

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST CLEMENT DANES SCHOOL**

Chorleywood

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117593

Headteacher: Dr Josephine Valentine

Reporting inspector: Dr Anthony Beaver  
20224

Dates of inspection: 23 – 27 September 2002

Inspection number: 249604

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chenies Road Chorleywood Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD3 6EW
Telephone number:	01923 284169
Fax number:	01923 284828
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs R Hadfield
Date of previous inspection:	7 May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20224	Dr A R Beaver	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9275	Ms C Kalms	Lay inspector	Community	<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
14596	Dr A Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Special educational needs Religious education	
31100	Mr G Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1782	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Business studies	
1994	Ms H Olds	Team inspector	Educational inclusion History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
16950	Dr C Orr	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages	
12276	Mr T Payne	Team inspector	Music	
15971	Mr M Pye	Team inspector	Physical education	
3731	Mr W Robson	Team inspector	English Drama	
6432	Dr M Sewter	Team inspector	Science	
18638	Mr C Shaw	Team inspector	Art	
11300	Mr B Smith	Team inspector	Geography	

2183	Dr P Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17404	Ms J Tolley	Team inspector	Spanish	
20847	Mr K Wilson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

The inspection contractor was:

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Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Clement Danes School is attended by pupils who come from many primary schools in Hertfordshire and neighbouring education authorities. The school has a very long tradition and moved to its present site in 1976. It was formerly based in London, where it retains links and receives financial support from the Holborn Estate Charity. It achieved the status of a Language College in 1999. It is comprehensive and has Voluntary Aided status which allows selection for entry of up to ten per cent of pupils because their academic potential is above-average and a further ten per cent to be selected for performance in art, drama, music or sport. The admissions criteria favour those who have connections with the school, including the children of staff. The school provides education for 1090 girls and boys aged 11 to 18 years, of whom 198 are in the sixth form. Approximately equal numbers of girls and boys attend the school in each year group, apart from Year 10 where there are more boys than girls. Overall, it is of average size compared with other secondary schools. The school is very popular and receives many more applications each year than it has places available. Fewer pupils than is typical either joined or left the school other than at the usual ages of 11, 16 or above. Of the two-thirds of parents who have indicated their ethnic origin to the school, three per cent have minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from the Indian sub-continent. Few have English as an additional language and their first languages include other European languages and Gudjurati and Cantonese. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is below-average. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs, including those with statements of special need, is below-average. These pupils have a wide range of physical, emotional, behavioural and other specific learning needs. There were difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers for business in the 2001-2 academic year. When pupils join the school at age 11, their levels of attainment span the full range and are broadly average overall, although there are fewer low attaining pupils than is typical in most schools.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

St Clement Danes is a very good school with some excellent features. Pupils attain well above-average standards compared with all schools. Teaching is good and much is of very good quality. The leadership and management are outstanding. The school's above-average income is used well to provide good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils attain well above-average results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations and standards have improved substantially since the last inspection.
- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and commands the confidence and support of governors, staff and parents.
- The teaching is good and much is very good and ensures that pupils of very varied competence and ethnic background achieve well.
- The pupils have very positive attitudes to the school, usually behave in an exemplary manner and relationships are very good.
- As a Language College, the school has greatly extended its links with the wider community and the range of learning opportunities it makes available to pupils.

#### **What could be improved**

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in some subjects across the curriculum.
- The accommodation for dining, art and music.
- Consistency in the marking of work and the use of assessment data to set targets to help pupils to improve their standards further.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Since the last inspection in May 1996, substantial improvement has taken place. The key issues identified at the last inspection have largely been resolved. Above all, the school has improved pupils' standards of attainment in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations very well. Standards

have risen from below the national average to be, consistently, well above it. Sixth form examination results have improved from below-average to average and 2002 results show further substantial improvement. The curriculum has clear aims and is well managed. Assessment data are now used more effectively to support pupils' progress in most subjects. The school's management and judgement of the quality of its own work have improved and planning for change is now managed exceptionally well. The key issue to link staff training to school priorities has been equally well managed and the school is now able to aspire to become a provider of training to other institutions. Literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) have been well developed across a number of subjects. Although more recently established, a consistent approach to the use of numeracy across the curriculum is developing satisfactorily. Religious education is now fully provided for in Years 7 to 11, but not in the sixth form. Assemblies are of good quality and provide the opportunity for an act of worship, but this is not made available daily for all pupils. Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved considerably.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and by 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**
	1999	2000	2001***	2001***
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	B
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

\* The average point score is the average of the overall points gained by pupils and 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 which contain a similar proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country. There are no similar school comparisons at A-level.

\*\*\* 2001 is the last year for which GCSE and A-level national comparisons are currently available. Reference is made to 2002 results in the text below.

Pupils achieve well from entry to the school at age 11 to attain well above the national average standard in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9. They attain very well in these tests when compared with the standards reached by similar schools. The trend in results in the last five years has been upwards, at a higher rate than the national trend, and advanced further in 2002.

Pupils of all levels of competence and ethnic background in Years 10 and 11 progress very well. They reach well above-average standards in attaining five or more GCSE A\* to C and A\* to G grades. Everyone gains at least one GCSE grade, a very high level of performance compared nationally, particularly by pupils with special educational needs. GCSE examination results compare well with those of similar schools. In 2001, the school's substantial improvement in performance was recognised by a DfES Achievement Award, because of the greatly improved average point score it had attained since 1998. The significant difference in the performance of girls and boys in the 2001 result was not repeated in 2002. Boys did not achieve as well as girls, but the difference was much less than the national difference in the performance of girls and boys. The school sets itself challenging, but well judged, targets for GCSE examinations and usually at least achieves these.

In work seen during the inspection in English, pupils used a good range of vocabulary, read fluently and wrote accurately. Their mathematical skills were good, including their work in algebra. They showed much competence in scientific investigations. The writing of talented pupils in French was impressive and the musical performance of instrumentalists was equally strong. Much imaginative designing and making was seen in design and technology and pupils' practical skills in physical education were often impressive.



In the sixth form, students usually attain standards in AS and A-level examinations that might reasonably be expected from their earlier performances in GCSE examinations. The school enables students to add satisfactory value to their achievements. AS examination results have enabled students to continue to A-level successfully. A-level standards have been equal to the national average in all recent years to 2001, the last year for which national comparisons are, so far, available. However, in 2002, the average point score in A-level examinations improved considerably, from 16.4 in 2001, to 18.8 in 2002.

In all years, girls and boys achieve well, irrespective of their different ethnic backgrounds. Talented pupils and those with a wide range of special physical, emotional and specific learning needs achieve the standards that they should, because work is well adapted to help them to learn successfully.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good and often excellent. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to work. They respect each other and share responsibility as equal members of the school community.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Usually exemplary. Pupils behave very well in lessons and act most responsibly when they are not directly supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils act sensibly and maturely. Relationships are very good. Pupils are responsible and eager participants in the life of the school community.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is much higher than is typical in secondary schools.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
Quality of teaching	Good	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 provides well for the varied needs and ethnic backgrounds of pupils, including those who are capable and talented and those with differing special educational learning needs, such as difficulties with literacy. Some individuals with physical impairments are helped to achieve very well. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are strong and they are very skilled in managing pupils through mutual respect and very good relationships. Their planning and organisation were strong in all but a few lessons that were less than satisfactory overall. In these, the pace of work was sometimes misjudged and either too fast or too slow to meet all pupils' needs; teachers often talked for too long in these lessons. The few lessons in which teaching was less than satisfactory were largely in Years 7 to 9. The teaching of science was very good, especially in Years 10 and 11. English and mathematics were well taught. Although the teaching of ICT was good, overall, teachers did not use it enough in art, business, geography and religious education. Music, drama and religious education were very well taught. Literacy and numeracy were taught effectively to meet pupils' needs. Pupils learn successfully because they work hard, concentrate well in lessons, have very good relationships and take much responsibility for their own learning and progress.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Language College status has extended provision very well. Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent. Statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' very wide-ranging needs are well met; those with physical impairments are well supported. Those with learning difficulties achieve very well in public examinations.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils involved have other European and some Asian languages as their first languages and all achieve the standards that they should.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very well provided for and shown in their very good personal development. Provision for their spiritual development is good and has greatly improved since the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils to enable them to achieve their best. Some health and safety procedures are not up to date.
Partnership with parents	Very good. Parents have confidence in the school and are generally very pleased with what it achieves for their children.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and she and key staff have enabled the school to avoid complacency and to improve standards substantially by establishing common purposes through very effective planning for change.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very strongly committed to the school and support the headteacher in ensuring improvement. They have guided the school astutely through many substantial changes. They inform themselves well about standards, and obtain and deploy resources effectively to benefit the pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Results of tests and examinations and the work of individual teachers are closely analysed, and action is taken to secure improvement where necessary. The system to ensure that teaching is of good quality is effective. Planning enables all to participate in setting targets for improvement, although the means of judging progress towards the targets that are set are not always sufficiently precise to allow outcomes to be evaluated accurately.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funding is used well. The school seeks and generally achieves the best value when buying goods and services that enable pupils to achieve well. Staffing is sufficient. Accommodation is adequate for needs except in music, art and the dining area; some is of excellent quality. Learning resources support pupils' and students' interest to work independently very well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school has high expectations of their children who make good progress.</li><li>• Leadership, teaching and behaviour are good.</li><li>• They feel confident to approach the school with problems.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homework.</li><li>• Information on their children's progress and closer involvement with the school.</li><li>• The quality of learning in ICT.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. They found that homework was set regularly in almost all the situations in which it was required. It was usually suitably challenging and helped pupils to extend their learning. Parents receive sufficient information on progress through regular consultation and information evenings, reports and individual contacts with staff. Teaching, learning and equipment for ICT have much improved since 1996 and are satisfactory. However, insufficient use is made of ICT in art, business, geography and religious education.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form consists of 198 girls and boys in approximately equal numbers. It is of above-average size. The percentage of students continuing their education at age 16 is above-average and most proceed from Year 11 into the sixth form. A small proportion of students join the sixth form from other schools at age 16. A very small percentage of students have minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from the Indian sub-continent. The school's requirements for entry to the extensive range of advanced courses on offer are appropriately based on their performance in GCSE examinations.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective. Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection, when students were attaining below-average results. Standards have consistently reached the national average in recent years. They improved even further in 2002. The teaching is very good and enables students to learn successfully and achieve at least what they should. The sixth form is exceptionally well led and managed and gives students a good, cost-effective range of opportunities to enhance their personal development and qualifications.

### Strengths

- The standards attained in A-level examinations have improved substantially since the last inspection.
- Teaching is very good and helps students to extend their subject knowledge and understanding very well.
- Students are exceptionally mature and responsible, behave in an exemplary manner and contribute very well to the life of the school and community.
- The sixth form is exceptionally well led and managed.
- Students are provided with excellent opportunities to enrich their learning beyond the curriculum.

### What could be improved

- Raising standards in A-level examinations further to ensure that students achieve equally well in all their subjects.
- The accommodation for dining, art and music is too cramped to meet all needs.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> After a period of staffing changes, A-level examination results are rising from below-average in 2001. Much teaching is good and students' very positive attitudes support their achievement well.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are very good. Students' performance is assessed and monitored meticulously by leadership of high quality. Students' work seen during the inspection much exceeds the average A-level standards attained in some recent years.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Students have very mature attitudes and respond exceptionally well to very good teaching. They progress well with creative and independent work and generally achieve well across the range of A-level courses.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Specialist teachers are now in post and standards are improving as a result. Teaching is good and students are learning successfully. ICT is not used enough.
Sports studies	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching and learning are good and students progress well in both practical and theoretical work to attain above-average standards at A-level. Provision is enriched by an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities.
Music	<b>Excellent.</b> Students achieve very well because of very good teaching. Their mature attitudes and the excellent opportunities in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work contribute to above-average standards that are further improving.
History	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching is effective in helping students to extend their understanding of the subject very well. Students prepare their work thoroughly and progress well in lessons to attain above-average A-level results.
English	<b>Excellent.</b> Very good teaching and students' mature attitudes result in high achievement and well above-average examination results.
French	<b>Excellent.</b> Teaching is very good and some is excellent. Students make very good progress in speaking and writing skills. A-level results have been consistently high in recent years.

In 12 other AS and A-level subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was usually at least good and some very good teaching and learning were seen in art, chemistry, geography and religious studies, where students achieved very well. In A-level examinations, students usually reach the standards to be expected from their previous performance in Year 11 GCSE examinations.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students benefit from good personal support and guidance overall. They are well informed in choosing courses. Their progress is monitored and they are aware of the standards that they are achieving towards the subject target grades that they are set. Guidance for choice in higher education is good. Advice and guidance for careers are satisfactory overall.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is exceptionally well led and is cost-effectively managed. Standards have much improved since the last inspection and students now achieve the standards that they should. Students have equal opportunity to do well. They are successfully encouraged to develop a mature sense of responsibility towards younger members of the school. Improving the quality of teaching and learning has been a high priority and effectively achieved.

## 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"><li>• They have a good choice of suitable courses.</li><li>• They are helped to settle into the sixth form successfully.</li><li>• Teachers willingly help them with work problems.</li><li>• Most enjoy being in the sixth form.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Careers advice and guidance.</li><li>• More response from the school to their views.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with students' positive views. The careers advice and guidance that they receive are satisfactory, but provision from external sources is not generous, as the school recognises. Support for choice of courses and application to higher education is very good. Students now recognise that the school council is beginning to provide opportunity for them to express their views formally.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

*The average point score is the average of the overall points gained by pupils and students in Year 9 National Curriculum tests or in GCSE examinations; it is often considered the best measure of a school's overall performance.*

*Reference to similar schools is to those schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds.*

1. Pupils of all levels of attainment enter the school at age 11. Overall, their attainment is broadly average, as shown in testing conducted by the school and externally assessed. The results of National Curriculum tests taken by pupils before transferring to secondary school indicate rising levels of attainment. Attainment on entry differs between subjects. In design and technology, for example, attainment is a little below-average because pupils have not had the opportunity to develop subject skills as they have in English and mathematics. A few pupils are selected on the evidence of their potential in art, music and sport.
2. From Year 7 to the end of Year 9, pupils of all levels of competence achieve well and make good progress. In the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, they attained well above the national average standard during the last four years, including 2002. Performance in comparison with similar schools in the tests is good. The trend in the average point score attained in the National Curriculum tests has increased at a more rapid rate than the national rate of improvement, especially during the last four years. During Years 10 and 11, pupils' rate of progress further increases and they attain very well in GCSE examinations. In 2002 and the previous two years, pupils reached well above-average standards in the attainment of five or more GCSE grades A\* to C and five or more grades A\* to G. In 2001, the results achieved were above the average of similar schools. (2001 is the latest year for which this comparison is nationally validated.) The trend in the average point score in GCSE examinations has risen well above that of all schools during the last four years. Overall, the school's performance in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations has improved impressively.
3. The inspection was early in the autumn term, near to the beginning of the school year, and pupils' work seen did not so far fully match the well above-average standards that have been attained in recent years in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. However, pupils were seen to be achieving very well in Years 7 to 9 in English, science and music, where their standards were already well above what is typical at this point in the school year. In other subjects, they were achieving well. In Years 10 and 11, pupils were achieving very well from the evidence of work seen in English, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music and well in their other subjects. Pupils achieve well in literacy and their progress in using numeracy is at least satisfactory. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in helping pupils to achieve more in all subjects is satisfactory, overall. However, ICT is not used enough in art, business, geography and religious education and is unhelpful, both to pupils' achievement in these subjects and to their acquisition of ICT skills.
4. Pupils were attaining below national average standards at the last inspection in 1996. The present headteacher's leadership has contributed directly to improving standards across the school. Teaching and departmental leadership have much improved and help pupils to achieve better standards. For example, the quality of teaching, especially the exceedingly helpful marking of pupils' work, and very effective departmental organisation and leadership help pupils to achieve very well in English and to make very good progress through the school. Pupils have a very good command of words, read fluently and most speak clearly and to the point. In mathematics, changes of staff and departmental responsibility are having a positive impact and pupils are now achieving well. Pupils have a good range of numerical skills and exceptional competence with algebra. Changes of responsibility and new leadership in the science department are driving standards up, and very good and sometimes excellent teaching

is enabling pupils to achieve very well in the subject at all ages. Their practical, investigative work is particularly strong. Similar reasons explain pupils' very good achievement in other subjects. For example, very good teaching and individual support in design and technology and the enrichment of pupils' experience through extra-curricular opportunities in music and modern foreign languages enable them to achieve especially well in these subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' personal development, shown in their mature response to the opportunities and quality of education provided, helps them to achieve so well. Their positive response in almost all lessons and high levels of concentration enable them to make, at least, good progress throughout the school. Targets are carefully selected and challenging and staff and pupils respond well to achieve them.

5. Pupils with special educational needs in learning, especially literacy, make good progress and achieve good standards. These pupils come close, at least, to national average standards by the time they take the National Curriculum tests in Year 9, and many achieve grade C or higher in GCSE examinations by the end of Year 11. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs in gaining one or more GCSE grades is very high and the school's performance is among the top five per cent of schools in the country in attaining this standard. Pupils with other special needs, including physical impairments, achieve their potential. Very good relationships and teachers' and learning support assistants' good understanding of pupils' needs help them to feel confident and secure so that they do well. The targets from pupils' individual education plans are clearly expressed and provide for realistic stages of development. As a result, pupils generally make good progress, both in their grasp of basic skills, and in their confidence and positive attitudes to work.
6. Girls and boys achieved equally well during the inspection. Pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with others. Pupils listen to each other and to teachers with interest; no one is discouraged from working and achieving well. Only in the 2001 GCSE examinations has performance differed between girls and boys to an extent above that which is typical nationally, when girls performed particularly well. However, the difference in performance was not significant in 2002. Gifted and talented pupils achieve their potential and make very good progress in most lessons. Those admitted to the school because they had good potential in art, music and sport achieve very well. Attainment of A\* grades in GCSE examinations were the school's highest ever results in 2001, but improved again in 2002.
7. Since the last inspection, standards have risen substantially.

### **Sixth form**

8. Students' attainment at A-level was average in 2001, the last year for which national comparisons are currently available. The average point score attained in A-level examinations in 2001 was 16.4. In 2002, results improved further and the average point score rose considerably to 18.8. The vast majority of students passed AS examinations in 2001 and 2002, and 33 per cent of the grades gained in 2001 were A or B, and in 2002 the proportion of grades A and B increased to 45 per cent. The value added to students' attainments from the standards that they reached in Year 11 GCSE examinations to the A-level results gained is satisfactory. At age 18, students achieve standards to be reasonably expected of them on the basis of their attainment at age 16. At the last inspection in 1996, A-level results were below-average, and a key issue for improvement identified sixth form standards as a priority. The headteacher has led the sixth form to improve standards through better departmental understanding of the standards achieved and imbued students and teachers with the need to improve. The A-level examination results of 2002 indicate a further increase in standards towards the relative levels now being attained in the main school.
9. The work seen during the inspection was of a higher standard than results of examinations in recent years. However, standards in 2002 AS and A-level examinations were higher than in 2001 and the 2002 results were the best ever attained by the sixth form. The work seen during the inspection confirms that the impressive rate of improvement since the last inspection is being maintained but that some further improvement is yet possible. Of the nine subjects inspected and reported in full in the inspection, students' work seen in English, biology, French and music indicated very good achievement. This was already apparent in Year 12 after only a few weeks into the autumn term. In business studies, design and technology, history and sports



studies, students were achieving well. In mathematics, standards of work seen were average. The differing performance of students across the nine subjects relates closely to the quality of teaching and, in some cases, to lack of continuity in staffing, as in mathematics. In other sixth form subjects, students were achieving well in the work seen during the inspection, and results in A-level examinations in these subjects have been average. Of the key skills, students achieve very well in communication, and some extend their achievement, for example, by using Mandarin or Italian. Given that the school is fully staffed and school management is very effective, there is every opportunity to raise students' standards further in AS and A-level examinations overall to the well above-average levels attained in GCSE examinations.

