into the life and work of the Centre. However, leadership has the vision to recognise the need to expand provision further in the interest of all students and is exploring a range of vocational opportunities with a local college.

68. The school's governors have contributed very well to establishing the Moorlands Centre. They shared the headteacher's vision of what was possible and gave the initiative their strongest support, while ensuring that the school's spiritual mission remained intact within the practice of the Centre. Their vision and determination ensured that provision for sixth formers was retained in the town and now benefits students who transfer into the Centre from many schools in the locality. They are very well informed and work in partnership with governors of the neighbouring high school in a committee that has a specific remit for the Moorlands Centre to guide change. They recognised the need to give the Centre identity and stability by appointing some staff who are solely based there. They have clear views on what further improvements are needed. They work very closely with the headteacher, who has their complete confidence, to ensure the Centre's further development.
69. The Centre is very well managed and the director makes a key contribution to this. The excellent relationships that exist between staff and students and the thorough approach to listening to the views of the students, both individually and through the sixth form council, owe much to the director's diligent contribution to ensuring that the Centre works so well. His commitment to the success of the Centre ensures that any potentially conflicting views among management and staff from the different schools are negotiated professionally so that agreement is achieved.
70. The Centre monitors standards and educational provision carefully and well to ensure that they are the best possible. They review and evaluate performance closely and analyse very well the strengths and weaknesses in provision. For example, there is regular observation of teaching and learning. Performance management is very well established and effective in contributing to the very good quality of teaching. The Centre is an Investor in People in its own right, and staff are effectively supported to enhance their skills. Analysis of performance data is very thorough. Where the teaching of a course is solely by the staff based only at the Centre, review is thorough and covers all contributing teachers. However, the system for the review of subjects taught by teachers from more than one school is not always rigorous enough to ensure that planning for improvement is fully effective. Although considerable benefit is gained by the wider professional input to many courses from staff from different institutions, some adverse effects have been encountered in English, mathematics and product design. In these subjects, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not as well co-ordinated as it might be. As a result, priorities for development are not clearly identified in these subjects' action plans.
71. The Centre uses the funding available to the maximum benefit of students. The funding provided to school and Centre is well below the national average. However, it is used exceptionally well and the provision made by the Centre is highly cost-effective. The principles of best value are applied to the full. Performance compares very well with that of other sixth forms and results are consistently well above average. The Centre challenges itself to make very good provision for students through very good teaching, an extensive curriculum and good extra-curricular enrichment opportunities. Consultation with parents and students is thorough and very well managed by the director. Competition for services is very competently managed to benefit students to the maximum with improving accommodation and learning resources.

Resources

72. Staffing is very good. Teachers are subject specialists and their knowledge and understanding of their subjects are very good across all sixth form subjects. Some newly qualified teachers are very well supported and are rapidly gaining valuable experience. Training arrangements are very good and many opportunities are taken up by staff. The school is an Investor in People and opportunities for all staff to extend their skills are very well provided and appreciated. Technical support is sufficient to support learning well, but the library is not staffed throughout the whole working day. Administrative staff provide competent and efficient support.
73. The accommodation of the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre has greatly improved since the last inspection in 1997. Essential maintenance and refurbishment have taken place and the Centre is a pleasant place in which students learn successfully. However, deficiencies remain and the accommodation, overall, is insufficient for the numbers of students. There is a lack of accommodation for physical education, and the very good quality of teaching and the well above average standards that students attain deserve subject specialist accommodation to match. The public areas of the Centre are already overstretched for the numbers of students. The dining area is too small and accommodation for private study is barely adequate. There are insufficient laboratories to accommodate all science classes. Plans to improve the

accommodation have been approved, but even with these completed, accommodation will be overstretched, particularly if the numbers of students increase as expected.

74. The provision of learning resources is generally good. Students have satisfactory access to computers and have access to the Internet for research. Textbooks are sufficient for their needs. However, the library is small for the numbers of students. Some subjects are generally well supplied with specialist texts to support students' wider, independent reading. Others have very meagre collections. The range of fiction is very restricted. A key asset is that students have access to the University of Staffordshire library and can request use of specific texts. Also students of product design have valuable access to the University's JCB Centre.

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

In the inspection, 13 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 available.

*indicates a course inspected and reported in full below. All other subjects currently running were sampled and are also reported below.

GCE A level and AVCE courses in 2001 for Painsley Catholic High School students attending the Moorlands Sixth Form Centre

2001 is the last year for which national comparisons of performance are currently available.

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics*	13	92	87	46	43	5.8	5.3
Biology*	27	96	88	36	34	5.9	5.3
Physics*	9	100	88	78	40	8.9	5.7
Chemistry	16	93	90	38	43	5.5	5.9
Environmental science	9	100	89	22	30	5.3	5.2
Design and technology*	6	50	91	0	30	1.3	5.4
Information and communication technology*	4	100	85	25	23	4.5	4.4
Business*	16	94	92	19	32	5.0	5.5
Physical education*	8	100	93	38	25	6.3	4.9
Leisure and tourism (AVCE)	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.5	10.0
Art*	4	100	96	0	46	6.0	6.6
Art (AVCE)*	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.3	n/a
Music	1	100	94	100	35	8.0	5.6
Geography*	9	89	92	11	38	3.6	5.7
History*	8	100	88	50	35	8.0	5.5
Psychology (other social studies)	15	93	87	33	34	6.0	5.3
Sociology*	6	100	86	33	35	6.3	5.3
English language*	12	100	92	67	29	7.7	5.6
English literature*	10	100	95	55	37	6.9	5.9
French*	8	100	89	63	38	6.2	5.6
German	8	100	91	38	40	6.5	5.8
General studies	65	86	85	51	30	5.9	4.7

GCE Advanced Supplementary level

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	2	50	52	50	2	2.0	0.8
Psychology (other social studies)	3	100	75	66	11	3.0	1.3
General studies	2	100	77	0	19	1.5	1.3

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

In the subjects reported below, the latest year when A-level examination results can be compared with national standards is 2001. However, reference is made to 2002 A-level results in the text. There are, as yet, no national comparative data available for AS-level examination results in 2001 or 2002.