10. Those with special educational needs make good progress and they can request special help if they think that they need it. Talented students have very good opportunities to raise their standard through lessons where teachers encourage open discussion and provide a good variety of activities. Stimulating opportunities are provided in some subjects - for example, in modern foreign languages and music - where students can raise their standards by extending their experience through worthwhile opportunities, such as work experience in foreign countries or public performances in music. These valuable experiences give students every opportunity to achieve their best. Their impressive maturity and positive attitudes to their work help them to make the most of their talents.
11. Since the last inspection, standards have risen in the sixth form. Students are achieving what they should, and 2002 results in A-level examinations indicate that further improvement is taking place. Good progress is being made towards the targets that are set. Very few students discontinue their courses. Given the very good quality of teaching seen, improvement seems likely to continue.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

12. Pupils have very good and often excellent attitudes to the school in all year groups. Girls and boys have equally positive attitudes. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They want to learn and are well motivated and interested in their lessons. They concentrate in class, listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions carefully. They participate well in lessons by asking and answering questions readily and contributing well to discussions. In a Year 9 English lesson, for example, pupils maturely discussed the behaviour and reactions of sections of society to self-government after reading *Animal Farm*. They discuss whole-school concerns critically as active and equal members of the school community in a responsible manner.
13. Behaviour around the school is very good and in lessons it is often exemplary. This has a positive effect on standards of work and the quality of learning. Pupils know how to behave properly and respond maturely to the school's high expectations of good behaviour. They work in an atmosphere that is free from bullying and unanimously report very little evidence of bullying. Racial harassment is extremely rare. Although the number of fixed term exclusions has risen since the last inspection, a number are attributed to the same students. Exclusion is a sanction used only when there is no alternative.
14. Relationships are very good. In lessons, pupils work very well together in pairs or in small groups. They co-operate very well with teachers. They listen carefully to each other during lessons and show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, the pupils showed much interest in the Jewish faith and respect for it. The school's policy to favour the admission of those with past or present connections with the school, including the children of members of staff, helps further the quality of relationships.
15. The pupils' personal development is very good. They have a keen sense of moral and social responsibility and respond especially well to the many and varied opportunities that the school offers to enhance their personal development. For example, they give their time freely to act as guides during parents' evenings. They are friendly and polite and talk confidently and sensibly about the school. Pupils gain an increasing sense of maturity and confidence as they move through the school. For example, some are sceptical about the value of the school council and express reasoned views as active, interested participants in a matter that they regard as of importance to the well-being of the community of the school. Many enjoy taking part in the many enriching, residential activities that take place both at home and overseas, such as, for

example, athletics training in Lanzarote, and the orchestra trip to Tuscany. Consequently, they gain understanding and awareness of their own cultural heritage and that of other more diverse cultures that extend their own worthwhile experience and enhance their personal development.

16. Attendance is high compared with most secondary schools and has improved since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. Most pupils arrive punctually for school, although current registers indicate that a small number arrive late, some frequently.
17. Since the last inspection, the pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour have remained very good throughout the school. Pupils are remarkably mature and purposeful in their work and their personal development is impressive.

### **Sixth form**

18. Students have very positive attitudes to the sixth form. They appreciate the opportunities available to them and a large proportion of Year 11 stay on into the sixth form. They show excellent commitment to the school and participate very well in school life. They are keen to learn, well motivated and respond very well to the good teaching and interesting work that they receive. In lessons, they listen attentively and work with interest and enthusiasm. They actively participate in lessons and not only answer but also ask questions, contributing ideas that challenge and extend their knowledge and understanding. They have the confidence and skills to work independently. They also work very well together by supporting each other and sharing ideas.
19. A strong sense of the importance of spiritual, moral and social considerations supports students' excellent personal development and the high quality of relationships. They have a genuine respect for the views and beliefs of others. During their time in the sixth form, students mature and grow in confidence. They are responsible young adults and provide excellent role models for younger pupils. They all value the responsibilities that they have been given and make a valuable contribution to others, both in the school and in the local community. Those who are prefects carry out duties around the school. They organise the school's charity week, lead the school council and participate actively in the sixth form council - for example, in the organisation of fund-raising events. Through the programme of community service they support younger pupils and some greatly extend the cultural aspects of their personal development by participation in work experience abroad.
20. Attendance is good. Very few drop out of the courses that they begin.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR 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.*

21. Teaching across Years 7 to 11 is good, overall. It was very good in one in three lessons seen throughout these years. Teaching was a little stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, where almost all the few lessons that were less than satisfactorily taught were observed. In these lessons, teachers were not well enough organised and their planning did not provide well enough for the needs of all pupils. As a result, management of pupils proved difficult and the pace of learning became too slow. Some lessons were excellent and inspiring learning experiences, very well adapted to the needs of the pupils. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was very good in music and religious education and mostly very good in drama. In other subjects, teaching was good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching was very good in science and good in mathematics and English, and some teaching of the latter was of particularly good quality. Art, design and technology, music and religious education were all very well taught. Teaching of business studies was satisfactory and, otherwise, teaching was good.

22. Good teaching ensures that the needs of all pupils are well met. Girls and boys learn equally well in mixed classes. Their very positive attitudes to learning and teachers' skilful organisation of lessons enable both sexes to contribute very well in the classroom and gain subject knowledge, understanding and skills well. Pupils listen to each other and to the teachers in a mature and responsible way in almost all lessons. Pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds learn as well as others because they are fully integrated into school and work, and teachers provide any support necessary. Pupils who use English as an additional foreign language have very good competence in speaking, reading and writing in English which supports their learning very well. Talented pupils' needs are especially well met. In English, for example, talented pupils benefit greatly from the meticulous marking of their work, and teachers' challenging advice is an excellent means of taking forward pupils' learning. In modern foreign languages, challenging work in lessons that move at a very brisk pace extend talented pupils' skills and in practice of the foreign language very well. In music, talented pupils are stimulated in lessons, and instrumental tuition is often of excellent quality in advancing their skills in performance.
23. The range of pupils' special educational needs is extensive but all learn well from the good teaching they receive in mainstream classes. In the learning support base and some of the special groups it is very good, and this results in these pupils making good progress. Teachers and learning support assistants in mainstream lessons generally plan effectively to ensure that lesson activities help pupils reach the targets on their individual education plans. Most support available is given by teachers and support assistants in lessons, but there is a good programme which provides additional help in mathematics and English for those pupils whom the school identifies as needing extra support. In these lessons, the pupils' individual education programmes are more specifically addressed. The needs of physically impaired pupils are accommodated well, including in physical education lessons and musical activities. Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress because of the teaching that they receive and all pupils achieve some success in GCSE examinations.
24. Good teaching contributes considerably to pupils' personal development. It gives them the opportunity to deepen their understanding of moral and social issues by learning to work well together. Drama was particularly effective in enabling Year 7 pupils who had only known each other for a few weeks to achieve high standards and exercise an impressive measure of self-discipline. In some lessons, teachers bring pupils to a much deeper level of understanding of responsibility and citizenship. For example, a very good Year 9 English lesson using George Orwell's, *Animal Farm*, enabled the pupils to think through issues about leadership, and to explore important political ideas in an extended vocabulary – with words which were new to them, such as *egocentric*. Lower attainers in Year 8 gained considerable spiritual insight from entering a classroom to the strains of Gregorian plainchant. In general, the teachers' high standards and expectations provoke a response from the pupils, who often exercise responsibility for their learning in a wide range of independent practical activities - in physical education, music and science, for example.
25. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge well to plan lessons and pupils' work carefully. In a very good Year 9 science lesson for lower attainers, the pupils' learning was greatly extended by the teacher's meticulous organisation and preparation of sequences of practical activity to show a relationship between electricity and magnetism. Moreover, the same topic was adapted for higher attainers, who were taught an excellent lesson based on very effective use of the science department's new ICT facility. In general, teachers use the learning resources available to them well, although they do not use ICT enough in art, business geography and religious education. In other subjects, teachers enable pupils to practise and extend their ICT skills well.
26. Teachers generally adapt work well for their classes so that learning is interesting and challenging and moves at a brisk pace. This was seen in a Year 11 food technology lesson in which pupils went through the process of making a flan to a recipe that they varied from the examples provided; they gained greatly from exercising responsibility for all stages of the task and achieved highly. However, teachers occasionally misjudge the pace best suited to pupils' learning needs and lessons run at too rapid or too slow a pace, as in some modern foreign language lessons. Teachers are very skilled at managing pupils because relationships are very good and pupils are almost always interested, responsive, co-operative and want to learn. Methods are usually successful. For example, some very good questions and explanations

were observed which carried pupils' learning forward very well. Literacy and numeracy are effectively taught and pitched at the right level for pupils' differing needs. Teachers generally use homework well and set it as required by the school's timetable. Homework set for Year 7 in art was particularly interesting and challenging. However, some teachers talk for too long in some lessons and these experiences lack the good variety of activities that spark pupils' enthusiasm to learn in most classes.

27. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has much improved. Now few lessons are less than satisfactory and many more lessons are of very good or excellent quality.

### **Sixth form**

28. Teaching is very good in the sixth form. Many lessons of the 63 seen were very good. A few were of excellent quality. Few were not of at least good quality. No lesson was less than satisfactory. Of the nine subjects inspected and reported on in detail, English, biology, design and technology, music and French were consistently very well taught. Business studies, history and physical education were well taught. The teaching of mathematics was satisfactory, overall, but some lessons of higher quality were seen. Other courses were sampled, including the key skill of communication, and teaching was of very good quality, overall.
29. Students respond very well to the very good teaching that they receive and learn successfully as a result. All students, irrespective of competence or ethnic background, extend their knowledge, understanding and skills successfully, partly because their personal development is so well advanced, considerably beyond that usually found in students of this age. Their maturity, interest and strong commitment to their studies enable them to respond in the most positive way to the very good teaching that the school provides for them. This was apparent, for example, in a Year 12 lesson in electronics, in which the students were taught through a video link with a distant teacher. These students showed at this very early stage of their course impressive maturity and commitment to take responsibility for their learning and make the most of the opportunity available. The very good quality of teaching and learning overall in the sixth form explains why standards of attainment have risen considerably since the last inspection. Six years ago attainment in the sixth form was below-average and identified as a key issue for improvement. Very good teaching and learning have enabled students to reach, at least, the standards that they should. Students' partnership in learning with teachers, shown in very good relationships, is helping them to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills successfully. Improved A-level examination results in 2002 are a consequence of the present quality of teaching and learning.
30. Teachers have impressive subject knowledge that enables them to plan lessons very well. In a Year 12 geography lesson, the example of a recent earth tremor was used by the teacher to help students to revise earlier work on tectonics. In a Year 13 lesson in pure mathematics, the teacher used subject expertise very well to assist students in the revision of earlier work. Lessons often challenge students very well. For example, in a very good Year 13 textiles lesson, the teacher was able to support the students, who were working independently on individual projects, to extend their skills and techniques to achieve the very best outcomes that they could in their work. The range of methods that most teachers use to stretch students' thinking is extensive. Regular discussions, debates and presentations take place. Teachers' explanations are clear and helpful. Their questions often challenge students to explore a higher level of thinking about a topic. In an excellent Year 13 biology lesson, for example, students were expected to present their ideas on a topic very quickly and, after summarising by the teacher, they went on to use new ICT equipment very effectively to extend their learning further.
31. Very good relationships give students the confidence to respond to questions without fear of getting answers wrong. As a result, students take risks in learning in partnership with teachers and other students and benefit greatly from such a positive intellectual environment. A weakness is that some teachers talk for too long and these lessons lose the brisk pace of working that is usually apparent. These lessons do not involve students enough in the process of learning. Subject teachers keep a check on the students' performance, with work regularly corrected and reviewed to support students' progress. The marking and correcting of work are never less than satisfactory but do vary in quality. For example, the marking of English work is

outstanding and contributes very well to students achieving high standards in this subject. In history, their work is very fully marked. In biology, there is exemplary practice. However, in mathematics, for example, a large proportion of the work is self-corrected by the students and they are not sufficiently encouraged to annotate their mistakes and corrections. Some homework set in many subjects is very challenging and students are expected to plan their work effectively, sometimes over extended periods of time.

32. At the last inspection, teaching was judged as better in the sixth form than in the main school. This is the present situation. Since 1996, teaching has improved further and some lessons are now of the very highest quality.

### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

33. The quality and range of learning opportunities in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 are good. A very clear statement on the curriculum provides a good basis for its evaluation.
34. Girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds and with differing levels of subject competence have equal access to the learning experiences provided through the curriculum.
35. Governors are closely involved and well informed about the curriculum. For example, during the working day, members of the governing body visit the school regularly to observe classes. Visits monitor and evaluate the quality of the curriculum in particular areas where a particular focus has been determined - for example, the use of ICT, or to see how well Year 7 pupils have settled down to subject work. Staff work hard to develop a sense of enjoyment and academic challenge for every pupil through programmes of learning designed to meet individual needs. Parents are very positive about the curriculum that the school provides.
36. The school's status as a Language College has extended pupils' learning opportunities very well. It has aided the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 because more teachers are now familiar with the primary curriculum. It has improved pupils' foreign language skills and curricular links with the humanities.
37. In Years 7 to 9, all pupils follow the range of National Curriculum subjects, as well as religious education, drama and life-skills. Teaching time is well above the recommended allocation for pupils in these year groups. This provides greater flexibility in Years 7 to 9 for fair procedures for grouping pupils by their levels of competence to support the learning of all. Mixed-ability groups are used in some subjects, including music; this provides excellent opportunities in the time available. From Year 8, provision is extended for pupils to study two foreign languages. The curriculum provides pupils with any support needed in literacy. The strategy for numeracy is less well developed, but progress is being made.
38. Pupils follow a good range of GCSE examination courses in Years 10 and 11. They have a reasonable choice of subjects and all take the required National Curriculum subjects and a short GCSE examination course in religious education. Pupils may continue with two modern foreign languages, from a choice of French, German or Spanish. Parents are confident that the curriculum encourages all pupils to achieve well in some areas of the curriculum, at least. There are no vocational courses available. Overall, however, pupils' needs are met by the current provision, although this is not generous in Years 10 and 11.
39. Gifted and talented pupils have good opportunities for enrichment and accelerated learning. These students take GCSE examinations at an early stage in some subjects. Individual pupils take the GCSE French examination in Year 8 and GCSE English language and literature in Year 9. Some 50 students sit the GCSE French examination in Year 10. They then take a second foreign language in Year 11. These pupils receive extra lessons beyond the school day. This provision stretches the pupils, but some struggle to keep up with two foreign languages, the new one and the one in which they have a GCSE qualification from Year 10. However, many of these pupils are very pleased that they took the GCSE examination early. Talented pupils benefit from master classes in French and art. Several challenges are made available in different subjects for talented pupils to extend their learning, as in mathematics, for example.

40. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational need is good. There are good arrangements to support pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy in specially organised classes for those pupils who would find a second or third language difficult. Teachers or learning support assistants also work with individual pupils to help, mainly with specific literacy difficulties. Pupils' individual education plans are well organised and targets are clear and achievable. The needs of the pupils who have statements of special educational needs are well met and annual reviews provide a good focus for further improvement. Pupils who use English as an additional language do not require additional provision to access the curriculum and achieve the standards that they should on the courses that they follow.
41. Since the last inspection, a whole-school literacy policy is now well embedded into the curriculum. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are provided with a study guide so that parents can help them with their literacy skills. Cross-curricular topics are well used in the discrete time allocated for ICT although the opportunities are not always clearly identified. A numeracy policy has been agreed and developments are planned but are not yet in place. Schemes of work are now of more consistently good quality than at the time of the last inspection.
42. Lifeskills lessons are provided for all year groups. They provide an effective education in sexual relationships and issues concerning drugs. Visiting speakers extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of these and other issues that are so important to personal development. Careers education is taught within this weekly programme. It is well designed to include personal development and to build self-confidence through interviews with community representatives and governors. There are good opportunities for guidance and for pupils to learn about the world of work. All Year 8 pupils undertake work experience; most do so with parents and a few shadow the duties of some school personnel. Work experience for all takes place in Year 10. Employers act as link mentors for individual students and often continue to monitor and support their development for their remaining years in school. For a small minority of low attaining pupils, work placements are timetabled for part of the week.
43. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. Pupils are encouraged to build on their strengths. Parents report very favourably on the very good opportunities for their children to take up sporting activities that they had not previously considered, and that their children's morale has increased by them being encouraged to take up playing an instrument. The range of sporting activities is excellent and many pupils reach national and international standards in for example, volleyball, gymnastics and cricket. Instrumental tuition is very well provided for and the school orchestra, brass and jazz groups perform regularly in public. There are many opportunities for national and international travel. Foreign language exchanges and opportunities to Europe are exceptional. All pupils have very good opportunities for residential experience, which contributes exceptionally well to their personal development and the very good relationships that are found throughout the school. Homework clubs, examination revision and extension classes are well supported.
44. Reference to links with other educational institutions and the community are to be found in the paragraphs on 'community' later in this section of the report.
45. The provision for spiritual development is good and fostered across the curriculum. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on their own and others' feelings. For example, they discover the miracle of number patterns and rationally consider emotions raised by conflict. Pupils flourish because the school encourages them to respect different worthwhile attitudes and ideas and to question why things are as they are. Success in learning promotes the regular celebration of success and encourages pupils' motivation. They are helped to explore religious and non-religious aspects of spirituality. These opportunities are strengthened by the quality of assemblies that combine strong moral guidance with regular acts of worship, prayers, readings from the gospels and opportunities to reflect on a range of spiritual topics. However, a daily act of worship is not provided for all pupils on all days of the week.
46. Pupils' moral development is very well provided for. Pupils follow well-understood codes of conduct and teachers provide good and effective role models in an environment of trust, tolerance and good humour. Pupils respond to high levels of expectation about their conduct and are very aware of what is right and wrong. They are able to understand and debate global moral issues, such as the possible use of nuclear weapons and the advantages and

disadvantages of development and conservation. The school generates a positive culture of self-discipline and reliability, which is evident in pupils' exemplary behaviour and responsible attitudes and respect for the rules as, for example, in sport. The curriculum in religious education contributes well to pupils' moral development and provides opportunities for considering, promoting and practising equality. Provision for pupils' moral development is at the heart of a comprehensive lifeskills programme. This also provides knowledge, communication skills and opportunities for participation to enhance pupils' development in citizenship.

47. Provision for pupils' social and cultural development is very good. Some provision in music and physical education is excellent. There is a very good sense of community in the school. Pupils work well together and share tasks. They work very well with teachers and often commit themselves to achieve success as a team. There are many opportunities for pupils to become aware of their own society and culture through opportunities for travel, fieldwork and a wide range of educational visits. Opportunities for social development in physical education are exceptional and very large numbers of pupils benefit; some exercise responsibility as club or team captains. There is high attendance at extra-curricular activities across the school and there is comprehensive provision for competition, team games, displays and clubs. However, there is still scope to allow more pupils to develop their leadership skills, for example, through the school council.
48. Opportunities for cultural development are sustained by exchanges and contacts through a variety of media, including e-mail links. The beliefs and values of other cultures are made known to pupils in history and geography and pupils show great understanding of the issues raised in lessons on slavery and, latterly, tourism in Africa. Knowledge and understanding of the world are increased by studies of world music, designs derived from other cultures, cultural artefacts, customs, festivals and sporting links. Pupils benefit from professional coaching of sports and games and host sporting teams from other countries. Pupils' appreciation of their own culture is matched by their understanding of the cultures of others. Lifeskills lessons give pupils some opportunity to prepare for life in a multi-cultural society.
49. Since the last inspection, provision for moral, social and cultural development has continued at a high level. Spiritual provision, a key issue in 1996, has improved considerably. The curriculum for religious education is now fully in place and in many other subject areas there is a strong element of spiritual provision. Assemblies contain planned spiritual elements, such as events and festivals, which are contained in the presentations. There are stronger links with religious foundations, both locally and elsewhere. Visits are made to St. Clement Danes Church to reinforce the school's religious and spiritual heritage. Pupils are reminded of an earlier generation's sacrifice by visits to the Menin Gate; this greatly raises spiritual awareness among those who participate. The Christian Union meets twice a week to allow the practice and expression of religious and spiritual matters.

### **Sixth form**

50. Curricular provision for the sixth form is good. The curriculum is carefully designed to meet the academic aspirations of the students who continue their studies in the sixth form. A broad range of subjects is offered for examination at AS and A-level. Students' choice is extended through distance learning and video-conference links. The school responds to students' expressed interests where possible. For example, an AS course in English language has been introduced. This has provided an interesting opportunity, especially for boys. Students' requests for this course to continue to examination at A-level have resulted in it being introduced one year early.
51. The absence of vocational courses restricts students' choices. The school has previously offered vocational courses but does not have sufficient expertise among its teachers at present. The headteacher is aware of this and possibilities for joint vocational courses with other institutions have been explored. The school intends to offer a vocational course in 2003, when staff training has taken place and if demand is high enough to justify the provision. Programmes are organised to meet individual students' needs - for example, two Year 13 students teach part-time in a primary school and link this with a sport and physical education course.

52. Provision for key skills is good in relation to communication skills, but less positive for number and ICT. Number is offered through GCSE mathematics in Year 12 for those students who have not already gained at least a GCSE grade C in the subject. Some students study Italian, Russian or Mandarin as part of the key skill of communication – very appropriate provision for this Language College. All Year 13 students are expected to take a communications skills test and complete portfolios. Enrichment studies offer a choice from among the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Young Enterprise, independent living and one modern foreign language. The school is responding to the students' request for ICT skills through accreditation by the European Driving Licence.
53. Topics on religion and ethics are included in lifeskills but, as in the last inspection, religious education is not adequately provided to meet statutory requirements. The school is aware of this and aims to re-introduce a specific course in religious education in September 2003.
54. Independent learning is encouraged through supervised private study. These opportunities increase in Year 13 when the key skills work has been completed.
55. Enrichment of students' learning by provision of extra-curricular opportunities is exceptional. Initiatives through the Language College for work experience abroad and foreign exchanges and travel are impressive opportunities. For example, students can undertake a three-week visit to Lyons, of which one week is for work experience. Not all students who participate are linguists. Some students attend a biennial World Challenge Global Young Leaders conference in New York. Last summer, an expedition was undertaken to Ecuador.
56. Sixth form students benefit greatly from very good provision to support their personal development. The provision for their moral, social and cultural development is very good. They respond very well to the extensive range of initiatives that are made available. Participants in a recent sixth form visit to Ecuador gained greatly from the experience and confidently and clearly described their experiences to most of the school so that all could share something of the challenging experiences they had encountered. They responded well to a stern challenge. Students maturely discuss euthanasia and other ethical issues, for example, and gain some awareness of life in a multi-cultural society. They take social responsibility with varying degrees of success. As prefects, some consider that their role is underdeveloped but in sport, they are active in accessing clubs, activities and trips and act as good role models to younger pupils as sports prefects. Students give valuable support to younger pupils by their participation in musical activities, seen in the work of the string orchestra, providing a valuable input into others' social and cultural development. All students make a valuable contribution through community service in or out of the school to the well-being of others.
57. Provision for students' spiritual development is good. They listen to others and show respect for their ideas and views. Learning enables them to enlarge their experience to develop spiritual awareness by reflecting, for example, on the emotions and consequences of the actions of characters as they impact on relationships, for example in the literature that they study. A spiritual dimension is implicit in much of the reflective work that they undertake across the curriculum. In geography, sixth formers are challenged to question what they see in the media and their spiritual development is encouraged by the expectation to attach human consequences to what they see and read, not accepting opinions unchallenged. Formal provision for religious education was discontinued last year in order for the school to develop key skills, but the school intends to reintroduce it from September 2003. Students who follow the AS and A-level courses in religious studies discuss arguments for the existence of God and an extensive range of theological ideas that much extend their spiritual development.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

58. The school provides very good day-to-day care for all pupils. It supports them very well. This level of care has been maintained since the last inspection. The policy that determines admissions encourages those with connections with the school, including staff, to send their children to be educated there. This close identification of parents with the school contributes to the very caring ethos of the institution. However, some procedures to ensure the welfare, health



and safety of pupils are not in place. The tutorial system managed by the heads of year recognises and strongly supports individual pupils, recognises their needs and meets these. All pupils benefit from effective personal and educational support and guidance.

59. Child protection is taken seriously. Procedures are in a transitional stage but the school is fully aware of the new local authority guidelines. The deputy to the designated person for child protection has undergone recent training. The recent transfer of responsibility as designated person for child protection to a senior member of staff has not yet permitted an update of his training. A policy statement for "looked-after children" is not yet in place. First aid and medical care are very good.
60. The governing body is committed to ensuring a safe environment; however, formal systems are not entirely in place and the health and safety policy has not been recently reviewed. The school is generally a safe place, but the steep-sided pool at the rear of the school is not fenced securely enough; a legible notice advising of danger replaced an old one during the week of the inspection. Portable electrical testing has not recently been carried out as required by law. Informal checks of the site and premises take place and each year departmental heads formally check safety in their areas of responsibility. Appropriate action is taken where necessary, but the issues and the action taken are not recorded systematically enough. Internet access is secure.
61. The school has very good procedures for observing, regulating and supporting pupils' personal development. Heads of year play a central role and maintain an overview of pupils, individually, as they move through the school. They liaise closely with tutors and through regular meetings and informal day-to-day discussions share information about pupils. Pupils retain the same tutor year-by-year, where possible, to assist staff in understanding their needs. In discussions with pupils during the inspection, they unanimously agreed that they were well supported by the school. A counsellor, the school nurse and the medical administrator provide help and support as necessary. Lifeskills contribute towards pupils' personal development, and include issues of health, drugs and sexual relationships. Pupils' achievements are recognised and rewarded with awards from the headteacher in assemblies and at the annual speech day and prize giving ceremony. Induction procedures ensure that pupils from many different primary schools settle well into Year 7. Guidance for Year 9 pupils making their option choices is well organised.
62. The school has very good systems for checking, regulating and promoting good behaviour. The highest standards of behaviour are implicit in the atmosphere and values of the school. They are promoted through the clear expectations and shared commitment of the headteacher and staff. Pupils fully understand, and respond in a positive and mature manner to the well-established code of conduct and system of rewards and sanctions. Any pupils causing concern are identified and their behaviour is kept under close scrutiny. Bullying occurs extremely rarely, and is managed well by the school.
63. The procedures for promoting and improving attendance are satisfactory. As the school does not have a computerised system of registration, measures are based on personal contacts between heads of year and tutors. Rates of attendance are high. Further support is provided by the education welfare worker, who meets with senior staff each fortnight to check registers and look for any unsatisfactory patterns of attendance or punctuality.
64. The care and support of pupils with special educational needs are, overall, very good. Teachers and learning support assistants know the pupils they work with well. The supportive ethos of the school and its respect for the value of the individual ensure that pupils with special needs have good opportunities to take part in all school activities. There are very good procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs. Liaison with primary schools is good and the special needs co-ordinator goes to the annual reviews of those prospective pupils when they are still in Year 6. Pupils' needs are quickly identified when they enter this school, and effective arrangements are made for the regular review of their progress. The targets contained in individual education plans are reviewed at least twice a year. The school has productive and useful liaison with outside agencies, which are involved as appropriate, and their reports are used well.

65. Improving assessment procedures was identified as a key issue in the last inspection. The school has acted very positively and made very good improvement since that time. Improving the use of assessment is one of the foundations upon which the school has raised pupils' performance so much. A teacher responsible for co-ordinating assessment procedures across the school was appointed soon after the last inspection. This post has subsequently been developed as the responsibility of a senior member of staff who provides analysis and practical application of assessment data. He has piloted groundbreaking work with parents and has provided them, for example, with information about how their child's attainment can be compared with national outcomes. This is very helpful to parents because they better understand what their child needs to do to raise standards and how they can help.
66. Very good procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress from the perspective of the whole-school. These procedures are disseminated to departments but are not yet fully used by all staff. However, their benefit is to be seen in the good practice of most departments and in outstanding work in English and science. On entry to the school, all pupils complete tests measuring their current verbal, numerical and reasoning abilities. These results are given to the various departments, who use the information well to ensure accurate groupings of pupils, such as setting in mathematics, and the planning of work pitched at the right level. Test results are also used effectively as a benchmark for measuring future progress. In most departments regular subject testing is used effectively to identify any necessary adjustments to teaching programmes or to groupings of pupils.
67. Good practice is in place in the use of performance data with pupils. In English, mathematics and science, pupils are given A-level predicting what they are, at least, expected to reach in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests, based on their test results from their Year 6 National Curriculum test results. Throughout the school in English and science, pupils are very aware of the level at which they are working in relation to National Curriculum or GCSE standards, and pupils have descriptions of the levels and their current point of attainment stuck into their exercise books. However, in some departments - for example, geography in Years 7 to 9 - the link between the work done and National Curriculum levels is less clear to the pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of the levels at which they are working on GCSE courses
68. In all departments, pupils are set targets for improvement. In science, for example, excellent individual target-setting involves the pupils in analysing their own performance compared with national average standards. It is a recognised priority for the school to establish this excellent practice universally, because in some other departments - for example, modern foreign languages, physical education, mathematics and religious education - target-setting is less well focused and, therefore, less effective.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

69. Assessment in the sixth form is good. Entry procedures into the sixth form and advice on progression through it are informed by comprehensive data on students' attainment from entry to sixth form courses and predicted success levels. Good use is made of a well established, commercial A-level information system that enables the school to evaluate individual students' performance and that of each subject department. Teaching and organisation of work by subject departments are informed by this collection, analysis and use of this performance data.
70. Form tutors also play an important role. They keep a close eye on the students' performance in termly assessments and provide support for any student identified as underperforming by these, or by any reports of concern. Parents are involved in this supportive process and the students are set short-term goals for improvement. These are relatively new procedures, introduced just two years ago. Early indications are that they are proving successful. Students' performance is reported, informatively, to parents in written form and through consultation evenings, when progress is reviewed.

### ***Advice, support and guidance***

71. Sixth form students receive good guidance and support on personal and educational matters. The well-planned programme of guidance on choice of sixth form courses begins in Year 11. The head of sixth form and tutors know their students well. Excellent relationships add considerably to students' confidence to take advantage of the care and guidance available to them. Sixth form tutors are responsible for students' well-being and for monitoring their attendance. All students have to attend registration in the morning and must request permission to be absent. The head of sixth form and the newly appointed deputy head are freely available to assist students who encounter difficulties. An academic mentoring scheme is supported with workshops in study skills, and independent study for Year 12 students indicates a strong commitment to improving performance. The school takes good care of students' health and safety, although the schedule for testing smaller electrical appliances has fallen behind.
72. Students are provided with very good advice and guidance about choosing courses available to them for future study in higher education. Information is available to students and the learning resource centre provides a good source of reference material. Careers education is satisfactory, although the external careers service does not provide generous support. In discussion, most students expressed satisfaction with the careers information and guidance provided, although the students' questionnaire indicated some dissatisfaction.

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

73. The school is very highly regarded by parents. They express very strong support for it and value what it provides for their children. They are happy with their children's progress; they are confident with the leadership and recognise, overwhelmingly, that it holds high expectations of their children. Inspectors agree with these views. A few parents expressed concerns over homework, the information provided on pupils' progress, links between home and school and the provision of ICT but, overall, inspectors cannot endorse these concerns. Although homework is not always set according to the timetable, work is regularly set and usually extends pupils' learning very well. Parents are made well aware of pupils' progress through written reports, a formal consultation meeting and by the school ensuring that parents are quickly informed of any difficulties. Inspectors find that the provision of ICT is satisfactory, although insufficient use is made of the equipment available in art, religious education and geography.
74. A significant number of the sixth form students who completed a questionnaire expressed concerns about some aspects of their life as sixth formers. However, in discussions with inspectors, they spoke very positively about the support and care given by staff and said that they are treated as adults.
75. The school has maintained the very good links with parents reported in the last inspection report. Many more staff than is usual are parents with children currently at the school. Parental involvement contributes considerably to the school's success. The headteacher recognises the value of a close partnership between home and school and encourages parents to be involved in learning both at home and in school. The induction process for Year 7 pupils before they join the school establishes positive links with parents that develop over pupils' time in the school. Parents are given the opportunity to be involved in the consultation process over setting priorities in school development planning. Some help as volunteers in the learning resource centre, and some provide transport for after-school activities. A supportive parents' association raises considerable funds to benefit the school and many willingly contribute to the Anchor Fund to increase the resources available. Parents are regularly invited to information evenings and presentations - for example, the annual prize giving, drama productions and musical evenings.
76. Parents have good access to members of staff to discuss any concerns. The school ensures that parents are informed and involved quickly should any pupil be experiencing behavioural, attendance or learning difficulties. Homework planners provide a useful means of contact and parents are also encouraged to contact staff through voicemail.

77. The information provided for parents is good. It helps them to become involved in their children's learning and to understand the work of the school. A regular school newsletter, Homelink, each month, and twice-yearly calendars provide regular information about school matters, forthcoming events and key dates. The prospectus contains basic information; the school is aware that it does not include all the information required and this is to be amended in future publications. It is however, supplemented by a helpful induction booklet for parents of pupils in Year 7. Year group information evenings are held regularly but parents do not receive specific information about the curriculum and topics being taught. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress through an interim report and a report at the end of the school year. These contain enough information for parents to understand what their children can do and to set targets for them to aim for improvement.
78. The school keeps the parents of pupils who have special educational needs very well informed. They are involved as soon as the school has any initial cause for concern, and there are opportunities for discussion with those members of staff connected with their children's education. Parents whose children have special needs are, generally, very pleased with what the school does for them. Individual education plans often contain suggestions for how parents can help at home. At the time of annual reviews, parents' views are sought and recorded.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

79. The leadership of the school is very good overall. The headteacher's leadership is of the highest quality. She has led the school outstandingly to improve its performance since the inspection of 1996. National Curriculum tests and performance in GCSE examinations were then below-average throughout the school. Standards have now risen to become well above what is typical nationally and, in 2002, continued to improve further. This impressive performance has been possible because the headteacher has worked very hard to establish common purposes across the school and staff have responded very well to the challenge of raising standards. The headteacher and the leadership group are an effective team and give heads of department strong support in a concerted effort to ensure that standards and the quality of the education are of high quality. Expectations of high commitment and effort from all provoke a positive response from all staff.
80. The governors give unstinting support to the headteacher, in whom they have great confidence. They have very good professional expertise which they use freely in the interest of the school. Their committees are well led and help to inform decisions of the full governing body. The governors visit the school personally and monitor school practice at first hand. The school has gone through many major changes in recent years and the governors have guided it astutely through these. Governors have met the statutory requirements for religious education in Years 7 to 11, as required by the last inspection, but all pupils do not receive the opportunity of an act of worship every day.
81. The management of the school is very good. Initiatives to benefit the school are undertaken with vigorous efficiency. For example, the successful bid to achieve the status of Language College and subsequent practice required as a College of this type have contributed considerably to raising standards. Senior management monitors the performance of the school closely. Collection, analysis and use of assessment data on the school's academic performance are used to inform senior management and subsequent decisions. The process of planning for change and improvement is very effective. Whole-school priorities and targets are identified clearly and carefully and the headteacher and staff work closely together to accomplish these. Planning involves all staff and governors, and pupils and parents have been drawn into the process. However, the criteria for judging progress towards some priorities set in school planning are not always precise enough for all intended outcomes to be evaluated accurately. The headteacher and her senior colleagues check thoroughly that teaching is good enough and work closely with subject departments to make it more effective where necessary. Where weaknesses are identified, measures are adopted to ensure improvement, and the school has assisted staff to improve their performance very well. Where departmental leadership was found to be ineffective, personnel has changed. Subject leadership and management are now of very good quality overall. The determination of the headteacher that

all pupils should achieve nothing but their best has been carried through to subject departments by the members of the leadership group working closely with heads of faculty and heads of department in a continued determination to ensure improvement.

82. The national process of performance management has been effectively developed to link the priorities of staff in ensuring their professional development to the needs of the school as a whole. Management of subject departments and year groups is effective and ensures that all staff work to common ends. However, some subject leaders have insufficient opportunity to observe the teaching taking place in their departments because of their own timetabled commitments.
83. The rapid rate of improvement in the school's performance has strengthened relationships because staff have confidence in the leadership and management of the school and realise that their own contribution will be recognised. The needs of pupils are the school's highest priority and these determine the work of the school. The differences among pupils of ethnicity, sex and physical impairment or learning difficulties are properly identified by the school and met. The school's improvement in performance has been achieved also with the response of the pupils to the school and to learning. Their very good personal development and maturity contribute greatly to their higher achievement.
84. The co-ordination of special educational needs is carried out effectively and efficiently. The co-ordinator maintains well-organised records of all pupils' tests, progress, and support, as well as liaison with agencies outside the school. The school fully meets the requirements of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs, and there is a designated governor, who has a good involvement in the life of the school. Staff have received training from the co-ordinator about the new Code of Practice and they receive copies of pupils' individual education plans together with a summary report on each pupil. Support assistants and the co-ordinator meet regularly to discuss pupils' needs and progress and he leads by very good example, both in support and in teaching.
85. The school's income is generous by national standards, but it is used very well to improve the school's accommodation, its learning resources and the opportunities for learning available to pupils. The school's links to the Holborn Estate Charity provide material advantage that is used very well to benefit the school. The additional income that is derived from the school's status as a Language College is used equally well. Best value principles are taken into account by governors and senior management. These principles are well verified by: the school's greatly improved performance that compares very well with other schools; greater challenge through an enriched environment for learning - as a Language College and excellent extra-curricular opportunities; consultative processes that engage all parties in sharing common purposes; effectively managed competition in the purchase of services, such as the adoption of the more efficient arrangements for catering.
86. Staffing is good. The school has an adequate number of staff to teach the National Curriculum and religious education and there is a good match of staff experience and qualifications to subjects taught. Staffing is very good in English, mathematics, music, religious education and in physical education, where sports prefects supplement a large number of specialist teachers. The school uses imaginative ways to attract staff, including advertising posts on its web-site and appointing a term early. A small number of regular temporary teachers cover staff absences and assist the continuity of learning. There is a suitable balance of men and women teachers and of staff with more experience and those newer to teaching. Overall, staff are well qualified; there is only a small amount of non-specialist teaching.
87. Classroom assistants, who are all experienced, have been trained. They support specific pupils with special educational needs well. The number of staff giving good support to learning includes technicians who work in science, design and technology and ICT, but there is no technical support in music and this situation imposes additional pressures on teachers. Foreign language assistants provide good support for French, German and Spanish. The learning resource manager makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Administrative, caretaking and catering staff provide well for the needs of the school.

88. There is a rigorous induction system for newly qualified teachers, and this is joined by newly appointed more experienced staff when appropriate. Professional development is well organised with in-service training suitably linked to the needs of the school and individual teachers. Adequate funds are set aside for this and clear records kept. Teachers regularly observe one another teach and this helps identify their professional training needs. The school enjoys good relationships with teacher training institutions such as the University of Hertfordshire and Middlesex University, and school and students benefit from this.
89. Compared with the last inspection there is less teaching by teachers not specifically qualified in the subjects that they teach, improved induction for new staff and clearer links between professional development and the needs of the school.
90. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in developing the accommodation for teaching and learning. A new language block has been built, and an impressive learning resource centre developed. In some areas, rooms have been refurbished, as in science and technology. Attention has been paid to providing lifts and ramps for those with disability, and the main sports hall remains the only area still presenting difficulties of access. The school is clean and tidy and benefits from having some good, bright, modern accommodation, and pleasant grounds. However, there are still areas of the school, particularly the older classrooms and corridors, that are in need of further decoration and refurbishment. In the dining room, there is overcrowding and the school has obtained approval to fund improvements to this area. The work is planned for completion before April 2003. In the art and music areas, pupils' learning is adversely affected by cramped and insufficient working space. The flood-relief pool at the rear of the school lacks adequate safety protection.
91. The school has good resources which have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Since the last inspection, the school has installed new computers and other equipment so that its provision is now already in line with national targets. ICT resources for design and technology and science are particularly advanced. In some areas, such as art, science and mathematics, resources are satisfactory overall. However, in art for example, the teaching of GCSE graphics is restricted by the lack of photographic equipment or digital technology. In other areas, such as modern foreign languages and music, resources are very good. Language students may read Harry Potter books in French and have immediate access to the Internet. The library resource centre has been greatly improved since the last inspection and is a thriving workplace for the whole-school.
92. Since the last inspection, leadership and management have outstandingly improved the quality of the school's performance. Improvements to accommodation and learning resources have provided impressive additions to benefit the pupils.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

93. The sixth form is exceptionally well led and managed in the context of the whole-school. The headteacher recognised that an improvement in the standards attained by the sixth form was necessary when, at the last inspection, students' standards of attainment were below the national average in A-level examinations. Exceptional leadership and effective management of change have ensured substantial improvement in the standards attained by students and the quality of the teaching that they receive. Standards have risen to be in line with national performance and students now achieve at least what they should. In 2002, results improved further. Teaching of the sixth form is now very good and more effective than in 1996. The effective teamwork and sharing of common purposes to achieve improvement in performance are as characteristic of the sixth form as of the main school. The head of sixth form leads a supportive team of tutors and together they manage the sixth form very well day-to-day.
94. The sixth form's performance is closely scrutinised and the headteacher and her colleagues inform themselves well of the standards achieved through the effective use of performance data in setting targets for improvement. The system to check on the quality of teaching is effective, with the result that the quality of teaching has improved considerably. The national process of performance management is very well organised to link the needs of individual

members of staff closely to the needs of the institution. The much improved quality of academic performance in the sixth form is a result of the effective action taken by senior management to improve teaching and to support subject departments in expecting higher standards. Overall, the outcomes are a better quality of education and higher achievement by students.