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, biology and physics, but chemistry and environmental science were sampled. Very good teaching in a Year 13 chemistry lesson helped students to increase their understanding of organic synthesis. Standards of attainment were well above average in this class. In Year 12, good teaching ensured that students were made well aware of the potential dangers of working with haloalkenes. Results in chemistry in 2001 were in line with the national average, and improved in 2002. One Year 12 environmental science lesson was observed. The teaching was good, as the teacher made good use of local knowledge and a relevant case study to help students explore the socio-economic effects of derelict land. Results in 2001 were in line with the national average but students did not achieve as well last year. Current standards are in line with those expected nationally.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The teaching and learning are good.
- The most competent students reach high standards

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- Students are not encouraged enough to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The subject lacks a sufficiently detailed development plan.

75. In 2001, students' A-level examination results were well above national averages. Five of the seven candidates in mechanics gained A or B grades. One of the four candidates gained grade A in statistics. Provisional 2002 A-level results from a similar number of entries are broadly in line with previous results. Results over time indicate no significant gender differences. Results in the Year 12 AS-level mechanics examination in 2001 were good and six of the 15 candidates gained A or B grades. Both students entered for statistics gained passes. The provisional 2002 results indicate a slight improvement on 2001. Most students conclude their courses and achieve, at least, the standards predicted from their results in GCSE examinations.

76. Standards of work seen are in line with recent results. Written work of students in Year 13 indicates full coverage of the course content. Their note taking and presentation of work are generally good and provides a sound base for revision purposes. Students produce good work, using geometric progressions and divergent and convergent series. They are adept in the use of complex numbers.

77. Year 12 students have now completed their first AS module test. Preparation for this was good overall and results above average. Gaps in their understanding left from the GCSE course have been addressed and they show good understanding of new mathematical techniques. Students' developing use and manipulation of surds and of co-ordinate geometry reflect their increasing understanding of mathematical techniques.
78. Teaching and learning are good. Students respect their teachers and as a result the climate for learning is extremely positive. In a Year 13 lesson explaining hypothesis testing, students worked confidently and accurately through the examples given. There was clear evidence of prior learning with appropriate use of standard deviation allied to normal distribution. Adept individual explanations of their work supported by good use of mathematical vocabulary further confirmed their secure grasp of the topic. The teachers' preparation of this lesson and subject knowledge were very good. In a Year 12 lesson, dealing with mechanics, students were able to apply what they had learnt to good effect using appropriate diagrams to support accurate numerical outcomes. Teachers ensure that students are fully aware of the aims of the lesson and understand the examples that they are asked to do. However, their marking of students' work is inconsistent and teachers do not always provide enough guidance to help students improve their work.
79. Students are remarkably mature in their attitudes. However, teachers tend to talk for too long and do not develop students' participation and independence sufficiently. Generally, students consider that they are well informed about progress, but a minority expressed concerns about ongoing assessment when very poor grades in their first module failed to confirm the targets previously set. Students use graphical calculators effectively, but they do not use computers enough to support their learning. Most students agreed that certain mathematical topics are challenging but remain confident that the choice of this subject was correct.
80. Subject leadership is good. The head of department has led the subject since the sixth form was set up. The results gained have been consistently well above average, particularly those of very competent students. The subject leader is aware of the developing strengths of individual teachers and is adept in using their skills and qualities to the best advantage. The analysis of subject outcomes is particularly strong. However this information is not used well enough for future planning and the subject lacks a clear development plan.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Standards in A and AS-level examinations are above average and current work is promising.
- Teaching is very good and teachers are enthusiastic.
- Students' attitudes are very positive.
- Leadership and management are very good and contribute to successful learning.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment of the A and B examination grades could be higher still.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.

81. Biology is taught to AS-level in Year 12 and to A-level in Year 13. Students invariably complete their courses. Recently, the number of students choosing to study biology has considerably increased and many more boys are now taking the subject. However, more girls than boys continue to take the subject.
82. Since 2000, there has been an increase in the proportion of students attaining the grades A and B in A-level examinations. Similarly, the percentage of students gaining the pass grades of A to E has been regularly above the national average. Results in 2001 were above the national average; standards were similar in 2002, although no national comparisons are yet available. Attainment at AS-level enables students to continue to A-level with confidence and students make good progress from their previous GCSE examination work.

83. The standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average, and students were achieving very well. In both Year 12 and Year 13, students showed that their earlier knowledge of biology was well established and that they had good understanding of key concepts. Students in Year 12 understand transport in plants and can successfully apply their knowledge to explain how some plants are adapted to survive in very dry conditions. In Year 13, they show good understanding of the role of hormones in the control of the menstrual cycle. Most students cope very well with the considerable demands of both AS and A-level examination courses. Students' communication skills are good and they contribute spontaneously to discussion and debate, as in the exciting and engaging Year 12 lesson seen on the heart and blood vessels.
84. The teaching generally is very good and in some lessons it is excellent. Students are taught by specialists whose knowledge and understanding of biology are outstanding. In a lesson on embryonic development and the functions of the placenta, the teacher was also able to bring nursing experience to bear and responses from students were mature and confident. Teachers have very good relationships with the students. Their expectations are high, and students work hard to meet these. In all of the lessons seen, preparation was excellent and students were aware of the aims of the lesson and were fully engaged with the new material. Students show clear understanding of the requirements for examination because teachers enable them to understand what is needed very well. Teachers' regular assessment of work and supporting commentary are exemplary and students consider that they are well informed and indicate that their learning needs are well supported. The use of ICT continues to be developed, but, in general, computers are not used sufficiently.
85. Students' learning and the quality of their work are very good. They take considerable pride in maintaining their files to a high standard and their notes and the recording of practical work are properly organised, and very well monitored. Work in lessons is well above national standards and students make very good progress. The careful guidance and advice from teachers are effective, although some students do not work independently enough.
86. Leadership and management of the subject are very good; standards have improved and there is clear direction to the development of the subject. The recent appointment of the joint head of biology has led to many changes which are supporting learning well. Following a period of turbulence in staffing, reported by Painsley to have occurred in the provision made by its partner school, the situation is now stable and teachers are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Documentation in biology is very well organised and new schemes of work and teaching strategies are proving helpful. The recent arrangements for enabling students to access subject material from home, through the Intranet, are proving successful. One intention in providing this extra resource is to enable students to improve their standards still further, including at the highest examination grades.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Standards in A-level and AS examinations are high.
- The teaching is very good.
- Students are very interested in the work and concentrate especially well.
- Leadership and management are very good

Areas for improvement

- Specialist accommodation for the subject is inadequate.
- There is a lack of extra-curricular activities in the subject.
- ICT is not used enough.

87. Physics is taught to AS-level in Year 12 and to A-level in Year 13. Students invariably complete the courses that they begin. In 2001, A-level examination results were very high compared with the national average. In 2002, more than half of the students again gained the higher grades, A or B. Results are consistently very good. All students regularly pass the examination and the proportion of those gaining grade A is regularly twice the national average. Of the 15 entries at AS-level in 2002, 13 passed and three gained the higher grades. Students are well prepared by the AS-level course to continue to A-level and reach high standards.

88. The standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average, and students were achieving very well. Students showed that their earlier knowledge of the subject was well founded and that they had good understanding of key concepts. Students in Year 13 understood work on sub-atomic particles and were able to calculate and demonstrate with confidence that the binding energy is an important factor in the stability of nuclei. In Year 12, students showed intelligent appreciation of wave-particle duality and confidently calculated the De Broglie wavelengths of an electron moving at low speeds. Another group showed very good understanding of quantum behaviour and, following a challenging introduction and engaging historical perspective, the level of argument and cogent debate about the photoelectric effect were exceptional. Most students cope very well with the considerable demands of both AS and A-level examination courses. Students' skills of communication are very good and they contribute spontaneously and well to discussion and debate.
89. The teaching is very good, and there is some excellent practice. Teachers' expectations are high, and students work very hard to meet these. Teachers have exceptional subject knowledge and understanding. They have very good relationships with the students and use time and resources effectively. In all lessons, students' responses were focused and mature and their confidence was very high. Teachers encourage students to make good use of ICT in some of their work but, in general, computers are not used enough. Teachers' preparation of lessons is excellent and students gain a very good understanding of the requirements of examinations in lessons that invariably run at a brisk pace. Teachers ensure that students are fully aware of the aims of the lesson and understand the activities that they are asked to do. Students are attentive and work productively. In Year 13, there is a general air of increasing maturity, responsibility and self-assessment, and students are quick to benefit and make very good progress. The regular assessment of work and the guidance provided by teachers are very good. Students feel well informed and recognise that their learning needs are well supported.
90. In the lessons observed, the quality of students' work was very good. They generally show good understanding and their files and the recording of practical work are complete. They respond well to guidance and advice from teachers and most students maintain their folders well, although a few show less well-developed skills in their notes, presentation and organisation of work. Recently the number of students choosing to do physics has steadily increased and so has the number of girls. However, in the present groups there are still many more boys than girls.
91. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Expectations and standards are very high and there is clear direction to the development of the subject. The subject leader manages colleagues with consideration and supports staff and students with much skill. This directly benefits students' learning. The mechanisms for regular assessment, recording and reporting are very effective. Documentation is very well organised and schemes of work and teaching strategies are supported by new texts and additional resources. Very recent improvements in specialist ICT equipment extend learning opportunities well. However, there is insufficient subject specialist accommodation and there is a lack of extra-curricular activities for the subject.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Product design and textiles were inspected and are reported in full below.

Product design and textiles

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

Strengths

- Excellent teaching enables students to become independent, self-motivated learners.
- Students' textiles work is very well researched and outstandingly creative.
- Standards in product design are rapidly improving.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' marking of work is not standardised enough.
- The department does not celebrate, exhibit or promote students' practical work and achievements enough.

92. The most recently validated A-level examination results in 2001 for product design were very low compared with national standards. Results improved in 2002, when nearly all students passed. Standards are also improving at AS-level and more students gained the highest grades in 2002 than in the previous year and achieved well in comparison with their other subjects. The textiles course was first examined at AS-level in 2002. There were few students but attainment was outstanding with a high

percentage gaining the A or B grades. Many more students have now joined the textiles courses. All students who started the AS textiles course in 2001 completed it. Most students complete their courses in product design.

93. Current standards of work seen are well above average in textiles and above average in product design, indicating very good achievement. For example in Year 13 textiles, recent work that focused on 'earth textiles' and the work of artists such as Andy Goldsworthy inspired students to change the displays in the classroom to reflect their most recent achievement. Students are immersed in excellent examples of the study of natural forms, textures and harmonies of colour, which challenge their design skills. The atmosphere in the textiles studio is calm yet inspiring. Students have empathy for materials and design concepts. They combine research from the Internet, make visits to exhibitions such as the Victoria and Albert in London, with a mature understanding of the need of designers to try ideas without the fear of failure. Students are bursting with confidence and can discuss the development of their design from its initial conception through a range of modifications. They make very good use of photography and fabric printing. They use computers to transfer images and experiment with the widest range of conventional and unconventional materials. The results seen in the textiles area are of the highest quality.
94. Product design is giving students a good range of opportunities. The revamping of the product design studio, the access to workshops in the main school and significantly improved use of ICT have started to raise standards. Many innovative projects in Years 12 and 13 have greater potential for success than much earlier work, because students can now base their research and specification in an area of their own interest. For example, a student's development of a high quality, innovative drawing tool initiated discussion between the student and teacher about research into patenting, so that the student's potentially marketable product design could be protected. Year 12 students establish very good design principles in their work on a case study based in the Sixth Form Centre. They researched, speed-sketched and designed for review of safety practices and use of equipment in the Centre. Students achieved very good success by using probing consumer research, photography and digital images. In addition, they enhanced their final designs by using an advanced computer package of professional standard to present the final design solution.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is excellent in textiles. Teachers are themselves inspiring designers and their enthusiasm is catching. Their confidence and trust in the students enables the learners to be independent and self-motivating. Consequently, the students achieve their full potential and gain skills to use in the future. Teachers' planning of lessons is very good and, for example, they enable students to use facilities outside the school. Year 12 used the JCB Centre at Staffordshire University for product design research. Teachers insist on students using technical terminology correctly and accurately. However, not all teachers place enough emphasis on rendering, annotation and exploiting the evaluation received from users of the products that are made in product design. The marking of these techniques is not sufficiently consistent across all elements of the product design course. Teachers make good, productive use of designers from the widest spectrum of contemporary design such as Galliano, Sir Norman Foster and Andy Warhol. This stimulates students to extend their own ideas and experience very well.
96. In textiles, students have worked together since Year 10. They feel this consistency has helped them to learn successfully, as they support each other and feel sufficiently confident to be creative. They are inspired by the excellent role models provided by textiles teachers. Product design has benefited from the recent appointment of a specialist teacher, working in partnership with other design and technology teachers.
97. Management of the department is good and a collegiate style is developing well. Monitoring is appreciated by staff but there is little opportunity to observe each other teach across the elements of design technology. This restricts sharing very good and excellent practice to raise the aspirations of all.