95. Governors have no separate sixth form committee, but provide very good leadership to the sixth form in the context of the whole-school. Their links to the Holborn Estate Charity bring material advantages to benefit the sixth form, and students have good access to the good, modern provision of resources in the learning resource centre. The statutory requirements to provide religious education and a daily act of collective worship are not met.
96. Funding, including the special grant for the school's status as a Language College, is used very well. Students benefit materially through opportunities for work experience abroad, for example. The provision of education for the sixth form is cost-effective. The principles of best value are rigorously applied. The sixth form's academic performance is satisfactory and improved further in examination results in 2002. Very good teaching and a good range of worthwhile learning opportunities provide a stimulating and challenging level of educational provision from which students benefit greatly. Increasing opportunities for consultation through the school council are recognised as valuable by students.

### **Resources**

97. Teachers' experience and expertise are very well matched to curricular needs and the quality of staffing is very good. Support staffing is equally strong. There have recently been difficulties in recruiting specialists in some subjects - for example, in business studies - but the sixth form is now fully staffed to meet all students' needs.
98. The overall standard of accommodation for the sixth form is good. Students benefit from modern areas such as the Anchor Building, the specialist accommodation for languages, the Barbirolli Hall and the refurbished design and technology areas. In the learning resource centre, there is free access to computers for sixth form students. Access to carrels for private study is better than at the time of the last inspection. There is also a large communal area where sixth formers can socialise. Accommodation for art and music is as restrictive as it is for the main school.
99. Sixth form resources are good and are used well to promote learning. In addition to resources provided in the main school, a video-conferencing system enables students to study subjects, such as psychology and electronics, which would otherwise be uneconomical for the school to provide. The new learning resource centre provides access to computers and valuable information on careers and higher education, but there is no access to ICT in the students' extensive private study area.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

100. To raise standards achieved by pupils **in the 11 – 16 school** and the quality of educational provision further, the school should:
  - (1) Ensure that pupils use information and communication in all subjects by extending the use of it especially in art, business, geography and religious education. (See paragraphs: 25, 151, 152, 169, 214. School planning has initiated action to extend the use of ICT.)
  - (2) Improve the accommodation for art and music by additional classroom space and areas for the practice of these subjects. Complete the plans to extend dining accommodation. *This issue also applies to the sixth form.* (See paragraphs: 90, 149, 197, 250. Plans to improve accommodation for dining are part of school planning.)
  - (3) Ensure that the marking of pupils' work and the use of assessment data to set targets to guide pupils to improve their work are used consistently well in all subjects. (See paragraphs: 68, 191, 205, 132, 214. School planning recognises the need to further the use of target-setting.)

## **Sixth form**

- (1) Raise standards in all subjects to those achieving the best results by continued checking, observing and support for teaching and learning to ensure further improvement. (See paragraph: 9. A target in school planning is to improve teaching, learning and achievement further.)

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

### **11 - 16**

- (1) Ensure that the pool is securely fenced and warning signs are clearly visible and that the testing of portable electrical equipment is brought up to date. (See paragraph: 60, 90)
- (2) Put in place a policy statement on “looked-after children” and ensure that it is implemented. (See paragraph: 59.)
- (3) Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils each day. (See paragraph: 45, 80.)

## **Sixth form**

- (1) Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students each day. (See paragraph: 95.)
- (2) Extend the curriculum to include religious education for all students. (See paragraph: 53, 57, 95.)

## **COMMUNITY**

101. The school has very good links with the community both at home and abroad. These are strengths of the school. They help enrich pupils’ and students’ learning and make an invaluable contribution to their personal and social development. An extensive range of activities helps to develop the positive atmosphere in the school and promotes self-esteem and independence in the pupils. The school does not, however, have continuing links with minority ethnic organisations or communities.
102. The school benefits from its strong historical links. All pupils attend the annual commemoration service at St Clement Danes Church. A strong sense of heritage and community is fostered through the annual speech day, to which parents and members of the local community, including representatives of local partner schools and of the business community are invited. The policy for admissions, which gives special opportunity to those who have or have had connections with the school, adds a sense of belonging to the wider community of the school. Each year the Holborn Estate Charity makes a valuable financial contribution to the school. It made a generous donation towards the construction of the excellent new Anchor Building.
103. The school is committed to lifelong learning. It has established positive relationships with partner institutions in the area. These include links with primary schools and extend to universities, colleges and the Chorleywood Twinning Association; the latter holds meetings in the school. Students from the University of Hertfordshire attended the school to observe lessons during the week of the inspection, for example.
104. The school has worked hard to establish itself as a Language College. This status has significantly broadened its links with the wider community and the range of learning opportunities it makes available. It has developed good curricular initiatives with local partner primary schools and provides resources and training in modern foreign languages for staff. Primary pupils visit the school once a term to use the specialist facilities available to the modern foreign languages department. Staff provide valuable support when they teach in primary schools and in one school help is given with the French club there. The range of school visits and foreign exchange visits is impressive and enriches the quality of education provided. The



school's foreign work experience exchange programme in Lyons and Barcelona enables sixth formers to develop their respective languages and learn about each other's culture. Further work placements in Germany are being planned.

105. As part of their community service, some sixth form students visit primary schools to help support younger pupils' learning, especially in literacy. Some Year 12 students help in the school itself or in the wider community. Year 10 pupils work in the local schools as part of their work experience programme. Links with local businesses, some of whom contributed to meeting the costs of the new Anchor Building, provide a good range of work placements. Students are active organisers of fund raising for charity and have successfully raised substantial sums.
106. The school's accommodation and facilities are shared with the local community and provide a very good local resource. The accommodation for sport is impressive; the Peter Conway Sports Centre, with Astroturf surface available, makes a valuable addition to benefit the community.

## SPANISH

Overall, the quality of provision for Spanish is **good** in the main school and in the sixth form.

### Strengths

- The standards achieved in GCSE examinations are well above-average and above-average in AS and A-level examinations.
- The attitudes of pupils and students towards their learning are very positive.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Management and leadership of the subject are good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils to use the language in realistic situations.
- The more effective use of assessment to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities and to enable them to take responsibility for their own progress.
- The achievement of boys in examinations so that they attain as well as girls.
- The use of accommodation for some classes restricts the range of learning opportunities.

107. After two years' study by the end of Year 9, pupils attain standards slightly above the national average. This represents good achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because work is well adapted to their needs. The skills of reading, writing and listening are very well developed. Higher attaining pupils write short accounts and letters, obeying grammatical rules and written conventions successfully to describe their family and others. They express simple opinions successfully and give reasons for their views by presenting advantages and disadvantages - for example, about their home town. Pupils have a very good understanding of the way the language works and identify, explain and apply patterns such as adjectival agreement and verb endings effectively and usually accurately. Lower and average attaining pupils produce pieces of writing following a model or by filling in key words in text in which gaps have been left. All pupils identify the main points from extracts of speech at near normal speed and higher attaining pupils identify more detail with little need for repetition. All respond promptly and appropriately to questioning and to instructions in Spanish. Higher attaining pupils interpret more complex and unfamiliar language than others. Speaking is less secure. Standards are average, but most pupils are hesitant in speaking and lack confidence in responding spontaneously or without guidance. They take part in short dialogues but need time to prepare what they are going to say beforehand.
108. By the end of Year 11, standards attained are well above-average. This represents good achievement in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Their skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening are very well developed. Pupils increase their range of vocabulary and structures and deepen their understanding of grammar. They identify detail from longer texts and write at length and in detail on a variety of topics including formal letters - for example, to

book accommodation and to write accounts of their holidays. They are proficient in using a wide range of structures and describe events in the present, past and future tenses. They include detail and link their ideas successfully. Their writing is usually accurate and presented with care. Pupils make some basic errors but this does not interfere with meaning.

109. In both 2001 and 2002, the proportion of candidates gaining A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations was well above the national average. A large proportion attained grade A, but the proportion of pupils gaining A\* grades at GCSE was below the national average. Girls achieve significantly better than boys. The proportion of boys attaining the highest grades is well below that of girls. However, there was no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls in the work seen during the inspection. Overall, pupils do as well in Spanish as they do in their other GCSE subjects.
110. By the end of Year 13, sixth form students are competent linguists and attain above-average standards. They achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment in GCSE and AS examinations. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of grammar and use a good range of vocabulary and structures. They write at length for a variety of purposes; for example, to discuss the changing role of women in Spain, to analyse and comment upon a variety of texts, including the media and literature, and to make presentations. They carry out research using the Internet and satellite television and incorporate their findings effectively in their essays to illustrate and justify their views. For example, students in Year 13 discussed the predicament of abused women after watching an interview on video. They went on to participate in a role-play exercise and put themselves into the roles of the woman being interviewed and that of a counsellor. They identify the main points and detail successfully from newspaper articles. They use dictionaries well to find and check meaning. Students respond promptly and appropriately to spoken Spanish but their responses are often brief. In Year 12, they are hesitant in speaking and, although by Year 13 they are more confident, the competence that they show in speaking and responding spontaneously is less secure than other skills. In AS and A-level examinations, the proportion of students gaining A and B grades was above what is typical in 2001 and well above that standard in A-level examinations in 2002. The number of students entered was too small for secure generalisations to be made about the quality of their attainment in 2001 in relation to the national average. However, all achieved at least as well as could be expected in relation to the grades they attained in Year 11 GCSE examinations.
111. Since the last inspection, standards have improved and the resources and accommodation available to the subject have also improved significantly. Teachers work well together as a team and, although the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are in the early stages of development, teachers frequently share ideas. The department has good capacity to improve further.
112. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Teachers have a very good command of Spanish and good subject knowledge. They use their knowledge of the language effectively to conduct lessons wholly in Spanish and to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to challenge higher attaining pupils by asking them to translate more complex language for others. Teachers' choice and use of resources and activities are appropriate and usually well sequenced. They enable pupils to build effectively on previous learning. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils became more confident in using the Spanish alphabet because they were given a series of speaking, reading and listening tasks which effectively reinforced their learning. Teachers give clear presentations of new language and grammar so that pupils rapidly understand and are able to apply patterns for themselves. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were rapidly able to ask questions in Spanish because of the teacher's clear presentation of key phrases and well-managed class practice, before they worked in pairs to question each other about their school. They made good progress because of the effective monitoring of their work by the teacher and her sensitive intervention to help individuals where necessary. Effective questioning enables pupils to respond successfully in Spanish. Pupils have frequent opportunities to participate in dialogues but this is mainly for rehearsal, and opportunities are missed to enable them to gather and exchange previously unknown information.

113. In the sixth form, students are given the opportunity to make presentations. Resources such as ICT, authentic texts and video clips are used well to widen students' knowledge and as a stimulus for discussion. The department makes a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development through trips and exchanges, contact with native speakers, display and as an important part of many pupils' subject curriculum. The department also makes a valuable contribution to developing pupils' literacy through the use of subject-specific technical terms and by pupils reading aloud on a regular basis.
114. Pupils' and students' personal development throughout the school is very good. They are very well behaved and settle quickly in lessons. They are eager to learn and listen attentively. However, when they are required to listen for lengthy periods to the teacher or are not required to participate, themselves, in oral work, some become restless and lose concentration. When they are asked to work together in pairs and small groups they do so sensibly, organise themselves well and concentrate on tasks set. Most clearly enjoy their learning. However, pupils are not sufficiently well informed about National Curriculum levels or examination criteria on a day-to-day basis to be able to evaluate their own performance or take responsibility for their own progress by identifying ways in which they can improve their standards. Sixth form students have very positive attitudes towards their learning; they particularly appreciate the opportunities that they are given to improve their linguistic skills, such as the exchange and work experience in Barcelona and trips to the theatre and cinema at home.
115. The department is well led. Examination results are analysed and appropriate action taken to raise standards. Assessment procedures are effective but the data gained from assessments are not always used effectively to plan for the progress of groups of differing ability within lessons. Schemes of work ensure continuity and progression in learning but lack detail as to how the needs of groups of differing ability are to be addressed and to identify expected outcomes. The arrangements for subject accommodation, where a significant proportion of lessons are taught at a distance from specialist areas, hamper the progress of some pupils. Some lessons are taught in inappropriate rooms such as the science laboratories and others in mathematics and history rooms. Where this is the case, pupils do not have the benefit of specialist facilities or of support from display and the range of learning opportunities is severely restricted for these pupils because of the difficulties in transferring equipment and resources from the modern foreign languages base.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	145
	Sixth form	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		61

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	8	41	58	30	7	1	0
Percentage	6	28	40	21	5	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	5	20	31	7	0	0	0
Percentage	8	32	49	11	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents less than one percentage point. Percentage numbers have been rounded and may not total 100.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	892	198
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	21	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	117	12

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	102	77	179

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	80	93
	Girls	73	67	72
	Total	162	147	165
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	91 (89)	82 (86)	92 (86)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	58 (58)	60 (61)	64 (46)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	85	95
	Girls	75	72	75
	Total	163	157	170
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	91 (87)	88 (88)	95 (86)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
)Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	70 (58)	60 (54)	65 (49)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	88	85	173

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	87	87
	Girls	63	85	85
	Total	125	172	172
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	72 ( 68)	99 (99)	99 (100)
	National	51 (48)	87 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil (capped)	School	43.5
	National	34.6

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.  
The capped average point score per student published in the table is based on the sum of the points awarded for the best 8 GCSE (or GNVQ equivalent) results.

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	32	45	77

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	32	45	77
	Average point score per candidate	15.6	17	16.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

### ***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
706	28	2
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0
6	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
2	1	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
363	19	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)	64.75
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8:1

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	384.64

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.45
Key Stage 4	22.62

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	3,417,180
Total expenditure	3,398,559
Expenditure per pupil	3,104
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,619
Balance carried forward to next year	12,002

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1095
Number of questionnaires returned	326

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	43	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	44	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	52	2	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	51	17	9	2
The teaching is good.	29	64	4	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	54	17	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	45	5	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	51	18	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	49	42	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	44	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	34	9	1	5

*Rows do not all total 100 because of rounding.*

### Other issues raised by parents

- Parents were, overall, very supportive of the school and the standards their children achieve. Some parents were critical of the quality of provision that the school makes for information and communication technology (ICT).

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching helps pupils to achieve very well and attain well above-average standards in all years.
- Pupils' attitudes to work in English are very positive and contribute significantly to their very good progress.
- Teachers check and review pupils' work very well and provide excellent support to help them to improve their work.

#### Areas for improvement

- A lack of variety of teaching methods in some lessons slows the pace of pupils' learning.

116. Pupils' standards in English on entry to the school are slightly above-average. They make very good progress and, by the end of Year 9, achieve well above-average standards in all English skills. Year 9 pupils have very good speaking and listening skills. They have a good range of vocabulary and can use standard English confidently. High attaining pupils used words thoughtfully and precisely to discuss complex ideas such as the differences between a maxim, a slogan and a motto, when reading *Animal Farm*. Many lower attaining pupils also contribute confidently in class discussions. Most pupils read aloud accurately and fluently, with good expression. They can identify literary techniques used in poetry, and average and high attaining pupils can explain how effectively they are used. They are able to explore the relationships between characters in stories and discuss what motivates them with close reference to the text. Writing standards are also very good. Pupils take pride in their work and write neatly and accurately. Nearly all can produce extended pieces of writing. A few lower attaining pupils have difficulties with spelling but still use a good range of descriptive vocabulary. Average and higher attaining pupils vary the length of sentences to good effect in very imaginative stories. These standards are in line with the school's recent results in National Curriculum tests. In 2001 and 2002, English results were much better than those in similar schools and well above the national average. Pupils attained a similar result in English to that which they gained in science and a little ahead of their standard in mathematics.
117. Pupils of all levels of competence continue to achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 and maintain their high standards. Year 11 pupils listen very attentively to teachers' and each other's views. Most have an excellent command of standard spoken English but some lack confidence when they give formal presentations to the whole class. For example, a Year 11 class expressed mature views about social and political issues, but all pupils avoided eye contact with the audience and just read from prepared scripts. Pupils read set texts with pleasure and understanding. Most have a good grasp of how poets use language for effect. For example, they explained Wilfred Owen's effective use of metaphor and personification in *Anthem for Doomed Youth*. Even lower attaining pupils understood and were fascinated by the way Robert Browning portrays character in *Porphyria's Lover*. Pupils' writing skills are also well above-average. They plan and draft most of their formal writing carefully so that they produce well structured essays. They have good note-making skills. High attaining pupils are able to write at great length in a variety of styles and produce mature, analytical essays when they discuss set texts. In GCSE examinations in English in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades was well above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. In English literature, results were also well above the national average.
118. Gifted pupils achieve very well and the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* and A in GCSE examinations in 2001 and 2002 was well above-average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress over time and achieve well in GCSE examinations. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also achieve very well. Girls do better than boys in Year 9 exams and at GCSE, in line with the difference found nationally.

119. Provision for English has improved substantially since the last inspection. National Curriculum and GCSE examination results have improved significantly each year, especially since 1999. The department now has excellent procedures for assessing pupils' work and monitoring their progress. Teachers know pupils' individual needs very well and provide valuable extra support for those who are not achieving as well as they should.
120. The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to learn well in lessons. Teachers set homework regularly and often ask pupils to prepare work for the next lesson. This encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and they respond well to this, usually completing homework on time. The marking of pupils' work is outstanding. Teachers write lengthy comments that provide excellent support and advice for pupils. This often leads to further improvement of work that is already good. Teachers show their high expectations by providing further background reading for pupils. For example, they provided references to Rousseau's and Hobbes' views on "the natural condition of mankind" to help pupils understand themes in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the texts that pupils are reading and this enables them to ask incisive questions, to build on points that pupils make and to extend the learning of even the highest attainers. However, some teachers place too much emphasis on whole-class discussion and do not use a sufficient variety of teaching methods. As a result, less forthcoming pupils listen attentively but do not contribute to the discussion. This reduces the opportunity for them to develop a personal response to texts before they hear the teacher's own views. Teachers plan their lessons well. They make sure that pupils know what they will be doing over a series of lessons. However, they do not always make their objectives clear enough, so that pupils are less sure about what they are expected to achieve.
121. Pupils' attitudes to their work in English are very positive. They want to learn and do well. Their respect and support for teachers and each other are shown in the way they are so attentive in class. This contributes significantly to their very good progress in all years.
122. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. Teachers' and pupils' work is monitored well and supportively. Newly qualified teachers receive excellent support and teachers work very successfully as a team to ensure high levels of achievement.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

123. Standards of literacy are very good and help pupils to make progress with the work that they are asked to do in different subjects. Pupils speak confidently and listen attentively, so that they can participate well in class discussions. They read accurately, fluently and with understanding from a wide variety of sources. They can scan well for relevant information when they are required to research. Their writing skills are also very good. They take pride in the presentation of their work and use technical vocabulary correctly in most subjects. Most pupils spell and punctuate their writing correctly and can write effectively in a range of styles.
124. The school has an effective policy for teaching literacy across the curriculum. The English department has adapted its schemes of work appropriately, to take account of the Framework guidelines for teaching English. All subjects help pupils to develop their literacy skills, although some do so more systematically than others. For example, science, history, geography and religious education teachers plan the teaching of literacy through their schemes of work, but physical education, music and ICT departments do not. Geography and science teachers are especially effective in helping pupils to learn key vocabulary. Teachers use and explain technical vocabulary methodically and display key words prominently in their classrooms. In design and technology, there is insufficient emphasis on subject key words in Years 7, 8 and 9, but their correct use is accentuated much more in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for pupils to use and develop their reading skills are good. Teachers ask pupils to read from a variety of sources. In most subjects, pupils are encouraged to research from textbooks or the Internet and develop their skills to scan for information. The teaching of writing skills across the curriculum is less consistently good. It is very good in English because teachers mark pupils' writing in supportive detail. Geography teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to write in different styles - for brochures, diaries and letters, for example. However, punctuation and spelling mistakes are not marked systematically in all subjects. In modern foreign languages, there is insufficient insistence on pupils drafting and re-drafting their work to improve accuracy.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall the provision for pupils in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards are well above national norms.
- The department is now very well staffed with highly qualified teachers of mathematics working well together.
- The pupils work hard and behave very well in lessons.
- Teaching is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not yet share the very good and excellent practice which exists within the department to improve teaching further.
- The quality of marking could be improved.
- The use of targets for pupils to raise standards still higher could be better used.