Review of performance overall is restricted because the performance of all teachers is not managed together as they are from different schools contributing to the Centre. Consequently, although development planning is comprehensive, the direction of the department as a whole is unclear. The department's work with students is an explicit expression of the school's motto "Know Yourself". However, it is missing opportunities to celebrate the gifts and talents of its students with a wider audience through exhibitions both in and out of school.

BUSINESS

The school provides advanced courses in business studies at AS and A-level. Students can also choose to study for the GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) at Intermediate level. These courses are reported on below.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- The teaching is very good and stimulates students' interest in the subject.
- The positive attitudes of students are helping to raise their achievement.
- The marking of work is very good.
- Subject leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used enough for teaching or learning.

98. Results in business studies have improved progressively over the last three years. In 2001, A-level examination results were below the national average. Results in 2002 improved, and most students did better than predictions from their prior performance indicated likely. The number of students attaining grades A or B rose and all students at least passed the examination. AS results improved between 2001 and 2002 when, although slightly fewer students gained the highest grades, the number of passes rose significantly. More boys study business studies than girls, but there is little overall difference in their respective attainment. Almost all students complete the courses that they begin. All students attained a pass standard in the Intermediate GNVQ course in 2001 and 2002; this standard was above the national average and above the predictions based on GCSE grades at the start of the course.
99. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. Year 13 students can apply their knowledge of decision-trees and use both the financial implications as well as their common sense to solve business problems in increasingly challenging case studies. A range of activities helped Year 12 AS students to consolidate knowledge gained from a company visit and to develop their skills of applying the principles of SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis to a national company. Another group classified different types of unemployment and the students showed a good understanding of its impact on the economy. In the Intermediate GNVQ course, Year 12 students widened their knowledge of theories of motivation through independent research from both the Internet and textbooks.
100. Students have excellent attitudes to the subject and this contributes well to their progress. They work willingly and productively. They participate in individual and group tasks and most develop well as independent learners and make their own thorough notes. In the AS and A-level courses, there is insufficient use of computers other than for word processing, but all students take pride in presenting their work neatly. Intermediate GNVQ students make very good use of the computer to give PowerPoint presentations. They make the most of opportunities to produce evidence of their competence in organisational and communication skills for the Diploma of Achievement.
101. The teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject, and wide experience of business and industry. This, combined with students' industrial visits, provides contexts for learning from the outside world of business which are then enhanced through stimulating and practical activities in the classroom. Teachers plan lessons well and end with a clear review of the learning objectives. However, they do not always involve students enough in this evaluation of learning. They mark work regularly and help students' learning by providing very good guidance for improvement.
102. Leadership and management of business studies are very good. The range of courses meets the needs of all potential sixth formers. Staff work very well together. They have a common vision for the continuous improvement of the subject, including the need to develop the use of computers as a tool for enhancing teaching and learning. There is a thorough programme for monitoring teaching, including positive support for less experienced teachers. Teachers are aware of students' individual needs, and work and examination targets are under constant review on all courses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school offers information and communication technology at AS and A-level and both courses are reported below.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving.
- Very good teaching enables students to learn and achieve very well.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Students' skills of note making are not developed enough.
- The range of qualifications available is not broad enough.

103. In 2001, A-level examination results were above the national average. Although there are no national comparisons available yet, 2002 results improved. AS results in both Years 12 and 13 showed many students achieving higher grades than in their other subjects. These results represent very good achievement by students. Numbers of students are increasing considerably. Nearly all students complete their courses.
104. Students' work seen confirms that current standards are above average and achievement is very good. Students are able to talk in depth about their understanding of issues surrounding the design of computerised systems. They enjoy the cut and thrust of debate when discussing business communication and information systems networks. They consolidate this work well through role-play, acting out aspects of communication such as queries at a help desk. As students in Year 13 approach their final examinations, carefully constructed prompt sheets encourage them to reflect on their portfolios. They are able to use their evaluations effectively to improve their final projects. However, students lack consistency in recording and analysing their evaluations of how well users manage the programmes. For example, they do not make enough use of the evidence available, such as photographs of their system being used, to highlight the importance of deciding how well things work from the viewpoint of a user for whom they are designed. Their use of annotation to illustrate the thinking and planning that went into developing a solution is also inconsistent.
105. Year 12 students have a clear understanding of the requirements of research. They identify real problems that can be improved by the use of computerised records. They are able to show how they can define and solve a problem in a system by using entity-relationship diagrams to analyse communication flow, further confirmed by screen dumps. The solutions derived from information systems are applied to the needs of a restaurant or a show jumping and dressage points system, and illustrated how well students related their work to personal experiences. As a result, they were able to give focused solutions. Initial hand designs of systems to be trialled were very good, especially from the girls.
106. All students show interest and enjoyment in the subject. For example, a Year 13 student's enthusiasm and readiness to lead a group brainstorm with the interactive whiteboard was notable. Students work very co-operatively to share experiences and debate their ideas. This consolidates their understanding very well. However, students do not consistently transfer their skills of note making to their ICT work. The ICT course attracts a majority of boys and teachers have to plan carefully to get the girls involved in discussions.
107. Overall, the teaching and learning are very good. There are some elements of excellent teaching but monitoring is not yet enabling paired observations by teachers in order to ensure more consistency. Teachers' personal experiences in industry and commerce make a significant contribution to students' learning, but this experience is not yet used effectively to offer students a wider range of accreditation in the subject. Teaching is rigorous yet maintains an element of humour that challenges and enriches the learning. Year 12's introduction to the original 1984 Data Protection Act and the 1998 update illustrated a very innovative teaching approach. A data-capture form challenged students' personal ideas and probed their thinking and skills of deduction, to identify the principles associated with the legislation. Teachers

assess students' understanding very well through individual and group question and answer sessions. They write clear, helpful comments on students' coursework and homework. This flexibility in assessment helps students to identify shortcomings, and target what needs to be improved. Teachers have high expectations of students' maturity and willingness to work. They involve any students who are struggling with careful planning and the effective use of peer support.

108. The subject is very well led and managed. All teachers are well involved and this helps the success of the subject. Staff are valued for their individual contribution to development planning and to getting good results. This includes the watchful and responsive support of the departmental technician to both students and teachers. Very good accommodation has been further enhanced by the generosity of Staffordshire University in the refurbishment of one room. Resources are very well monitored and maintained. Staffing is now more settled.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education, but travel and tourism, which is offered for the AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education), was also sampled. In the sample Year 12 lesson, the six Painsley High School students attained above average standards in their module based on types of communication. Following the completion of their individual market research, students showed a good understanding of ways in which advertising influences people and how their response changes, as they get older. Very good teaching extended students' learning well.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Standards are consistently well above the national average and were at their highest ever in 2002.
- The teaching is very good and enables students to make very good progress and learn very well.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, and sometimes excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of ICT.
- Accommodation is barely satisfactory.

109. Standards attained by students in A-level examinations are consistently well above the national average. From 1998 to 2001, the percentage of candidates attaining the A or B grades was significantly above average and only two students of the many who entered did not pass the examination. Students regularly achieve better results in physical education than in the other subjects that they take. Results in 2002 were outstanding; all students passed the A-level examination and almost three-quarters attained grades A or B. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Year 12 students also attain very good standards at AS-level. In 2001, over half achieved the A or B grades. In 2002, the results were even better. All students passed and well over half gained grades A or B.
110. In lessons seen in Year 13, the students reach well above average standards overall. They have very good knowledge of the influence of social and political elements on the development of their chosen sport. They also have very good knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary. Although there is a range of standards the majority of students are working towards grades in the A to C range.
111. Standards seen in Year 12 AS-lessons are above average overall. All students are working towards at least a pass grade with half of the group achieving very good standards. Students know the names and roles of the national organisations that influence participation and the development of excellence in sport in the UK. They use technical words very well. In one practical lesson, the standards of the small group in cricket were good overall and one performer was exceptionally talented and achieved very well.
112. Teaching is very good and ensures that students make very good progress. Teachers plan lessons very effectively, with clear progression of learning activities. They prepare excellent handouts and resource packs. They have very good knowledge and prepare very challenging tasks that enable students to work

independently in small groups to prepare very good presentations. Teachers use a very good range of teaching styles and work very effectively with individuals and small groups when challenging students to link theory to their chosen sports. Relationships are excellent; teachers and students show each other mutual respect.

113. Students always have very good attitudes and enjoy their work. They are sensible and enter willingly into discussion. They work extremely well together in pairs and small groups when preparing for discussion or presentations. Attitudes in practical activities are excellent. Students listen to advice and they are very keen when preparing for practical assessments.
114. Leadership and management by the teacher who is delegated responsibility to develop sixth form courses are very good. Schemes of work and resources are very well prepared to support the sections of the A-level and AS courses taught by Painsley staff. Procedures to assess and monitor students' progress are good and are used effectively to set target grades which are shared with students. Teaching is well monitored by senior and departmental staff. Not all students have opportunity for timetabled recreational physical education but extra – curricular opportunities are very good and teams and individuals gain very good success locally, regionally and nationally. Accommodation for lessons on subject theory is mainly good, but there is no dedicated room for physical education and the room used for the AS course is too small. Outdoor facilities are plentiful but of mediocre quality. Indoor accommodation for practical activities is barely satisfactory. Although there is some use of video recordings to analyse performance, teachers and students do not make enough use of ICT to support learning.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not provide courses in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design, which students can study at AS, A-level or AVCE. Drama and music were also sampled. Drama has been introduced as an AS-level subject this year. In the Year 12 lesson seen, very good teaching helped students to consolidate their understanding of Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* in preparation for a forthcoming examination. Standards were well above average. Two music lessons were observed. In a Year 13 A-level class, the three students made very good progress because the teacher gave excellent advice about how to compose and perform to a high standard. Standards were in line with the national average. The Year 12 AS-level class was well taught. Standards were above average and students made good progress with an analysis of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- The teaching and learning are good and students achieve well, especially from the individual guidance that they receive.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- There is the lack of a sense of urgency in some lessons.
- The approach to drawing is often not bold or broad enough.

115. In the A-level examination in 2001, results were average. In 2002, the as yet nationally unverified results were of a similar standard. Numbers of students taking the examination were too small to make meaningful comparisons between boys' and girls' performance. In the AS-level examination in 2001, most students attained at least a pass grade, although few of the higher grades were gained. In 2002, results in the AS examination showed significant improvement. In the AVCE examinations in 2001 and 2002, the numbers of students were too small to make reliable comparisons with national results, but all students gained at least a pass grade. Most students complete their courses.