125. The mathematics department has recently suffered from the long-term illness of some teachers. This has involved an increase in class sizes in some years to give all pupils access to qualified teaching of mathematics. Nevertheless, results in 2002 were well above the national average in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests, but marginally behind those gained in English and science. Standards in GCSE examinations were well above-average. Over time, results have been well above national averages and improving at a similar rate. Results have been broadly in line with those of similar schools. There has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, or of that of different groups of pupils.
126. By Year 9, pupils' mathematical skills show good progress from their standards on entry to the school. Their attainment is not significantly better than that seen nationally when pupils join the school at the age of 11. After three years, it is well above-average. The work of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 shows that many are capable of obtaining levels 7 or 8 in the National Curriculum examinations at the end of the academic year. They are especially competent at algebra. Lower attainers perform at level 5, the nationally expected level at this age. They can cancel vulgar fractions and find the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle using Pythagoras' theorem. Numerical work is well above-average.
127. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above the national average for pupils attaining grades A\* and C and show at least good progress by the pupils from their results in Year 9. Pupils in lower attaining sets are entered for a modular GCSE examination, a recent innovation in the school. Current indicators show very good performance by these pupils, with many achieving at or even above national average standards.
128. The standard of work of pupils by the end of Year 11 is well above that attained nationally. Almost all pupils are on course for attaining the A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations. Higher attaining pupils have secure understanding of circle theorems. Lower attaining pupils can draw a pie chart from a table of data, although they do not always include labels or a suitable key. Some can find the prime factors of numbers up to one thousand. They are beginning to progress well with indices, including the fact that a zero index with any number equates with one.
129. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do those from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils with English as an additional language were seen in mathematics lessons during the inspection.
130. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching programmes have been improved to incorporate changing requirements of examinations. Most areas of concern identified in the last inspection have been remedied. Although there is still room for increasing the variety of pupils' activity and interest in some lessons, the quality of teaching remains good and that of pupils' behaviour very good. Teachers have a better grasp of the use of ICT as a tool for teaching.

131. Teaching is good throughout all years. In the best lessons, pupils were challenged to think for themselves and discuss their work. In these lessons, pupils were interested and totally involved. Most lessons were well planned and prepared. Teachers' expectations of pupils and the pace of learning in lessons were almost universally good. Most teachers manage the pupils well, so that no time is wasted. All are well qualified, fully trained teachers of mathematics.
132. In response to this good teaching, pupils work hard and make continuing and consistent gains in mathematical skills and knowledge. Most are aware of their current levels of attainment, compared with National Curriculum or GCSE standards. Nevertheless, because targets for improvement tend to be generalised rather than specific, opportunities to motivate and improve are being missed. Not all pupils know precisely in which areas of their work they are weakest, or what specifically they need to do to improve.
133. Teaching was unsatisfactory in just one lesson. In this, the teacher underestimated the potential of the pupils and covered the conversion of numbers to and from standard form in a didactic and dull way. The pupils could do what they were asked but gained no enhanced understanding of indices or place value. In fact, incorrect ideas were conveyed. Pupils were encouraged to think in terms of "moving the decimal point" rather than the effect of place value on the respective digits in a number. This and some other satisfactory lessons lacked flair and variety in challenging the pupils with a range of ideas and approaches to the subject matter. Enabling all teachers to learn from and emulate the best in the department is a priority.
134. Some teachers mark the pupils' work carefully. There is some very good practice within the department in this respect. In addition to indicating whether the work is right or not they comment fully on how it might be improved and make good use of the school's reward system to motivate the pupils to do better. Closer checking on the standards of marking, whether by sharing good practice or by more regular checking, is currently lacking and without improved practice, the highest standards across the department are unlikely to be achieved.
135. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good. In every lesson seen, the pupils' attitudes to their work and their behaviour were at least good and often very good or excellent. Nor did this very good behaviour result solely from pupils responding well to good teaching. Relationships in the classroom are very good. The quality of these relationships and pupils' personal development does much to contribute to pupils' good progress.
136. The mathematics department benefits from sound leadership by a relatively new head of department. Because of this, the teachers work together well as a team. The focus now is on improving teaching and learning, once schemes of work have been fully developed.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

137. The teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. A whole-school policy was introduced last Easter, a year following consultation with all departments. A staff working group continues to meet. This encourages the sharing of good ideas and practice. Some examples of the good teaching of numerical skills are to be seen across the school. In physical education, for example, handling of numerical data is incorporated throughout the course. In design and technology, Boolean algebra features in aspects of control associated with truth tables in logic games. In English, pupils work out how much a worker's wages in the play *An Inspector Calls* would be worth today. Almost all subject areas have determined what their contribution to the pupils' numerical understanding should be and have incorporated this into a policy in their departmental handbooks.
138. Pupils display well above-average numerical skills in their work across the curriculum. For example, in science, pupils are very secure with the use of mathematical vocabulary and they can use fractions and interpret formulae successfully. In music, pupils in Years 10 and 11 use their mathematics to balance phrases and structures when composing. There is a very good quality of graph work in the pupils' work in business studies.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Pupils' attainment at ages 14 and 16 is well above the national average.
- Teaching and the planning of lessons are very good overall, with some excellent practice.
- Pupils work well together and attitudes to science are positive; behaviour is consistently very good and pupils take pride in their work.
- Assessment, tracking of pupils' progress and target-setting are very well developed.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards could improve even further.
- Pupils would benefit from using ICT more, by using sensors in investigations and datalogging.

139. Standards continue to improve and results in 2002 were well above the national average both in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations. Pupils' attainment in science has usually been similar to their standards in mathematics and below that in English. In relation to national differences, there is no significant variation between the performance of boys and girls, or for that of different groups of students
140. In 2002, the proportion of pupils attaining levels 5 and 6 in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 was above the national average, and at level 5 and above, was also above the average of similar schools. In GCSE examinations 2002, as in the previous two years, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was well above the national average; the percentage of those gaining grades A\* to G was in line with national figures. There was no significant pattern of gender difference and, by age 16, over time the difference between boys and girls gaining the higher GCSE grades is negligible.
141. The standard of work seen during the inspection was very good. Pupils have very good knowledge and understanding, and they achieve well across Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Year 7 made good progress in the lessons on the introduction to classification and species. In Year 8, they investigated aspects of chromatography and successfully used their new knowledge and understanding to solve a forgery mystery by logical deduction of the rates of separation of different inks. Pupils of all levels of subject competence achieve well in lessons.
142. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Years 10 and 11 also reached very good standards and made very good progress. For example, capable pupils in Year 10 achieved well in their work on the pH of oxides. They discussed with confidence the position of metals and non-metals in the periodic table and predicted with accuracy the outcomes of reactivity and displacement reactions. Year 11 students understood the more difficult concepts of the radioactive decay of unstable atoms; others showed good understanding of the action of electrons in the dangers and use of static electricity. Those with special educational needs make very good progress in line with their peers, as do other minority groups.
143. There was very little change since the last inspection until the new head of department was appointed in September 2000. Along with the appointment of other new staff, the department has subsequently made major changes which support learning very well. As a result, standards have continued to improve. Departmental documentation is very well organised and up to date; schemes of work and teaching methods have been thoroughly revised and are supported by new texts, key resources and computing hardware and software. Teachers work closely together, and the quality of teaching has improved. The tracking and recording of students' success are exemplary. In addition to evidence of pupils' attainment on entry to the school, the results of regular assessments, end-of-module tests, and other material are successfully used to group students by subject potential. Individual targets are set for pupils and progress is reported to pupils and parents. Teachers' work is well supported and informed by these processes and pupils learn more successfully as a consequence. This has been a major development and has enabled the department to communicate and negotiate realistic targets with parents and pupils. The recent provision of a dedicated ICT suite has already made a positive impact on the quality of students' work.

144. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and a major strength. There are some examples of excellent practice. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science, which they use effectively with students, and they are enthusiastic about their subject. They organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes, as in lessons on chromatography in Year 8, and the ICT presentations on static electricity and circuits and the work on infertility, IVF and chromosomes in Year 11. In most lessons, aims and intended outcomes are displayed and known by the pupils. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. Homework is well thought out and consolidates and extends new learning well. Whole-class questioning is regularly used and effective, and the pace of lessons is good. In very good and excellent lessons, students are challenged and confident and they show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This was demonstrated well in a Year 11 physics lesson related to current and voltage in series and parallel circuits where pupils were able to use initiative, and were engaged with aspects of planning and working together. Assessment is properly organised and teachers mark pupils' books and other work regularly. The quality of pupils' work on display throughout the science laboratories is very good and some is excellent. There are strong links with a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
145. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their work in science, behaviour in lessons is very good and attitudes to learning are very positive. Expectations of teachers are high and relationships are very good. Pupils take great pride in their work, which is completed on time, and books are well looked after. The engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is high and pupils enjoy practical work and investigations in science; they concentrate and work well together.
146. The new head of department is experienced, has a clear vision, and has already identified and successfully tackled the major issues. He handles people well and with sensitivity. The department has completed a major review of documentation and schemes of work which includes statements about literacy, numeracy, ICT, teaching strategies and the effective use of resources. The new arrangements for checking pupils' standards and target-setting are exemplary. The department is very well organised; teachers and technicians are familiar with safe working practice and daily routines reflect this. They work successfully together and the sharing of expertise is a rapidly developing area of good practice.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The pupils' achievement is good during both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11.
- The teaching is good overall and often very good in GCSE lessons: teachers have high expectations that lead to challenging work and good achievement.
- The head of department has ensured the effective development of the curriculum; schemes of work meet new demands and the needs of the pupils.
- Time and resources are used efficiently to promote learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The department offers too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT.
- The shortage of space and equipment sometimes restricts art activities.
- Teachers do not always provide enough opportunity for the more reticent pupils to answer questions.

147. Year 9 pupils achieve well. Pupils enter the school with average knowledge and understanding and achieve a high level of technical skill and knowledge of the media they use in expressing their ideas. Their skills in researching and producing paintings and sculptures from a wide variety of sources are well developed. Pupils' standards, measured by the teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were, correctly assessed as above-average. Nearly all pupils reached the expected National Curriculum levels and many exceeded these. Pupils in Year 11 achieve above-average standards. In line with the national trend, girls do better than boys. Boys' work, in general, shows less imaginative research and consideration of alternatives. Higher attaining

pupils achieve an individual approach with a rich application of their understanding of colour and texture. All pupils use their knowledge of other artists and different cultures to enhance their ideas. They research their chosen topics in depth. Standards in the 2002 GCSE examination were well above-average with a high proportion of students gaining an A\* or A grade. This was a significant improvement on results in 2001 which were below the national average. In 1999 and 2000 they were in line with national standards. Those admitted to the school on grounds of their potential in the subject do very well.

148. Standards and provision have been maintained at a good level since the last inspection. Pupils of all ages produce exciting and stimulating work. The lack of some resources – for example, for pottery and printmaking - limits the range of options available. The head of department has adapted the schemes of work well to make the best of this situation, although the lack of photography or digital image processing lessens the scope of the GCSE graphics course, for example. Overall, accommodation is cramped and restricts pupils' learning opportunities.
149. Teaching is good overall. It is good and sometimes very good in Years 7 to 9 and often very good in Years 10 and 11. The very well planned scheme of work is matched by the expert knowledge of the teachers so that they are able to present a high level of challenge to the pupils. Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm and a great deal of commitment, which is shown in the amount and depth of the homework that they produce. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils made very good progress for two main reasons. Firstly, they had prepared for the lesson very well by researching lettering styles at home and, secondly, the teacher had developed the pupils' skills in using a craft knife safely so that they were able to begin constructing 3-D letters with little further instruction. They had to work and plan in groups. This was successful, despite the cramped classroom, because of the very good relationships and level of co-operation. The good pace of all the lessons and the effective and imaginative use of resources also contribute to the pupils' achievement. In Year 10, pupils quickly learned new pastel-drawing and watercolour techniques. The teachers assessed their progress and introduced tasks to stretch them, including talented pupils, still further. Pupils were very pleased with the way that they were able to use their prior knowledge about colour to develop their skills in drawing or painting from observation.
150. There are a few weaknesses. Teachers tend not to ensure that pupils who do not have their hands up in class to answer questions are able to contribute to questioning or discussion. Consequently, time may be wasted in finding out who may need further help or support and opportunities are missed for developing speaking and listening. Although the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well, they are rarely given simpler tasks or concessions in the demanding schedules. In one Year 9 lesson, pupils had to cope with a very large input of information as well as a technically challenging task. Because of this, the lower attaining pupils were less able to respond to the moral and emotional content of the *Twin Towers* project.
151. Teachers do not plan sufficient lessons which make use of ICT. This is partly because of the problems in booking time in a computer suite. Teachers assess the pupils' progress well and pupils are given good information to help them to improve. Good leadership and management by the head of department ensure that different forms of information on assessment contribute well to the development of the schemes of work and that the department has fully integrated the new National Curriculum requirements.

## **BUSINESS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Very good GCSE examination results have been attained in recent years.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good, helping pupils to make good progress.
- The department is now functioning well, following the appointment of new staff.



Areas for improvement

- There is lack of a subject-specific classroom base.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially in the case of higher attainers.

152. In the last three years, students following the GCSE examination course in Years 10 and 11 attained a well above-average number of A\* to C passes. In addition, the number of pupils who passed the examination with any grade was also well above the national average. Attainment is good, and in lessons and in current work, it continues at this same standard. What is missing, however, is the effective use of ICT to enhance pupils' work further. Spreadsheets and databases - a mainstay of business - are seldom used, and this is a weakness. Some lower attaining pupils fail to make sufficient progress in lessons because they are too easily distracted from their work and in consequence their attainment in the lesson is not as high as it should be.
153. Overall, since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. The accommodation and resources are adequate, but teachers move between lessons because rooms have shared use. There is no dedicated room for business studies with computers in it available specifically to the subject. Following staff changes, the co-ordination and management of the department are improving, but are coming from a low base.
154. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. In Year 11, the quality is always good. However, in Year 10, lower attaining groups prove challenging for new teachers until relationships are established, and here there are some unsatisfactory features in teaching and in pupils' response. Both teachers are new to the school; one has one year's service and the other joined this year, some three weeks ago. Teachers are knowledgeable and are developing sound schemes of work; none was available when they arrived. The work of the pupils matches the requirements of the syllabus.
155. With the exception of a Year 10 class seen, learning is good in lessons. Relationships are good and pupils listen well to their teachers. They follow instructions and complete their work quickly and effectively. There is a good pace in lessons and pupils work hard to keep up and join in, as they do willingly. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and ask questions when they do not fully understand. Teachers respond to their needs, and give suitable explanations to ensure understanding. The coursework is well completed, and teachers give good guidance that the pupils follow. This enables pupils to pass the GCSE examination, but there is an absence of challenge for the highest attainers. Homework is regularly set and carries on from the content of the lessons well. It is often set in the middle of the lesson so that pupils can clearly understand what they have to do and can ask questions of the teacher if they do not.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The good achievement by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and attainment of very good standards in GCSE examinations.
- The progress made by gifted and talented pupils achieved by working independently on imaginative projects.
- The accommodation and learning resources are of a very good standard.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocated to the subject in Years 8 and 9 is insufficient for pupils to make better progress in these years.
- The teaching in Years 7 to 9 varies too much in quality.

156. Overall, standards are very good. Standards in the subject on entry to the school span the full range but are generally below those expected nationally. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. In 2002, girls attained better standards than boys but boys did particularly well compared with the standards that boys attain nationally. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated

in lessons and make the progress that they should. Eight out of ten pupils currently opt to take the subject in Year 10, a proportion which has increased in recent years. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, standards were well above the national average. For example, eight out of ten pupils obtained the higher A\* to C grades and just under one in three gained A\* and A grades in the GCSE examinations. Results were higher in the food technology, graphic products and textiles examinations than those in resistant materials and electronic products. Girls continued to perform better than boys, but not exceptionally so. The proportion of pupils who obtained A\* to G grades in GCSE examinations was broadly in line with the national average in 2002. Overall, the results represent a good achievement for those who took the subject in Years 10 and 11. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress by working independently on imaginative projects.

157. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Pupils' attainment and achievement have improved, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Their very good attitudes and behaviour have been maintained.
158. The overall quality of teaching is very good, but more variable in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 it is sometimes excellent. All teachers have good knowledge of their specialist area. When teaching is good teachers introduce topics and demonstrate tasks very well. They gain pupils' interest, time activities well and have very high expectations. When teaching is less successful, teachers fail to maintain interest, allow pupils to go off task and do not match teaching methods to pupils' needs. The time allocated in Years 8 and 9 is insufficient for pupils to progress more quickly in these years. All pupils' work is assessed, recorded and reported to parents well.
159. The overall standard of learning is very good. In Years 7 to 9 pupils receive well planned lessons in which they learn to design and make an imaginative range of products using wood, plastic, metal, textile and food materials. They learn to use simple mechanisms, electronics and control particularly well. The effectiveness of the projects is due to the way they combine a range of materials and design and make methods. In Year 7, for example, pupils design and make a "jitter bug" in which the outer case is made from textiles and the movement created by an electrical motor and circuit. In lessons in food technology, pupils learn the importance of hygiene, and how to investigate and compare food products and basic recipes well. Pupils routinely use dimensions and quantities in their work and have good opportunities to use ICT, particularly in Year 8. Key words are introduced well in all lessons and some opportunities are provided for pupils to write about their work at length.
160. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to learn very well in GCSE courses based either on their chosen material - resistant, textile or food - or in graphic products or electronic products. Much of the coursework is very good. In Year 11, for example, pupils make a sweet or savoury flan from a standard recipe; decide how it may be modified to make it more commercially attractive; and make and evaluate the modified flan. Pupils consider well some of the moral and cultural issues associated with their work. A group of pupils are currently taking part in the Technology Enhancement Programme, sponsored by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. Pupils have joined others from France, Germany and Spain to design and make an interactive game and are responsible for the base design and firing device.
161. The department is very well led by an experienced teacher who is ably supported by the head of technology and the other specialist teachers. They are all keen to improve teaching methods and standards. The accommodation and learning resources are both excellent and very much enhance attainment.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- GCSE examination results are well above-average.
- Very good teaching, with a good variety of methods, enables pupils to learn very well.

#### Areas for improvement

- The limited number of lessons available in Years 8 and 9 restricts pupils' progress.