116. In the work seen of current Year 12 students, standards are above average. They are achieving well in relation to predication made from their GCSE examination grades in the subject. Their work in colour is bright and bold, and they create lively abstract designs, based on the work of Frank Stella, which show a growing knowledge of the formal elements of composition. They make expressive sculptures in a variety of media, including welded metal, wire and natural materials. Students also sketch outdoors very confidently, and produce bright studies of the plant forms seen in a local garden centre. Their experimental work in sketchbooks, however, is too restricted in scope, and lacks a sense of discovery.
117. In the work seen of current Year 13 students, standards are above average, on both the A-level and the AVCE courses. Their achievement is good, and they are making good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students draw accurately from observation, and clearly represent the cold hard qualities of hand tools, such as spanners and wrenches. They use colour carefully, exploring illusion in paintings, which are informed by the work of Vaserey. They use ICT well, to document sculpture, or to explore landscape themes. Their approach to drawing, however, while careful and accurate, is not bold or broad enough to develop fully their skills in this area.
118. Teaching and learning are good. A major strength of the teaching is the high level of individual advice and guidance which students receive. Teachers do this by spending considerable time with each student, discussing the work, and how to improve it. For example, in one lesson using charcoal and chalk, the teacher circulated around the class, showing individual students how to draw light and dark tones in curving lines. These followed the contours of the objects, creating the illusion of three-dimensional form. Students followed this advice, tried hard and were successful. Good learning was the result. Teachers are also very encouraging, and build good relationships with the students. However, in a small number of lessons, the atmosphere is comfortable, and lacks a real sense of urgency. Students begin to chat, without fully concentrating on their work, and the pace slows. This restricts their learning to not above a satisfactory level in those lessons.
119. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good, and they appreciate the frequent individual advice and help that they receive from teachers. This helps to support their good achievement. The accommodation, while satisfactory overall, is partly shared with another subject. This restricts the displays, and makes it more difficult to exemplify high standards. In addition, the tables provided are too small, restricting the opportunities to work on a larger scale regularly enough.
120. Leadership and management are good. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored, and there has been a focus on improving standards. This has been successful, and standards are beginning to rise, although the improvement has not yet been fully reflected in examination results. The subject also makes a good contribution to students' cultural development. For example, they study a wide range of artists, take part in workshops, and visit galleries and other places of interest.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography, history and sociology, but psychology was also sampled. Two psychology lessons were observed. In a Year 12 lesson, good teaching ensured that all students were fully involved in a lively discussion about issues of perception. In Year 13, very good teaching ensured that students were able to apply their existing knowledge to a new topic very effectively. Psychology is increasing in popularity and last year 33 students studied the course at A-level, gaining good results.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Students achieved impressive standards in the 2002 AS examinations.
- The teaching is very good and teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of students.
- Fieldwork enquiries contribute very well to students' learning.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Some teaching does not always provide enough opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Information from assessment is not always used fully to direct teaching.

121. In 2001, results in the A-level examination were well below the national average. In the first AS examination in 2001, few students gained an A or B grade although all gained passes. Since then, standards have recently risen considerably. In the 2002 A-level examination, results improved greatly and standards were similar to the above average results of 2000. At AS-level in 2002, 15 out of 24 students achieved an A or B grade and all candidates passed the examination. These are impressive improvements in standard. The lower standards in 2001 were due, in part, to long-term staff absences. This had discouraged higher attaining pupils in Year 11 from choosing geography as a sixth form subject. The vast majority of students complete the courses that they begin and many continue with geography from Year 12 into Year 13.
122. Students' standards in the lessons seen and in written work analysed during the inspection, confirms that they make very good progress. The contribution of fieldwork through geographical enquiries is very strong. It supports aspects of physical and human geography well. Geographical skills are well developed through studies of the hydrological cycle in Year 12 and the coastline in Year 13. The work of above average students illustrates a depth of geographical knowledge and understanding. Their well-organised work includes concise notes and clear diagrams, data collection and graphs. They use ICT well. An extended piece of students' written coursework illustrated how highly they achieve.
123. In Year 12, students achieve well. Below average students do not always recognise their work is not detailed enough for them to progress well from their standard in GCSE examinations. Boys take less pride in their work than girls. A few persistent and simple spelling errors remain. In a Year 12 lesson, students prepared for a teacher led enquiry in which below-average students found difficulty in linking the models of theories of urban development with practical applications. However, above-average attainers readily matched classified zones of development associated with inner city and outer-ring housing.
124. In Year 13, students achieve highly. Three-quarters of the group are attaining at an above-average standard and readily compare the relative costs, advantages and disadvantages of transport systems in the management of contrasting urban environments. They have very good study skills. They mark and reference their detailed notes very well for ease of revision.
125. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a depth of geographical knowledge and understanding. They plan their lessons very well and use an impressive range of teaching styles that readily engage students in their learning. Many lessons emphasise literacy and numeracy skills very well. Teachers expect students to achieve highly and students, all of whom are keen to succeed, are stimulated by the very good progress that they make. Frequent checks on students' knowledge and their understanding of key terms are made through purposeful question and answer sessions. However, occasionally teachers do not require students to expand their answers fully enough. In a Year 12 lesson, the video excerpt left insufficient time for them to read two detailed case studies. Insufficient focus on analysis of one centre of urban migration restricted learning and did not provide sufficient opportunity for students' independent learning. Teachers mark work regularly and supportively to help to raise students' standards. Clear targets for improvement are set. However, much of the teaching is focused on the requirements of the examination, and teachers do not base their work sufficiently on assessment of students' needs from analysis of their prior attainment.
126. The department is very well led and managed. It has been re-vitalised by the head of department who, together with recently appointed colleagues, has established a confident team who work very well together. There is regular monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice. The department has a strong sense of purpose. Standards have risen impressively. The departmental documentation is clear and schemes of work are detailed. The collegiate management of the sixth form works well in this subject, with each head of department from the contributing schools taking overall responsibility for alternating year groups.

History

Overall, provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students gain well above average results in A-level examinations.
- The very good teaching and the excellent attitudes of students ensure that learning is very good.
- Evidence is imaginatively chosen and used very well to assist learning.

Areas for improvement

- Individual or small group work does not always fully exploit learning opportunities.

127. A-level examination results in 2001 and 2000 were well above the national average. The grades gained in 2002 were higher still when five of the 11 students gained grade A or B and all students passed. Students attained exceptionally well in the AS examination in 2001; they also did very well in 2002. Students begin their courses with well-developed historical skills and a mature sense of history. They then regularly exceed predictions in relation to their prior results in GCSE examinations. A similar number of boys and girls take the subject and there is no significant difference in their attainment. Very few students do not complete their courses.
128. The work seen during the inspection confirms that the standards attained by current students in both Years 12 and 13 are well above average. History is a popular subject and students are highly motivated to learn. As a result, almost all students are achieving very well. For example, impressive initiative and effort were shown by Year 13 students in their own shared PowerPoint presentation on *The Nature of Russian Politics*. This revealed effectively that Stalin's collectivisation and industrialisation were instruments to achieve increased totalitarian control. The presenters then prepared notes, which brought out very clearly sympathy with the workers for whom dismissal was the penalty for missing a day's work, and provided these for the rest of the class. Students build effectively on their knowledge and understanding of GCSE examination work. Higher attaining students' work showed very good analysis and the critical use of different kinds of evidence. They readily related concurrent European and American events - for example, through the inclusion of illustrations and graphs in leaflets to describe the Wall Street Crash and its impact on American prosperity. Their synthesis of evidence drew readily on contemporary events and unemployment in Europe. However, lower attaining students are less selective in their information from the Internet and pay too little attention to analysis. The emphasis that teachers give to the planning of essays and the significance of concluding paragraphs in written answers enable students to raise their standards very well.
129. In Year 12, students analyse evidence very well and draw perspectives from it. In a lesson on aspects of Soviet society in which work was in small groups, students showed good understanding of the evidence. For example, one group showed good perception in recognising the importance of the cinema to different social groups in Soviet society in the 1920s. In another class, students were able to analyse how public opinion was manipulated to support Nazism.
130. Teaching and learning are very good. One lesson seen was of excellent quality. Students achieve very well because teachers are skilled in directing students' enthusiasm for the subject into very successful learning. Teachers constantly challenge students to judge the significance of events. For example, students were asked to judge the achievements of the policy of détente from 1963, and the contribution of Henry Kissinger as a peacemaker. Teachers enable students to select sources of evidence and quotations in a discriminating way to support their arguments. Their detailed planning of lessons invariably includes an interesting and stimulating range of activities. They use examples of evidence imaginatively to promote independent learning and work in small groups. However, teachers do not always fully exploit the learning opportunities in individual or small group work, because too little time is sometimes given to oral presentations or role-play. Teachers guide students to organise their written work effectively for ease of reference and their regular marking includes suggestions for improvement, even when work is of the highest standard. They set clear targets and students effectively evaluate their own work against these.
131. The history department is very well led and effectively managed by the acting head of department. The history team is enthusiastic and very willing to support one another in their new roles and responsibilities. Monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice are thorough and support the very good quality of teaching and learning very well.

Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision for sociology is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and structure lessons well.
- Most students have a good level of knowledge and understanding.
- Year 13 students use sociological terms and apply theory with confidence.

Areas for development

- Assessment and marking are not always closely enough related to learning objectives and, consequently, students are not always guided well enough on how to improve.
- Some students are not actively involved enough in class discussions

132. A-level examination results in 2001, when a small number of students took the course, were above the national average, based on the average point score attained. In 2002, a much larger entry gained much higher grades. All students passed and half attained the A or B grades. Ten of the 28 students gained the highest grades in the 2002 AS examination. Boys and girls attain equally well, although few boys follow the courses. Once they are committed to their course, nearly all students complete it.
133. The standards of students' work seen were above average in Year 13 and broadly average in Year 12. Students demonstrate a good level of knowledge in their written work. Higher attaining students annotate the teachers' handouts and produce their own notes. They understand and can apply theory. Lower attaining students highlight handouts but show less evidence of using the information and developing their own ideas. In discussion, most Year 13 students and some in Year 12 use sociological language well. They make perceptive comments. However, lower attaining students resort to assertion and anecdote. Students' written work varies from that which uses evidence and theory well in support of an argument, to simplistic statements based solely on the teacher's notes. Files are generally well kept, although there are no page or cross references, limited use of glossaries and no indexes.
134. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All teachers plan their lessons well from an appropriate scheme of work for each module. They make the focus of lessons clear. They usually begin with a resume of the last lesson and the most effective teachers engage all students in this, challenging them well to develop their answers. In one lesson, the teacher effectively used students' previous learning to illustrate myths and moral panics. However, the reliance on voluntary contributions meant that the understanding of non-participants could not be tested. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They make links between different modules, for instance using Douglas's work on the family to explain aspects of achievement in education. They build on students' knowledge and make reference in lessons to the work of sociologists used by students in their coursework. In one lesson, the teacher's use of closed questions limited students' active involvement and reinforced passivity. In another, the learning was good because the teacher made the subject relevant and accessible, and used students' very recent experiences of 'Rag Week' to illustrate sociological concepts.
135. Teachers provide students with good resources; these include definitions, original evidence and evidence drawn from research. They make the resources of the University of Staffordshire library available to students. Although the specialist vocabulary – for example, words such as 'patriarchy' and 'ideology' - is difficult for some students, they learn successfully because teachers check the understanding of all students. Students are then able to use sociological terms and apply theory with confidence for themselves. In most lessons, learning is good because teachers use a suitable range of methods. In one lesson these did not challenge the students enough. In another, however, the teacher asked open questions effectively, for instance, "What can we say about socialisation?" so that students had to reflect before responding. Marking and assessment are inconsistent. There is little reference to assessment objectives in lessons or in written work. As a result, students receive insufficient written guidance on how to reach or exceed their targets and some students are unsure of their target grades. However, when students are given learning targets, there is clear evidence of progress.
136. Students have positive attitudes towards sociology. The most competent respond well when faced with difficult evidence and the high expectations of teachers. They settle to discussion in small groups quickly. In whole-class discussion, some students are passive and make insufficient contribution, but most speak knowledgeably and with good understanding of the subject. Some teachers engage quieter students, encouraging their responses with good humour, but sometimes learning is limited because more vocal students dominate the discussion. At other times, discussion supports learning well. For

example, a student was able to question the teacher's interpretation of the history of girls' underachievement.

137. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has made a good start, co-ordinating schemes of work and introducing half-termly moderation. However, the monitoring of teaching and students' work and the documenting of departmental policies and best practice are not yet fully in place. The teachers form an enthusiastic team with clear plans to ensure further development of the subject.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English and French, but work in German was also sampled. German A level examination results were above average in 2001, and the students' average point score was similar in 2002. One A level and one AS German lesson were observed where teaching and learning were good and very good, respectively.