162. All pupils study drama in Year 7 for two lessons each week. In Years 8 and 9 they have one lesson a week for half of each year. Drama is a popular option in Years 10 and 11 for pupils who wish to study the subject for the GCSE examination.
163. Pupils attain average standards by Year 9. Their progress is limited by the lack of continuity of lessons in Years 8 and 9. As a result, standards are similar in Year 7 and Year 9. For example, Year 7 pupils are able to concentrate well and stay in role convincingly. They quickly gain confidence in the use of basic dramatic techniques such as freeze-frame, tableau and thought-tracking. Year 9 pupils are articulate when they share their ideas with the class, but lack confidence in performance and during warm-up activities.
164. Pupils gain very good results in GCSE examinations. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\* to C was well above-average, as in the previous two years. One third of pupils achieved grade A and all passed the examination. During the inspection, Year 11 pupils were devising and scripting scenes for a Theatre in Education project in a primary school. They were able to take into account the likely interests of children of different ages and adapt their ideas appropriately. They showed very good skills of self-evaluation and supported each other well, working at a good pace.
165. Teaching is very good and enables pupils to learn very well in lessons. Teachers' very good class management is based on excellent relationships with pupils and ensures that they work quickly, making the most of the limited time available. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods and vary the activities in lessons to maintain pupils' natural interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
166. The drama schemes of work link closely with those of the English department in Years 7, 8 and 9, and ensure that the school meets requirements for teaching drama in English. Drama makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Teachers give their time readily to enable pupils to participate in lunchtime drama clubs and regular school productions. Committed leadership is taking the subject forward very well. It has a more significant place in the curriculum than at the last inspection and attainment in GCSE examinations is very good.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good and some lessons are very well taught.
- Results and trend in attainment in GCSE examinations.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour support their learning very well.
- The department has good capacity to improve even further.

#### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' access to and use of ICT are insufficient.
- The tracking of pupils' progress and setting of targets for them to improve are lacking.
- The revised departmental schemes of work await completion.

167. By the end of Year 9 pupils achieve well. From an average level of attainment on entry, they make good progress. Pupils learn basic mapping and number skills in Year 7 and apply these well in exercises such as the Contour Island assessment. Their skills and knowledge grow through Years 8 and 9, and investigative techniques are introduced and are supported by steadily improving written skills. Pupils use imaginative and extended writing in a variety of styles – for example, brochures, letters and diaries, as in Year 9 work on *Days in Sydney*.

Note-taking develops very well. Pupils enhance their personal development considerably, particularly in making decisions on issues of conservation and sustainable development in work on tourism in Kenya and development of the Amazonian rainforest.

168. By the end of Year 11, pupils continue to achieve well. Results in GCSE examinations have steadily improved over the last four years and at a higher rate than the national average. Results in 2001 and 2002 were above the national average. Boys' grades are consistently higher than girls, but only by a small margin. The results for 2002 have also seen the improvement in the number of A\* grades gained in 2001 and maintained at A-level above the national average. Pupils taking geography in GCSE examinations, although gaining better than average grades, have not done as well, overall, as in some other subjects that they take. Analysis by the department has shown that this is largely the result of some pupils having difficulties with the coursework and of the need to raise the performance of girls who gain GCSE D grades. The department has undertaken training to resolve the situation.
169. In Years 10 and 11 pupils develop the skills and understanding to hypothesise, gather and analyse data and reach conclusions, all based on a thorough understanding of geographical processes and patterns. This is seen to advantage in investigations such as, *Why is Southend-on-Sea a Tourist Honeypot?* and *Does Corfe need a by-pass?* Pupils' use of number develops, along with a knowledge of more complex concepts such as flood hydrographs and geographical modelling in urban development. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs in learning receive appropriate work and support and make good progress. In work seen, there is little difference between boys and girls in presentation, knowledge or understanding. Pupils in all years have insufficient opportunities to access and use ICT. Some individuals use ICT well, but overall, pupils' skills are not practised enough in using computers and other equipment from Year 7 onwards.
170. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Those areas of the department's work considered good at the last inspection have remained so; many of these relate to the teaching and the attitudes of pupils. There have been improvements in achievement at the end of Year 9 and in standards in GCSE examinations. As a result of some disruption to staffing and leadership in recent years, some matters identified for improvement at the last inspection have not yet been satisfactorily addressed. These include the use of ICT and the development of assessment. Under the new head of department, a review has taken place and clear targets have been set for departmental improvement. Many of these are already being met and a supportive department should ensure continued improvement.
171. The teaching is good in all years and often very good. Lessons are well planned and taught in a flexible and interesting way by teachers with very good subject knowledge. This was shown in Year 11 lessons that included explanation of recent events. As a result, pupils are fully involved and show a genuine interest in the subject. Good techniques of questioning and reinforcement enable pupils to develop their thinking and make valuable contributions to lessons. Teachers' choice and use of different activities and resources help pupils to work at a good pace and produce a good volume of work of quality. Teachers usually have high expectations of what pupils should achieve.
172. The teaching and learning are greatly assisted by the very good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils that are a reflection of their very good personal development. Relationships in lessons, where pupils work co-operatively together and with teachers, are very good.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The teaching is good and teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Pupils achieve well because the teaching methods are effective and the work is carefully planned.
- Spiritual, moral, cultural and social issues are very well considered and raise attainment.

Areas for improvement
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- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils' competence in writing accurately could be improved.</li></ul> |
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173. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Pupils do as well as can be expected and make satisfactory progress from entry to the school to the end of Year 9. In lessons and all the work seen, pupils usually achieve the standards expected of them - and some do very well. In Year 7, for example, where pupils work in classes of mixed ability, they begin to understand the problems of Hannibal when he tried to invade the Roman Empire. Competent pupils explained fluently in class how he crossed the Alps and why the Carthaginians wanted to expand their trade routes. Most pupils regularly join in lively discussion and volunteer to read aloud. Pupils can write quickly although they do not always check their work for spelling errors. Girls and boys perform equally well. Middle attaining pupils work less competently, and lower attainers and those with special educational learning needs struggle to understand the vocabulary used in the reference materials. In Years 8 and 9, pupils work in classes grouped in similar levels of ability. In a Year 9 lesson with a class of mixed ability, pupils volunteered to adopt the role of slaves at a West Indian auction and others took the role of plantation owners. Higher attaining pupils empathised well with the humiliation of the "slave" and recognised the "owner's" formidable powers. However, pupils found the textbook-based independent work more difficult. By the end of Year 9, pupils make satisfactory progress to attain good standards, although basic spelling errors persist. There is good use of ICT. For example, a pupil with special educational needs used word processing and clear illustrations in his study of the Second World War.
174. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11, and standards by the end of Year 11 are above-average. Pupils in Year 10 research information from the Internet and write challenging newspaper articles from the perspective of different countries and give their opinion – for example, of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. Pupils who find this task difficult willingly seek help from the teacher. Most pupils are confident learners and listen well. Year 11 pupils in a higher attaining class gained a much better understanding of the relationship between Cuba and the United States in their study of the missile crisis, from informed use of a decision-making exercise. GCSE coursework is of a good standard and ICT is used well to enhance it.
175. Results at grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations in 2000 were above the national average, with girls well above and boys above this standard. Results were similar to those found nationally at the A\* to G grade level. In 2001, boys' attainment of GCSE grades A\* to C grades fell below the national average, but girls attained above it. All pupils gained a grade in the A\* to G range. Results were stronger again in 2002, and similar to those attained in 2000. Girls continue to perform better than boys although the gap is narrower than it was.
176. The department has improved since the last inspection. Examination results are analysed well. A detailed scheme of work is well designed to support pupils' learning. Assessment tests are used regularly. The mark scheme used in Years 7 to 9 explains clearly how well pupils are doing.
177. Teaching is good, both in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. It has some very good features and is very well informed by assessment data. The better lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils, who often follow the same task, although extension work is assigned that further meets the needs of the gifted and talented. In some lessons teachers create a very good sense of the historical period being studied, through role-play. In a lower attaining Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils entered a "monastic classroom" silently to Gregorian plainchant. Question and answer sessions are used well to ensure that pupils understand their work, although on occasion the explanations are too long and pupils copy too much from the whiteboard. Good support teaching is given to pupils with physical impairment and they progress well. Teachers give pupils individual help to achieve as well as they can. Homework is used well, but it is sometimes given too hastily at the end of the lesson. Historical visits are very popular and extend pupils' worthwhile experience of the subject successfully.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

### Strengths

- The quality of ICT equipment is much better than average.
- Most subjects are using ICT and staff encourage pupils to use their skills in lessons.
- Pupils are interested and enthusiastic users of ICT, given the opportunity.

### Areas for improvement in ICT across the curriculum

- The use of ICT should be extended in art, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education.
- Subject schemes of work in Years 10 and 11 do not link closely enough with requirements for ICT.
- ICT in Years 10 and 11 is not planned well enough across the curriculum to show how all subjects contribute.
- Recording of pupils' levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 is not effective enough in making them fully aware of their standard in ICT.
- The range of printed resource material available is not extensive enough to cover all topics and pupils' needs.

178. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have achieved a good standard in ICT skills. They use word processing, design and communications and spreadsheet and control programs to good effect. Information research skills are particularly well developed and pupils are able to access and evaluate information from a range of sources including the Internet. Spreadsheet activities in design and technology and mathematics create good opportunities for effective modelling and manipulation of complex data. Pupils with special educational needs achieve a good standard in computer work. They are able to improve their work through re-drafting, although weak skills of annotation and evaluation prevent some from higher achievement. National Curriculum teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were ambitiously set well above those of other subjects and the national average, and not wholly supported by the evidence of work seen during the inspection, although pupils achieved well, overall. The recording of pupils' levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 is not effective enough in making them fully aware of their standard in ICT.
179. By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement has varied considerably from good to unsatisfactory, dependent upon which course they have followed. Their attainment in GCSE courses has been mixed. In 2000, 2001 and 2002, results of the short GCSE examination course, studied and assessed in Years 9 and 10, were well below the national average. Better results have been achieved with the full GCSE examination course in which the 2001 results were above the national average. However, the proportions of pupils attaining GCSE examination grades A\* to B were only half the national figures. Pupils' incomplete coursework was a problem and the subject's allocation of lesson time has been increased. The school now currently offers only the full GCSE programme as an option in Years 10 and 11. The 2002 results indicate an increased percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A\* to C, with one in three gaining grade B. During the inspection, the quality of the pupils' final presentation of their work was generally good, both for on-screen and printed materials. In the best Year 10 and 11 work seen, the communication was clearly structured for the audience intended. When consideration of the audience and the purpose of the communication were not considered carefully enough, inappropriate fonts and graphics detracted from the standard of the final presentation. However, this focus upon the end-user (the audience for whom the information is intended) lacks sufficient development in Years 7 to 9.
180. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. Resources have improved substantially and there is good use of ICT in an increased number of subject areas. Progress in planning, monitoring, assessment and achievement has been variable, but is now improving, with new systems in place.

181. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good, overall. Lessons are well organised to combine written and oral activities with time spent using the computers. Pupils with special educational needs use the technology available and all can participate in the same classroom activities. Those with weak literacy skills receive teachers' support to complete the annotation and written evaluation stages. Unsatisfactory lessons result from overloading pupils with inappropriate materials not well enough adapted by the teacher to meet all pupils' needs. This limits pupils' ability to plan, complete tasks, and gain maximum benefit from the use of computers in the lesson. Pupils' learning can be constrained in lessons by an over-reliance upon the teachers' oral direction and guidance. This affects those pupils capable of making more progress and those who are reliant upon further assistance from the teacher. Written and visual materials are insufficiently available in the classrooms to provide prompts, reminders and program shortcuts. The combined efforts of the head of the technology faculty and the head of department provide effective leadership for the subject and support for other teachers. Provision for staff training is good, although teachers need to become more familiar with current GCSE examination board requirements in order to improve examination results further.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

182. Since the last inspection, there has been strong investment in ICT resources to improve pupils' access across the school. As well as the three ICT departmental networked rooms, network facilities are developing within subject departments, notably in English, modern foreign languages, design and technology and science. The learning resource centre has good facilities supporting extra-curricular work, timetabled English lessons and research into careers. The use of ICT has improved, although the non-timetabled network room was not fully used during all the days of the inspection.
183. There is a strong cross-curricular impetus to use ICT from senior management, well supported by staff training. Pupils' skills are developed through subjects and the timetabled programme for all pupils running throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 (although this places time constraints upon design and technology). Good use of ICT is made in English, through word processing and desktop publishing of creative writing. In drama, pupils can produce scripts and publicity for plays. In design and technology, they investigate Computer Aided Design (CAD) and systems controls successfully. Good use of ICT is made in history, by research using databases, and in physical education, by measuring and monitoring aspects of exercise and fitness. In science, satisfactory use is made of the interactive whiteboard. In mathematics, pupils can use spreadsheets and graphic calculators to extend their learning, and in music, they research and present work on composers and themes. However, the use of ICT is an area for further development in art, business, geography and religious education.
184. ICT equipment is a valuable resource to support pupils' learning. Their research, information handling and presentation skills are well developed through opportunities to use databases, access the Internet, word process and desktop publish. Pupils' skills to measure and control, and to evaluate the appropriate use of ICT against alternative methods are less well developed, but satisfactory overall. Opportunities to study the wider cultural, ethical, social and economic contexts for the subject, particularly their own relationship with ICT in their future working lives, are not yet extensive. Subject schemes of work in Years 10 and 11 do not yet link closely enough with requirements for ICT, which is not co-ordinated well enough across the curriculum to show how all subjects contribute.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- GCSE examination results in French and German have improved considerably over the past three years and are now well above-average.
- The higher attainers perform very well in early entry to French GCSE examinations in Year 10.
- Teaching is good overall and learning is good in response.
- Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are usually very good and contribute greatly to the quality of pupils' attainment.
- The number of pupils taking two foreign languages has risen sharply since the school achieved Language College status.

### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching does not ensure that the foreign language is always the main means of communication in the classroom to raise standards of speaking.
- In Years 7 to 9, the amount of written work set and the quality of marking are not always consistent across classes.
- A few teachers do not ensure that all students participate actively in lessons, especially in the wider-ability groups in Years 7 to 9 – as the department's development plan recognises.
- A significant number of lessons is not taught in specialist rooms.

185. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above-average. Overall, the pupils achieve well. They develop writing skills very well, especially the gifted and talented higher attainers who follow a more rapid course than others to take GCSE examinations in Year 10, rather than Year 11. These pupils write accurate and extended descriptions of their families, homes and school life. All pupils are introduced to the past tense in Year 8 and can describe, in very simple but accurate form, their holidays and previous weekend activities. Teachers' high expectations of middle and lower attainers, combined with pupils' mainly very good behaviour and attitudes to the subject, contribute significantly to their higher than average standards in writing. Furthermore, the good achievement in written work has a positive effect on attainment in some other language skills. For instance, pupils listen carefully, and many remember vocabulary well from reading. However, not all teachers ensure that pupils make as much progress in speaking skills. Many pupils do not practise the language in the classroom sufficiently and do not achieve as much fluency as they should.
186. Pupils with special educational needs in the wide ability groups have greater difficulty in participating well in fast speaking activities. Pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds, and those with English as an additional language, achieve as well as others. The National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 gave a similar picture of pupils' attainment and reflected the national picture of girls attaining better than boys.
187. Pupils begin the study of German (or Spanish) in Year 8 in mixed-ability form groups. By Year 9, their writing skills have developed well, but speaking skills, as in French, tend to lag behind. Pupils are not sufficiently used to hearing and using the foreign language as the main means of communication in the classroom. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils, particularly girls, were very inhibited and failed to participate freely in speaking tasks, because of the lack of practice and encouragement they had experienced in Year 8.
188. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above-average overall. Fast-track pupils have already taken their French GCSE examination in Year 10 and are studying their second GCSE foreign language. Their writing skills continue to develop well, in line with the examination syllabus requirements. All pupils in Year 11 learn to write more extended accounts and descriptions and, at all levels of attainment, gain in accuracy because of good guidance from their teachers. They continue to listen carefully to tapes of increasing complexity and participate well in class listening activities. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are given close guidelines for their speaking tests, and most understand the necessity of participating to a greater extent, and of practising oral work.



189. Attainment and progress are similar in German. Pupils respond very well to the demands of the GCSE examination. The higher attainers working in classes of similar competence are challenged well to understand complex grammatical work and they respond willingly to writing at length and using appropriately expressions that they have just learned. Less gifted pupils in a Year 11 class also responded well to vigorous teaching about how to order food and drink in a German cafe.
190. GCSE examination results in French and German in 2002 were well above-average. This was a considerable improvement on the previous three years. Pupils performed better in foreign languages than in almost all their other subjects. The results included the well above-average GCSE examination performance at grades A\* to C, obtained by a significant number of the fast-track pupils, who took French in Year 10 and German (or Spanish) in Year 11. The gap between the performance of the boys and girls was, as in 2001, narrower than is the case nationally.
191. The quality of teaching in French and German is good. The teachers' good understanding of how pupils make progress in writing skills raises pupils' achievement. Pupils respond very well. In Years 10 and 11, teachers build well on Year 9 attainment and give pupils detailed guidance for examination coursework. Most teachers challenge the gifted and talented pupils very well as they prepare for early GCSE entry in French. Teachers have high expectations of the middle and lower attainers, and nearly always give them consistent and purposeful support in writing. Pupils with special educational needs, however, are sometimes discouraged from responding by the rapid pace of written work. Teachers plan well for lessons but do not use enough of the foreign language in chorus, pronunciation practice or when working in pairs. Pupils lack enough opportunities to practise speaking the foreign language in lessons to develop real confidence. Teachers use many of the excellent resources well but the full range of teaching possibilities, including ICT and overhead projectors, is not drawn on extensively enough, especially when lessons have to take place in non-specialist rooms. In a Year 9 German lesson, pupils very much enjoyed activities with computers, but did not practise their speaking sufficiently. Teachers usually assess pupils' performance in listening skills well, so that they understand immediately how well they have done. However, the quality and amount of marking of written work are inconsistent across the department, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Target-setting in Years 7 to 9 is not focused enough on how pupils can move on to the next National Curriculum level. Appropriate homework is set regularly and contributes to pupils' overall achievement.
192. In most respects the modern languages department is well led. Developing the accommodation, resources and curricular opportunities, in order to raise standards in the new Language College, has been managed very successfully. Improvement in all these areas is substantial since the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes towards learning languages have developed very positively, as standards in examinations have risen. Many more pupils are studying two foreign languages. Central areas for further improvement are the closer monitoring of marking and target-setting and, above all, of the teaching of speaking.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **very good in classroom work** and **excellent in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work**.

### Strengths

- Standards are above expectations by the end of Year 9 and well above-average in GCSE and instrumental work.
- Teaching is very good, including in instrumental tuition, and pupils' achieve very well.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes and their behaviour is excellent.
- Standards in extra-curricular work are outstanding and bring much credit to the school.
- Leadership and management, and the support given to music, are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not use their own instruments enough in classroom work because space there is insufficient for all to do so.
- The time for music in Years 7 to 9 does not allow the curriculum to be taught in sufficient depth.
- Learning is hampered by the cramped accommodation.

193. Pupils enter the school with variable musical experience related to the quality of their musical education in their previous schools, instrumental tuition experience, interests and level of home support. Many instrumentalists enter with above-average attainment but many more pupils enter with below-average attainment.
194. By the end of Year 9, standards are above-average and most pupils are working at levels 5 or 6 of the National Curriculum. Some talented pupils attain up to level 8. Pupils make very good progress in lessons but their achievement over time is reduced by the shortage of time to teach the subject in Years 7 to 9. Pupils make good use of keyboards but do not use their own instruments enough in classwork to support the instrumental tuition that they receive and to strengthen classroom work. Most pupils compose securely and show an understanding of structures and devices, but some compose only mathematically. Pupils' skills of improvisation are good. The music-reading skills of instrumentalists are very secure but less experienced pupils use letters written under notes. Pupils listen very respectfully to recordings and in practical work; the more experienced use technical vocabulary in appraising. General musical knowledge - for example, of instruments, composers, forms, structure and well-known pieces of music - is good.
195. GCSE examination results between 1997 and 2002 were well above-average when compared with all schools. In 2002, all pupils obtained grades A or B; current standards are also well above-average. Average instrumental skills are approaching grade 5 in Years 10 and 11, but some pupils play at the level of grade 8. Pupils show good understanding of harmony, devices and structures and create imaginative compositions. They use music technologies well (including computers at home) to develop pieces and notate work. Pupils listen very respectfully. Their general musical knowledge in Year 11 is broader than average and in Year 10, it is excellent. Overall, at all levels, pupils' attitudes and achievement are commendable.
196. Teaching in classroom work is very good and often excellent. Teachers teach confidently and use competent musical skills well when demonstrating, accompanying, directing or conducting. Time is used well. Lessons start briskly, proceed at a lively pace and pupils remain focused on the work. Teachers give clear instructions and pupils understand the objectives and how to achieve them. Expectations of what pupils should achieve are very high and they enjoy challenging lessons, especially practical work - for example, when they confidently improvised samba rhythms. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make good progress and the talented pupils are well stretched. Lessons are well organised but some are too teacher-directed and visual aids and classroom display do not reinforce learning enough. Pupils are attentive and work productively and supportively of each other. They have little opportunity to work in small groups because of the shortage of practice cells. Discipline and relationships are excellent. Pupils are good-humoured, work well, are keen to answer questions, and the most enthusiastic involve themselves in musical opportunities offered by the department and outside school. Assessment is very supportive and shows pupils clearly how they can improve. Homework is set regularly to extend pupils' learning. In GCSE work, pupils' attitudes are mature and all take advantage of opportunities in instrumental or voice tuition and in extra-curricular work which strengthens their achievement.
197. The head of department is enthusiastic, committed to raising standards further and extremely hardworking. She provides excellent leadership and management. She is well supported by senior management. Departmental documentation is of high quality and the assessment system supports learning well. These are under review with the intention of developing pupils' levels of musical skills. Curricular links with primary schools are being strengthened to build on this work. The inadequate space to accommodate the subject affects learning because teachers of instruments use all practice cells and there is, then, insufficient space for working in small groups. Resources are good but shortages include larger instruments to enhance creative work, music for the learning resource centre, overhead projectors and audio equipment. The lack of technical support imposes pressures on staff and insufficient time is

given to the head of department to organise music. Since the last inspection, there have been good improvements in teaching, departmental schemes of work, pupils' attitudes, numbers of pupils taking GCSE examinations, assessment, resources and management. However, the time for teaching in Years 7 to 9 is short and reduces the range of learning opportunities.

198. Approximately 82 boys and 168 girls, approaching a quarter of the pupils in the school, - a very high number by national comparison - receive instrumental or voice lessons from 17 visiting teachers. There is a waiting list for lessons on some instruments. Standards are well above-average and the progress and achievement of pupils are very good in relation to their ages and to the time during which they have received tuition. Pupils have achieved very well in graded music examinations. Teaching is mainly very good as seen in voice, brass, wind tuition; some excellent work was seen in string tuition. Imaginatively, free tuition is offered on under-subscribed instruments.
199. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is excellent and includes two orchestras, string orchestra, senior choir, junior choir, jazz band and many other sectional ensembles and rock bands. Standards and the quality of teaching are excellent; individual pupils reach high standards, including those who are admitted to the school because they are talented in the subject. Visiting teachers give excellent support to these groups. The school promotes many concerts and musical events including the Commemoration Service, speech day and an annual music festival. These events involve high numbers of pupils. Groups perform at local arts, charity events and festivals. They visited Tuscany earlier this year and plan to perform at Disneyland in Paris next year. Music makes a most valuable contribution to pupils' personal development, especially their social and cultural development. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, commitment of parents and the enthusiasm of the many talented musicians whose performances and successes bring much credit to the school and this outstanding department.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is at least good and teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes.
- Good standards are achieved across the school.
- Excellent extra-curricular provision is made available.
- Sports coaches are used very well to enhance pupils' performance.

### Areas for development

- Pupils' self-appraisal targets are not specific enough.
- Schemes of work do not indicate precisely enough where literacy, numeracy and ICT are to be developed.
- Lesson summaries do not reinforce learning points enough.

200. The very good subject knowledge of teachers contributes strongly to the good standards of pupils' performance, and all benefit from excellent extra-curricular provision.
201. The pupils' standards by the ends of both Years 9 and 11 are above-average. Their skills and understanding of subject concepts are good and often very good. Pupils achieve well by Year 9 in relation to their attainment on entry to the school, and those admitted because of their competence in sport and games achieve very well. In small group work, Year 8 girls, for example, had good control of the push pass in hockey and passed accurately for prolonged periods. High attainers are able to describe simple strategies for games and can correctly position players. Girls out-perform the boys, except in football skills, in Years 7 to 9. This difference is reducing, although most boys in a Year 8 lesson demonstrated very good skills in trapping the ball, and using two-touches to pass whilst running.

202. By the end of Year 11, most pupils show increasingly refined techniques. Boys make good progress in their understanding of space and mobility during basketball, recognising quickly the need to close down and deny space to opponents. Pupils are increasingly confident when using subject vocabulary. They understand the importance of exercise, the need for warm-up routines, and which muscles are developed during stretching exercises. Commitment to working hard is evident and fitness levels are good. For example, Year 9 girls participated in a strenuous aerobics warm-up followed by a range of circuit training exercises. Pupils with special educational needs learn at expected levels and make good progress. Those with physical impairment participate well.
203. GCSE examination results are now consistently above the national average. Some pupils attain highly. In work seen during the inspection, Year 10 girls showed good hand-eye co-ordination, consistently hitting the rounders ball accurately. Fielding and bowling skills are well above-average, and most girls suggest appropriate coaching tips to their colleagues. Pupils' theoretical work shows that they have good understanding of human anatomy, identify the major bones, joints and muscles, and recognise the importance of exercise and a healthy diet.
204. The pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work. They present themselves well in lessons, show enjoyment and apply themselves with determination. The mutual respect, high quality of relationships and the shared enthusiasm of the teachers and pupils have a considerable impact on the quality of work produced and support pupils' very good personal development very well.
205. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved, the curriculum has been regularly reviewed and schemes of work have been further developed. ICT skills are increasingly being provided and there are good assessment and recording systems. However, the targets set with pupils are not precise enough. Resources and accommodation are good, although office space is restricted.
206. The quality of teaching is usually good, and often very good. The teachers make clear their objectives, together with their high expectations of pupils' performance. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers and the expert contributions of professional coaches - as in trampoline lessons - enable a good variety of activities to be introduced. Plenary sessions, to summarise and reinforce learning points, are inconsistently used. In theoretical work, some activities do not extend learning as much as they could because they give little scope to the learner. Marking is regularly carried out and it is supportive of pupils' learning, but teachers' comments do not always suggest targets for improvement to help pupils to make further progress. Homework is set regularly and is usually well suited to the work in hand.
207. The subject benefits from very good leadership. Monitoring of teaching takes place, with staff benefiting from opportunities to share their skills with others in the department. A very good curriculum presents a good variety of experiences to all pupils. The subject makes a good contribution to developing pupils' literacy skills and provides a very good support to numeracy, with pupils dealing consistently with data. However, the schemes of work do not yet identify exactly where literacy, numeracy and ICT should be developed.
208. There is a rich extra-curricular programme that has contributed to the subject earning the SportsMark award. Clubs, practices and competitive games are well attended, and opportunities to train abroad in the USA, Lanzarote and Belgium are popular. Talented pupils and many others enjoy considerable team and individual success in sports as diverse as volleyball, athletics, gymnastics, hockey and football at county, district and international levels.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The teaching is very good.
- The GCSE short course examination results are very good.
- The head of department's leadership and management of the subject are good and the subject's standing in the school is rising.

### Areas for improvement

- The planning and use of ICT are insufficiently developed.
- The policy for marking and assessment across Years 7 to 11 is inconsistently implemented.

209. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, achieve well because of the very good planning of lessons and work in the subject. Pupils are learning to think for themselves and they have opportunities to express their own ideas. For example, one pupil in a very good Year 9 lesson examining moral issues and thinking how a person might come to know right from wrong, concluded that, "It runs in the family, and rubs off on you." Thinking things through for themselves begins in Year 7, when pupils consider rights and responsibilities, and learn to respect other people's points of view. They suggest ideas such as, "don't make fun of others", or "try your best". They are given opportunities to relate religious ideas and beliefs to the examples set by famous people, such as Maximillian Kolbe or Oscar Romero.
210. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is above-average and this is borne out by the very good examination results. Pupils achieve well, including those who have special educational needs. They learn about moral dilemmas, such as the question of birth control and the reactions to this from various religions. In addition, pupils learn some of the traditional arguments for the existence of God, and examine social customs and issues such as marriage and divorce, together with a study of family structures. In their coverage of the examination syllabus, pupils study topics such as abortion and the law, and some of the issues concerning life and death, including euthanasia. The results for Year 11 pupils in the 2002 GCSE short course examination were very good. Almost all pupils attained a grade in the examination and two pupils in every three gained A\* to C grades. These results exceeded those for 2001, and the trend over the last three years has been upwards.
211. The rate of improvement since the last inspection has been very good. This is shown by results in GCSE examinations and the very good quality of work and teaching that takes place in the department.
212. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers ensure that all pupils are fully included in all activities. They plan very well, setting high levels of challenge, which motivate pupils very well and enable them to learn effectively. Teachers are properly very confident in their own knowledge and understanding of the subject. They use resources imaginatively, such as the very good videotapes seen in use with Year 8, who were working on the origins of the Passover festival. Teachers are skilled in using methods and activities that ensure that pupils understand the topic. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on three different types of love, teacher and pupils answered questions together before reinforcing their learning with written work. Biblical references were used to good effect, setting out the Christian point of view clearly. Pupils considered terms such as "unconditional love", and there were some humorous references to and insights into some of their parents' remarks to them at times.
213. The pace of the lessons is usually very brisk, with time, however, for pupils to express their own ideas and thoughts. Relationships are very good, and expectations of good behaviour and work habits are very high. As a result, pupils behave very well and their personal development is very good.

214. The department is well led by an enthusiastic and committed head of department. As a result, standards are rising, and the subject is well thought of in the school. This is borne out by the increased number of pupils applying to study it in the sixth form. The standard of marking is not consistent across all years, and there is insufficient planning and use of ICT. Resources overall are barely satisfactory, although the quality of some of the videotapes is very good. There are insufficient textbooks, and pupils have to share. There are also insufficient religious articles for pupils to see and handle, so that their experiences are restricted.
215. The personal development of pupils is good, and the subject makes a good contribution towards their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. They study the faith and beliefs of several religions and their associated moral expectations and social customs. They learn about the festivals and customs of Christianity and at least three other world faiths.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

### ***GCE Advanced Supplementary level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	62	0	15	0.67	1.51

### ***GCE A-level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	22	77	87	23	43	4.5	5.8
Biology	10	90	88	20	34	4.8	5.3
Design and technology	11	100	91	36	30	5.6	5.4
Business studies and economics***	23	87	***	13	***	4.3	***
Sports studies	9	100	92	44	25	7.1	5.1
Music	6	100	93	33	35	5.6	5.7
History	18	94	88	56	35	6.9	5.5
English literature	26	100	95	58	37	7.2	5.9
French	9	100	92	71	38	8.0	5.7
Business***	19	84	92	0	32	3.6	5.5
Economics***	4	100	89	75	36	7.5	5.5

\*\*\* There are no combined national data available for business studies and economics combined. Performance in the two subjects separately is given in the last two rows of the table above.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

216. The focus was on mathematics and biology, but chemistry and physics were sampled. In two Year 12 chemistry lessons, good and very good teaching made full use of ICT and practical work to enable students to improve their skills. A-level results in 2001 were below-average, but greatly improved in 2002. In Year 12 AS physics, a well taught lesson on the enhancement of images was seen in which the students responded well to new ideas and techniques. In the 2001 A-level examination, results in physics were average and students achieved standards to be expected from their previous performance in GCSE examinations. Results in 2002 were similar.

## Mathematics

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

### Strengths

- Standards are again rising.
- Students much appreciate the support given by their teachers.
- Teachers are very knowledgeable and much teaching is good.

### Areas for improvement

- The students' work is not corrected fully enough.
- There is insufficient variety in the methods of teaching of some classes.

217. A-level examination results in 2001 were below national averages and AS-level results were broadly in line. The 2002 results are better. The department suffered staffing problems in 1999. These impacted adversely on the 2000 and 2001 results and the three year average covering this period is below the national figure. All students did not achieve the A-level standards that they should have done in these years. A relatively newly appointed head of department is now in post and the staffing position has stabilised and is much improved. Consequently standards are rising again.
218. The standard of work seen on the inspection was in line with the national average and better than might be expected from the examination results. Currently, Year 13 work ranges from a high to average A-level pass standard. Students handle the calculus with confidence and differentiate log and exponential functions readily. Most are secure when using the remainder and factor theorems. Students in Year 12 at the beginning of their sixth form studies are coming to terms with sampling and the meaning of bias in statistics. In pure mathematics, they are beginning to develop the skills to solve simultaneous linear and quadratic equations. Students' work seen showed that most studying mechanics are beginning to understand mathematical modelling and equations of motion. The changes to the schemes of work, ensuring closer attention to algebra in the early stages of the course, are proving very helpful to students' understanding and progress. Students, however, make slips and errors, such as that made by one who treated a quadratic equation as if it were linear when attempting to solve a problem involving distance, speed and time.
219. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Some teaching of lessons seen during the inspection was good and some was very good. All lessons are carefully prepared and clearly presented providing the right level of pace and challenge for the range of competence of the students in them. Some lessons, however, are rather dull. It is significant that all students say they are well served by the mathematics department but scarcely any feel that mathematics is their favourite subject. One, while explaining that his mathematical experience was very positive overall, said, "You can't expect maths to be interesting."
220. Insufficient attention is paid to ensuring consistently that the students' work is fully corrected. Whilst almost all work is checked, teachers do not ensure that, when students correct their own work, they mark clearly to show whether it is right or wrong. Corrections are not always clearly done. This renders the work more difficult to use for revision. The students feel well supported by their teachers. They feel free to approach them when they are in difficulties and are very appreciative of the amount of time outside normal lessons that the teachers are prepared to afford them.
221. The mathematics department benefits from sound management. The teachers are enthusiastic and work together as a team. They are beginning to recognise the learning benefits that accrue from more detailed setting of targets for students to improve and this is the subject of training for all staff across the school. There is a commitment to improvement and the capacity to see that it takes place.



## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Standards in external examinations are rising and have attained the national average.
- Teaching and the planning of lessons are very good overall.
- Assessment and the recording of students' attainment and progress are excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in examinations could be further improved, particularly at the higher grades.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough.

222. Biology is taught to AS-level in Year 12 and to A-level level examinations in Year 13. The vast majority of Year 12 students who completed the AS course in 2002 continued to A-level. In 2002, the proportion of students attaining AS-level qualifications increased. In 2001, the proportion of students attaining A-level qualifications was in line with the national average and in 2002, the proportion gaining grades A or B increased considerably. Students have usually achieved standards that could reasonably be expected from their earlier attainments at GCSE.
223. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above-average, and students achieved very well. Students in Year 12 have good understanding of the form and function of phospholipids and can summarise the activity of fats and carbohydrates. A similar group were confident in their understanding of the mechanism of gas exchange in plants. In a Year 13 lesson on homeostasis, students were able to increase their knowledge and understanding of the relationship between concentrations of blood glucose and glucagon. They cope very well with the considerable demands of both AS and A-level courses. Their communication skills are well developed and they respond well to spontaneous discussion and debate. They take and make notes to support their growing knowledge of the subject.
224. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with some excellent practice in Year 13. Teachers' expectations are high, and students work hard to meet these. The subject is taught by the head of department and three other specialist teachers, all of whom show excellent subject knowledge and understanding. They have very good relationships with the students and use time and resources effectively. The range of teaching methods is wide and, as a direct consequence, students respond very well. For example, in a lesson on the nervous system, students' responses were focused and mature and their levels of confidence were very high. In all lessons seen, preparation was very good and resulted in sound learning. Students are attentive and work productively in lessons. In Year 13, there is a general air of maturity and responsibility. Students are quick to benefit and make good progress, as they indicate in their own process of self-assessment. Lessons move at a good pace and the challenge to students to learn is equally good. The regular assessment of work and supporting commentary provided by teachers are exemplary. Students feel well informed and recognise that their learning needs are well supported.
225. Students' learning is very good. In the lessons observed, the quality of students' work is very high. They take a keen interest in scientific investigations. Assessed practical work and projects show well developed skills and include those of practical investigation. They handle apparatus and equipment competently, show confidence in written work and can follow detailed instructions. Students generally show good understanding and their files and the recording of practical work are properly organised. Written work is very well presented and up to date. The standard of work in lessons is well above national standards and students make very good progress. The careful guidance and advice from teachers are effective and students in Year 13 take considerable pride in and responsibility for their own learning.
226. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent and there is clear direction to the department's development, following the head of biology's appointment in May 2001. She supports staff and students with considerable skill and there is a direct benefit to the successful learning of students. The routines for effective teaching and regular assessment, recording and reporting are secure. There is a poor history of the proper use of ICT in biology. However, new

accommodation and equipment and the use of sensors and datalogging give students every opportunity to extend their expertise with ICT successfully. Residential field-work is of excellent quality.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

All courses in design and technology are reported on below.

### Design and technology

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

#### Strengths

- Students' creative and independent work in projects is excellent.
- Students' attitudes, relationships and behaviour are very good.
- The overall standard of teaching is very good.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent.

#### Areas for improvement

- The attainment of students in examinations could be higher.

227. Overall, standards are good. Standards on entry to the subject in the sixth form are in line with the school's average (C or B grades in the related GCSE examinations). About one in ten of sixth formers study one of the four AS and A-level courses offered in the department. In 2001, the results in home economics were very good, with two out of the five students obtaining A and B grades in the A-level examination. The one male student who took the examination obtained an A grade. In 2002, more students took the examination but the results were lower. In 2001, the results in product design were satisfactory overall, with three out of the nine students obtaining A and B grades in the A-level examination. A larger proportion of the boys obtained these higher grades than girls. In 2002, the number of boys and girls who took the examination was the same and results improved. In the more recently introduced art-textile course, the overall results for the three students who took the A-level examination in 2002 were similar to the results in home economics. In the new course in electronics, taught by distance learning, all three boys obtained A grades in the A-level examination in 2001. In 2002, results were lower. Overall, the standards of both boys and girls are good in all four courses. They have regularly achieved at least what they should, based on their previous attainment in GCSE examinations – but their performance has not yet risen above this reasonable level of expectation, as it could do. However, students have regularly achieved particularly well in home economics.

228. The overall quality of teaching is generally good and often very good. All teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and prepare lessons particularly well. Their relationships with students and the caring support that they give to them, particularly in practical lessons, is very good. Teachers are able to stimulate students' interest and imagination very well. They involve students in theory lessons by the good use of questions and answers. As a result, students' attitudes, relationships and behaviour are very good and often excellent. Students mature and grow in confidence very well as a result of their creative and independent work on projects.

229. The overall standard of learning is always good and often very good. In the home economics, product design and art-textile courses, students learn by undertaking a combination of lessons on theory and practical project work. All students work independently on their projects, many of which are imaginative and enable them to demonstrate their flair for the subject. Gifted and talented students make good progress. The standard of the project work is often very good and sometimes excellent. In the electronics course, students learn the theory by distance learning using a video-conference link to a distant teacher, supported by an excellent published text, and by undertaking practical work in the school. During the inspection, electronics students were observed learning well in a Year 12 lesson about logic gates, truth tables and Boolean algebra, in a lesson conducted over the video link. In two different very good Year 13 lessons in home economics, students were seen learning successfully about soluble vitamins in one and

renewable energy in the other. In the lesson on renewable energy, students researched solar energy and wind power. They had prepared a presentation in small groups and gave this to the whole class very well. In a good product design lesson in Year 13, students were seen learning about new "smart" materials and in another in the same year they learned well about genetically modified trees and timber. In a good Year 13 lesson using textiles, students were seen making padded fabrics to imitate ripples on water and plant forms as a part of their specialist project. The effective learning that students achieve indicates that results in examinations could be higher.

230. The department is well led by an experienced teacher who is ably supported by the head of technology and the other specialist teachers. The accommodation and learning resources are both excellent and very much enhance students' attainment. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The number and range of courses offered have increased. The introduction of the distance learning course in electronics is particularly successful. The numbers of students taking the department's courses have increased in recent years and this situation has supported rising standards.

## BUSINESS

The school's only course in this curriculum area is reported on below.

### Business studies

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

#### Strengths

- Students' recent examination results show improvement over earlier performance.
- Teaching is good and new staff are working hard to provide an appropriate scheme of work.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students do not use ICT enough to support their learning.
- Closer matching of courses to students' needs, by considering the reintroduction of a vocational course in the subject.
- The use of data does not inform teaching and the planning of work enough.