English

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good and enables students to learn well.
- Teachers work very effectively as a team and are overcoming the effects of recent difficulties in staffing.
- Students have achieved well in most recent years.

Areas for improvement

- The procedures for monitoring provision for the subject are not clear enough.

138. Until 2002, students attained well above average standards in both subjects in A-level examinations and gained impressive results in English language. However, the subject has recently suffered from a lack of continuity of specialist staff to teach in the sixth form. A-level results in English literature were well above the national average in 2001, but they were lower in 2002. In English language, A-level examination results in 2001 were very high in comparison with the national average, and nearly two in three of thirteen students gained the highest grades. In 2002, only six students entered the examination; the highest attainer reached grade B. In AS examinations for English literature and English language in 2002, all students passed and a good number gained grades A or B, especially in literature. Although the AS courses equipped most students to continue their studies to A-level, students did not achieve as well as expected in either subject.
139. Current standards reflect the lower 2002 results and are in line with those to be expected nationally. However, the school took action to deploy staff more effectively and students are now achieving well, as shown by the improved results of several students who have re-taken AS-level examinations.
140. Year 13 English literature students have a very sound understanding of the themes, plot and relationships between characters in the texts they are studying. They are well aware of the social and historical background to texts. For example, they could explain clearly how Hardy's portrayal of *A Wife in London* typifies the experience of some women in the First World War. They can readily identify the literary techniques that writers use, but only higher attaining students are confident in the more precise analysis of how these are used to create meaning and effect. Most English language students use specialist vocabulary appropriately to help with their analysis of texts. However, they have difficulty in carrying out and reporting their own research systematically. For example, most of their linguistic investigations lack a clear focus or methodology to enable them to analyse their findings in sufficient depth to gain a high grade.
141. There is a wide range of attainment in Year 12. The most competent English literature students are able to write mature essays that analyse Margaret Atwood's portrayal of a dystopian society in *The Handmaid's Tale* with close reference to the text. Others tend to re-tell the story rather than analyse the text and low attaining students have great difficulty in making a personal response to poems. English

language students are developing a good understanding of grammatical and phonological features of different dialects and accents.

142. The quality of teaching is good and enables students to learn well. Teachers know their subject very well. As a result, they ask challenging questions during well managed class discussions that help students to extend their ideas and thoughts. They also provide a good range of resources and background information for students, to help them understand the views of different critics and theorists. Sometimes, however, this prevents students from developing a more personal response to texts as they read the views of others before forming their own opinion. Teachers often offer very detailed advice when marking and this helps students to improve their essays considerably. This level of support is inconsistent though and lower-attaining students in particular would benefit from more support in the structuring of essays and language investigations. Teachers plan their lessons well, with a good progression of activities that consolidate students' understanding. In the best lessons there is a good mix of discussion in whole classes and in small groups, but in two English language lessons teachers gave students insufficient time to work together. As a result, less confident students did not contribute as much to discussion as they might have done.
143. Students are very hard working. They take copious notes during lessons and organise their files very well, although these do not contain much evidence of independent research. They have rightly been concerned about the lack of specialist teachers and the frequent changes of supply teachers last term. However, they also appreciate the good teaching and support that they now receive. Nearly all students complete their AS or A-level examination courses.
144. Teachers work very effectively as a team and their joint commitment has enabled them to limit the effects of staffing difficulties. The head of English at Painsley High School and the most experienced English teacher at Moorlands Centre provide excellent support for three newly qualified teachers. However, responsibilities for management of the subject are not specifically allocated and rely too much on teachers' evident goodwill. As a result, procedures for monitoring provision for English are not clear enough and priorities for the future development of the subject are not identified.

French

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

Strengths

- Students use a wide range of expression in speaking and writing and attain well above average standards in A level examinations.
- Teaching is very good and some is excellent.
- Students are enthusiastic and learn very well independently, especially with the use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Some students' pronunciation does not match the quality of their extensive vocabulary.
- Grammatical errors spoil some written work that is otherwise of high quality.

145. Students' results in A-level examinations have risen since 1997. In 2001, standards were well above average and almost two-thirds of candidates attained grades A or B. In 2002, students sustained the strong standards of 2001, and attained the same average point score. The school's data show that students maintain the high standards of their GCSE examination results and achieve very well over the sixth form courses. Very few students fail to complete their courses, and the vast majority of those who take the AS-level examinations do so successfully and go on to take A-level. They show very positive attitudes and work with enthusiasm.
146. Standards are well above average from the evidence of the work seen during the inspection. In Year 13, students converse effectively. They competently exchange and justify opinions on a variety of topics, such as the channel tunnel to capital punishment. The authentic language encountered in videos of French television and through research using the Internet is rapidly adopted. A wide range of words and structures is used with increasing skill and fluency. Despite the very good French they regularly hear from teachers, the French assistant and recordings, the accents of a number of students lack the distinct features of authentic intonation to match the range and complexity of the words and grammatical

structures that they use. However, in Year 12, when students become fully caught up in the topics under discussion, as in an excellent lesson which drew on the social and moral perspectives apparent in the work of Jean-Jacques Goldman, their intonation and expression become more authentic. In the written work of both Year 12 and Year 13 students, however, errors and omissions frequently spoil otherwise good, and often very good, work so that results are potentially compromised.

147. Teaching is very good. Teachers are highly competent linguists who match work very well to students' needs. In consequence, students develop confidence and competence well in all linguistic skills. Grammatical points are taught very well in the context of the lesson, and this supports accurate communication. Regular assessment and constructive individual feedback show students how to improve. Teachers provide students with very good strategies to research and apply their skills independently, and enable them to use the language in real-life situations. Students' files show that they regularly locate and re-use information from the Internet; they submit homework by e-mail.
148. Very good leadership and management ensure critical self-evaluation and review. Examination results are thoroughly analysed. This practice has helped to sharpen the focus of teaching and learning, promote very good achievement and, consequently, high attainment.