231. In 2000, results in A-level business and economics were above the national average and the proportion of students attaining grades A and B was equal to the national average. In 2001, standards were lower and no A or B grades were gained in business. Standards improved in 2002. No national comparative standards have been published yet. All students passed the A-level examination but few A or B grades were attained. Of 35 students who entered the new AS examination, almost all passed and half gained A or B grades and were well equipped to continue to A-level. The pass rate has been unduly variable, particularly when considering the students' prior attainment and has largely been the result of a period of instability in staffing and a lack of specialist teachers of the subject. The most recent results are showing improvement and the work in classrooms and on students' projects confirms an improvement in standards.
232. The quality of teaching is good, overall. It is never less than satisfactory, usually good and, on occasions, it is very good. The new subject leader is producing good plans for the teaching programme and leads the newly qualified member of the department well so that teaching is matched to the students' needs. In Year 12, there is rapid revision for those who studied the subject in Years 10 and 11, and students who have not studied the subject previously are quickly able to catch up. Both teachers are very knowledgeable, and the use of appropriate and up-to-date case studies gives relevance that aids students' learning.
233. Students learn successfully. They listen well to their teachers and join in willingly in pairs and work well in small groups. This allows them to consolidate their ideas; feeding back to the rest of the class ensures that they organise and present their ideas logically. The good relationships in classrooms give students confidence in themselves, and allow a good pace of learning to be

developed. However, when students do not understand, they readily ask their teachers to explain further, and this they do willingly. There is good humour too, and the relaxed yet busy atmosphere further fosters good relationships. Although students can use computers in the learning resource centre, there is insufficient use to allow modelling of data or forecasting of outcomes. Homework is regularly set and the coursework tasks are well written and supportively marked whilst in progress. This practice gives students every opportunity to attain good outcomes. Project work is of a very good standard, and indicates the way that students' learning in class has translated into effective independent learning.

234. The management of the subject is improving now that staffing is again stable, but is coming from a low base. The schemes of work are only now being formalised and data is not yet used effectively enough to inform teaching. Staffing difficulties have temporarily denied students the opportunity to study an advanced vocational course, although the school is actively considering the reintroduction of such a course. The accommodation and resources are of average quality. Teachers move between small rooms. There is no base room for the subject. Similarly there is only limited access to ICT, although teaching resources are otherwise good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

235. Two lessons were seen in AS and A-level computer studies courses in Years 12 and 13. Teaching was good and students made satisfactory progress using software and databases and in learning new ideas. The work was well matched to the syllabus and the competence of the students. Examination results at A-level in 2001 were below-average, but students achieved satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment in GCSE examinations. Standards in 2002 were no higher.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The only course in this curriculum area is reported on below.

### Sports and physical education studies

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Students attain good standards in examinations.
- The AS-level course has been successfully introduced and developed.
- Excellent relationships and positive attitudes are apparent in lessons.
- An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is available.

#### Areas for improvement

- Targets to help students to improve are not used well enough.
- Marking of work does not indicate clearly enough how students could improve.
- Coursework standards could be raised.
- The subject lacks a dedicated classroom base for theory lessons.

236. Students' results in AS and A-level examinations are of a good standard. All students passed the AS-level examination in 2001. The 2002 results were of similar quality. A-level examination results in 2001 were above the national average and students generally achieved the grades to be expected from their standards in GCSE examinations two years earlier. The 2002 results indicate similar standards.
237. Year 12 students build upon the good level of knowledge and skills that they gained from their GCSE course in the subject. Good knowledge of anatomy and physiology is demonstrated when students identify the role of muscles as levers in sport. They show good understanding of the origins of school sports. High attainers are quickly able to identify the links between their own experience of competitive school games and their introduction in public schools by

Thomas Arnold. They suggest ways in which sport and the need for military fitness are connected. In practical lessons, the students record work on a trampoline using a video camera, and then analyse and evaluate their performance. All students apply good knowledge of the various drops and perform their routines satisfactorily. High attainers are able to use front and back drops, position themselves correctly, and show good balance.

238. Overall, students in Year 13 are producing good work and are achieving well, relative to their attainment on joining the course. In theoretical work, students make good progress in increasing their knowledge of the psychology of sport, anatomy and physiology and the nature and development of elite performances. They identify the various ways in which sport can contribute to the stabilisation of relations between countries, such as North and South Korea, and discuss, in some depth, the issues surrounding the commercialisation of sport. Most students make good progress in their ability to relate their learning to their own experience. Students' coursework has pulled grades down slightly. In their written work, while they use technical vocabulary well and have a good grasp of principles, there are inconsistencies in the depth to which they explore essay questions. Evidence exists of students' use of the Internet - for example, when they identify various world class sporting events. Numeracy is used effectively, as when students measure lung capacities and use graphs to show the relationship between oxygen and haemoglobin levels in their work on physiology.
239. The teaching is good overall and some is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ensure good learning throughout the sixth form. The best teaching involves high expectations, a good range of open-ended tasks, and group work that produces a variety of responses from the students. The extent to which questioning is used to test students' depth of knowledge further is inconsistent, as is the use of plenary sessions that effectively reinforce learning points. Teachers' marking contains supportive comments. However, some marking is not instructive enough to aid students' learning and help them to set their own targets for self-improvement.
240. The students are highly motivated and adopt a very mature approach to their studies. They work well together in small groups and excellent relationships are established. All are very appreciative of the support and encouragement given to them by teachers.
241. There is a good, optional programme of sport for all students in Year 12. The students are very positive about their experiences and work hard. In a netball lesson, students worked extremely hard during ladder-practice work designed to improve their agility and movement.
242. All sixth form students are able to engage in the excellent range of extra-curricular provision, and many do so. Some act as sports prefects, acting responsibly and contributing positively to work in lessons in the main school as well as in extra-curricular activities. When leading teams and participating in the running of clubs and practices they develop their citizenship skills impressively. There is a strong tradition of success in many sports at county and district levels and beyond.
243. Leadership of the subject is strong and there is a shared commitment to further improve the schemes of work, and develop target-setting for all students. Accommodation and resources are good overall, although a permanent classroom for theoretical work is lacking.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

244. The focus was on music, but art and theatre studies were also sampled. In art, teaching was very good and students achieved well in one Year 12 lesson on techniques for recording space. In a Year 13 lesson, good teaching and learning helped students to appreciate the work of other artists. A-level examination results in art for 2001 were average and all students achieved at least the standards to be expected from their previous performance in GCSE examinations. In 2002, all students achieved grades A to C in the A-level examination. Teaching in two theatre studies lessons seen was good. In both Year 12 and Year 13 students confidently participated and progressed well. A-level examination results in 2001 were well below-average but, in 2002, results improved considerably.

## Music

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and often excellent; lessons are well matched to the needs of the students.
- Learning is secure and very well supported by the wider opportunities offered through instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work.
- Students show mature attitudes and relationships are excellent.
- Assessment is very effective in helping students improve their work.

### Areas for improvement

- The cramped accommodation is insufficient for students' learning needs.

245. AS and A-level examination results in recent years have been broadly average when compared with all schools nationally. Results in 2002 were slightly above the 2001 average. Students achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment in GCSE examinations.
246. Increasing numbers of students each year take music in the sixth form. Large numbers of sixth form students are involved in the musical activities of the school, which strengthens these activities. The standard of work in both examination groups is above-average. Students' performing skills are above-average and most students are working for grade 6, 7 or 8 examinations in instrumental performance. Some have already passed grade 8 and some talented students have achieved higher grades on two or three instruments. Their instrumental and vocal work is very well supported by the high quality of the tuition that they receive and by the wide range of opportunities offered by extra-curricular groups such as the first orchestra, jazz band and senior choir. Students' involvement in these supports their learning well and raises their subject standards overall. Students have competent skills in composition and use computers and other ICT effectively to develop and notate their pieces. Their understanding of harmony is good, although students with less experience find the theory challenging. Aural work is secure and well supported by students' instrumental skills, but some find this work difficult. Students' good general musical knowledge and overview of musical history supports their modular topics, which show good research skills.
247. The teaching is mainly very good, often excellent and much appreciated by the students. Planning of lessons and work is very well matched to the needs of the students. Objectives and explanations are clear because teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and communication skills are strong. Consequently, lessons are lively and often entertaining. Lessons are prepared well, have a brisk pace and use a good range of resources so that students know what they have to do and how to do it. They are well motivated and learn successfully. Students enjoy their lessons and have much confidence in their teachers. The use of assessment is very supportive in identifying students' individual needs and setting clear targets to help them to improve. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are very high and the latter respond very well and enjoy the challenges offered. Work is carefully marked and comments are supportive, encouraging and helpful in moving students further forward.
248. At all levels, work is supported by the students' mature attitudes and excellent relationships. They are keen to learn and spend much of their time being involved with music. They give classroom support to younger pupils. Students are very appreciative of the quality of the provision that they receive, particularly the very good teaching, characterised by the energy, expertise and enthusiasm of the staff, opportunities in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work and the personal support available to them.
249. Students learn very well and enjoy the opportunity to work as a class, in small groups and at their own pace supported by the expertise of the teachers. They appreciate and make full use of the very good facilities for music technology available including the Internet, and all students have computers at home. Students are fully focused and hardworking. They are very supportive of each other and the staff, keen to answer questions and involve themselves in a range of activities which support school music and in musical activities beyond the school, ranging from orchestras to rock bands. Their work is further supported by activities such as the

visits to concerts organised by the department and their personal musical pursuits. They are articulate and most are well organised. Many are considering careers in music including teaching, performing and producing. The involvement and support of the sixth form students greatly strengthen the quality of music in the school.

250. The leadership and management of music are excellent. Resources for sixth form work are very good and support students' learning well. The accommodation does not provide easy access for students to work in small independent groups and this is unhelpful to their learning.

## HUMANITIES

251. The focus was on history, but geography, politics and religious studies were sampled. In geography, two lessons were seen. Very good teaching in a Year 12 lesson fully involved students in an impromptu revision exercise on tectonics, in response to the day's earth tremor in the Midlands. Good teaching in a Year 13 lesson, where students analysed and compared provision for recreational facilities, enabled all students to make good progress. A-level examination results in 2001 were very high and, in 2002, a similar high standard was maintained. In politics, good teaching in a Year 12 lesson extended students' knowledge and understanding of parliamentary functions well. All students passed the A-level examination in 2001 and 2002. In religious studies, good teaching in a Year 13 lesson on the theme of religious experiences encouraged students to introduce some personal ideas into the discussion well. Standards at A-level were below-average in 2001, but all students passed the examination. Very good teaching in a lesson on the Year 12 AS course enabled students to argue a case and evaluate an ethical issue very well.
252. Provision for religious education, other than for examination courses, is unsatisfactory and does not meet statutory requirements.

## History

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good teaching supports students' achievement well and A-level examination results are above-average.</li><li>• Lessons are well planned and help students to learn successfully.</li><li>• Students are enthusiastic and prepare thoroughly for lessons.</li></ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to encourage lower attaining students, particularly boys, to attain higher standards.</li></ul>
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253. Students' performance in A-level examinations is above the national average. In 2001, Year 13 students attained above the national average and over half gained a grade A or B. More students than expected gained A or B grades but some achieved less well than expected. Overall, this was an improvement from 2000, when results were nearer to the national average. In 2002, A-level examination results were better than in previous years. All students who took the examination achieved A-E grades and over half gained A or B grades. Results have improved since the last inspection. Girls consistently out-perform boys and many gain high grades.
254. In 2001, students were entered for the first AS examination. Seven students gained A or B grades and 20 of 23 students A to E, a result a little below national average performance. Students performed less well than expected. AS examination results were much better in 2002, when 16 students achieved grades A or B and 21 of the 24 students were successful. Girls continue to do particularly well in the proportion of grades A and B that they attain. Most students achieve well, in terms of their previous attainment in GCSE examinations. Year 12 students' AS-level course equips them to continue to study history in Year 13 successfully.

255. Observations in lessons and analysis of students' work confirm that standards are above-average and achievement is good. Attainment is above what might be expected at this early stage in the Year 12 course. The performance of the current Year 13 group is above-average, with several students performing very well.
256. Students' preparation for lessons is thorough and their prior reading leads to more informed class discussion. They analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively to produce well-balanced and convincing arguments. Year 13 students discuss Irish history and the different views of historians over time very well to make good progress. The girls contribute more freely in discussion than the boys. From previous A-level coursework in Year 13, higher attaining students are very clear about the need to recognise different interpretations of history and they argue coherently about the strength of historical connections. Lower attaining students, often read widely but do not always give clear explanations of how historical events influence change. Many students complete their work with well argued and clear conclusions.
257. Year 12 students discussed in an informed way how Gladstone's paper tax had adverse effects on educational improvement for the working classes. This led to a better understanding of his fiscal policy, although lower attaining students found this difficult to understand.
258. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. As a result, students learn well from well-focused work that is planned effectively. This is well complemented by students' commitment to independent learning at home. Students make very good use of an extensive analysis of available departmental resources. These study skills and their own research extend what they learn in lessons. Historical discussion and note-taking prepare them well for the future demands of their coursework. One Year 12 group prepared a Powerpoint presentation very effectively to explain the events leading to the 1867 Reform Act. Students make very good progress because of the joint teaching of this introductory module of work.
259. Teachers provide students with detailed resource booklets on the courses. AS course booklets were reviewed after the 2001 examination and more consideration was given to how less competent students could better use historical information. The guidance is now very well planned to include assessment and target-setting. Targets are used to encourage students to achieve as well as they should. Students value the support and enthusiasm of their teachers, their depth of subject knowledge and their willingness to give of their own time to help them improve their standard of work. However, not all students make sufficient effort to benefit from this.
260. An experienced historian leads the faculty. She provides clear guidance to a newly appointed subject co-ordinator and closely evaluates examination results. Together they share clear views of their priorities for raising standards, particularly those of some boys.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

261. The focus was on English, French (and the special feature of Spanish), but German, Italian, Russian and Chinese were also sampled. In German, teaching and learning were satisfactory in a Year 13 German lesson in which good use was made of ICT to research and examine reports about the recent elections in Germany. All students passed the A-level examination in 2001 and 2002. Standards are improving after a period of staff changes. Italian, Russian and Mandarin Chinese make valuable contributions to the College's overall language provision and to the lifeskills programme.



## English

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

### Strengths

- Students reach well above-average standards at A-level.
- Teaching is very good and enables students to achieve very well.
- Students' mature attitudes have a positive effect on their learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The pace of lessons is not always brisk enough because a few are over-directed by the teacher.

262. A-level examination results in English literature in 2000 and 2001 were well above-average. In 2001, all students gained passes and more than half gained the highest grades, A and B. Results were of a similarly high standard in 2002. Students achieve very well in comparison with their performance in their other A-level subjects and their earlier performance in GCSE examinations. Results in AS examinations in 2001 were very good. In English literature, all 28 students passed, with half gaining the highest grades. In 2002, results improved and all students again gained passes. The first group of students to take the AS English language examination gained very good results in 2001. Results improved again in 2002 and well over half of the students passed at the highest grades. Once committed to the courses, nearly all students complete them.
263. Year 13 students have just begun their A-level courses but they are already achieving above-average standards. They are building well on their success at AS-level and are achieving very well in relation to their previous GCSE examination results. In English literature, students contribute confidently to class discussion and are already able to express and defend personal responses to difficult texts, such as *The Duchess of Malfi*. Although they make limited reference to specific events in the play, as they have just begun to study it in depth, they have a very good understanding of the contrasting moods and emotions that Webster evokes. English language students are developing a sound knowledge of different theories of language acquisition. High attaining students are able to compare and contrast the differing viewpoints of Chomsky, Skinner and Piaget, while others show their understanding by explaining the theories clearly in their own words.
264. In Year 12, students are currently making very good progress from their earlier GCSE standards of work. English language students are already referring to phonology, semantics and lexis when discussing differences between spoken and written language. They are beginning to analyse language with growing confidence. English literature students are able to recognise and discuss different layers of meaning in Brian Friel's challenging play, *Translations*.
265. The quality of teaching is very good and enables students to make very good progress. Teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject and this enables them to extend students' understanding. In particular, they use their knowledge to provide students with a wide range of references for further research. Students respond very well to these opportunities to manage their own work and willingly prepare information for the rest of the class. For example, a discussion about *The Duchess of Malfi* was successful in one lesson because each student had prepared tape recordings of music that reflected their perceptions of the themes of the play. Teachers also provide many extra resources to help extend students' understanding of the social and historical background to the literature that they are studying. Teachers' marking is excellent. They provide detailed notes and advice on all pieces of assessed work. They show their high expectations of students by giving guidance on the further improvement of work that is already of a high standard. As a result, students know how well they are doing but also understand how they can gain even better grades. Most lessons are taught at a good pace, with a variety of teaching methods that maintain students' interest. Just occasionally the pace of lessons becomes slow, because of too much insistence on teacher-led, whole-class discussion.

266. Subject leadership is of excellent quality. Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies. They are mature and confident and have excellent relationships with teachers. They appreciate the fact that teachers are prepared to give willingly of their time and to provide extra help for individuals when needed. This mutual respect between teachers and students makes a significant contribution to students' learning in all lessons.

## French

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

### Strengths

- A-level examination results were well above-average in 2001, sustaining the high level of success of the last three years.
- Students' standards of work are well above-average.
- Teaching is very good and some lessons are excellent, helping students to learn very successfully.
- The subject is very well led.
- Students share ideas together and with teachers very well.

### Areas for improvement

- Students are not required to re-draft their work or to complete corrections.

267. In the A-level examination in 2001, five of the eight students gained grades A or B. These results were well above the national average. Nearly all students performed better than their predicted grades, and their average point score continued the steady rise of the previous three years. In 2002, seven students gained grades of a similarly high standard. All completed the course. More girls than boys took French, as is the case nationally. In the AS-level examination in 2001, results were above-average and almost all students did as well as expected in relation to their GCSE grades. A small number of students left shortly after the beginning of the course mainly, the school reports, because of the perceived difficulty of AS-level.
268. In lessons and other work seen, Year 12 students, at the start of their course, achieve as well as they should, given their well above-average GCSE grades. They build successfully on the Year 11 business French course and their early entry to the GCSE French examination in Year 10. Most are able to express their opinions and answer factual questions simply but accurately. They learn to expand their vocabulary - for example, through the study of family life at home and in France. A few students are less confident in speaking, but all are reminded to keep careful records of new words. The current group includes more boys than has been usual. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others in the group.
269. Standards in Year 13 are well above-average. Students make very good progress as a result of very effective teaching that demands much of them, and because teachers have a clear understanding of how students build up their language skills. In an excellent lesson taught by native speakers of the foreign language, the delivery was entirely in rapid and demanding French, which students understood well. Students gave lucid presentations of their own ideas on various themes portrayed in *Le Petit Prince*. In another lesson, where the level of interest again was high, students examined world ecological problems, extending their vocabulary in the four language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
270. Written work in Year 12 starts with a carefully constructed study of basic grammar, and continues rapidly to more complex areas of sentence construction and expression. Marking is purposeful, concentrating on grammatical accuracy, as students move on to more demanding and extended writing. The most talented students produce work of flair and imagination. Essays are marked assiduously, but students are not required to do follow-up corrections to reinforce their learning.
271. In the three lessons seen, the teaching was very good or excellent. As a result of this outstanding teaching, students learned very well. The principal features of the teaching are well-structured planning of lessons and work, brisk pace and a range of varied and imaginative resources and approaches. Two teachers are native speakers of French and are keen to share

with the students their knowledge and understanding of the society and literature of modern France. Teachers actively encourage Year 12 students to do two weeks of work experience in France, during which time it is evident that they make excellent progress in using the language. Students appreciate that they are expected to achieve highly and respond appropriately to the challenge. Their independent work in reading from the Internet and listening to French radio is checked regularly. In addition, students benefit greatly from individual help given by the French assistant.

272. The department is very well led. Teachers are mutually supportive in sharing teaching approaches, and a new scheme of work provides a good framework that follows examination requirements closely. Students are made aware of their target minimum grade at an early stage of Year 12 and have regular feedback and guidance on their rate of progress.