

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOHN BOSCO HIGH SCHOOL**

Croxteth

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104715

Headteacher: Sister Helen Murphy

Reporting inspector: Mark Woodward  
11049

Dates of inspection: 24 - 26 February 2003

Inspection number: 249605

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Female
School address:	Stonedale Crescent Croxteth Liverpool
Postcode:	L11 9DQ
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev A Bailey
Date of previous inspection:	6/10/1997

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St John Bosco School is an average-sized comprehensive school, serving 1079 girls aged 11-19. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times is average compared with schools nationally. The area served by the school is one of the most deprived in England and Wales. Forty-four per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with only three pupils having a language other than English as their first language. Around twenty three per cent of the pupils are on the register for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), which is above the national average, and less than one per cent of pupils have SEN statements which, is well below average. Most of the pupils with SEN have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Two teaching posts are currently vacant and are being filled by temporary staff. The standards achieved by the pupils when they enter the school are below average.

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

St John Bosco is a good school. Personal development is promoted very well and despite the challenging social circumstances faced by the pupils, the school is a very orderly and safe community. Pupils make satisfactory academic progress, although they achieve below average national standards, in line with the standards they achieved before joining the school. The school is well led by the headteacher and senior staff, a particular strength being the maintenance of the school's Catholic ethos. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and the school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well in expressive arts, art, dance and Spanish.
- Results in the National Curriculum tests for English in Year 9 and in vocational examinations in Year 11 are good.
- Pupils behave very well and pupils and parents have very positive attitudes to the school.
- Pupils' personal growth and self-esteem are enhanced by the excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum is broad and this opens educational opportunity for pupils of all abilities.
- The accommodation has been improved substantially in recent years.

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

- GCSE results, particularly the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades.
- National Curriculum test results in mathematics and science.
- The proportion of teaching that is very good or excellent, so that expectations of academic achievement match expectations of positive attitudes and good behaviour.
- Levels of attendance; they remain slightly below the national average despite substantial improvement over recent years.
- The use of assessment information by heads of departments and teachers to track pupils' progress.

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

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

The school was last inspected in October 1997. Since then it has made satisfactory progress. The trend in examination and test results is broadly in line with the national trend and attendance has risen significantly. The quality of teaching is lower than reported by the last inspection. The very strong ethos, so much valued by parents, has been maintained. The school's response to the key issues has been satisfactory: standards have risen in mathematics although further improvement is necessary; pupils are becoming more skilled as independent learners although this is still an issue, particularly in the sixth form; and better links have been established with primary schools.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	B
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	E	N/A	

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

Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average (as they are when pupils join the school) and pupils make satisfactory progress during Years 7 to 9. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests were lower than in 2001 but the trend of improvement in National Curriculum test results over the past five years is in line with the national trend. The 2002 results were in line with the national average in English, which represents very good progress compared with the same pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests taken before they entered the school. Results in mathematics and science were well below average; these results represent unsatisfactory progress in mathematics and poor progress in science. Compared with similar schools (based upon the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals), the results in 2002 and 2001 were well above average. The school's targets were exceeded in English but were not met in mathematics and science; the science results were well below target.

Pupils examined at the end of Year 11 over the past two years made satisfactory progress. but 2002 results were similar to the results in 2001 while the trend in results over the past five years is broadly in line with the national trend. The proportion of A\* or A GCSE grades is consistently well below average. The achievement of pupils in English, mathematics and science during Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. GCSE results in art, expressive arts and Spanish were well above the national average in 2002 and the standard of work seen in these subjects and in dance confirm their high level of performance. The school met its target for the proportion of pupils gaining five A\*-C GCSE grades in 2002 but the other two statutory targets were not reached.

Students entered for A-level, AS-level, AVCE or Advanced and Intermediate GNVQ achieved results that were well below the national average between 1999 and 2001. National comparisons are not yet available for 2002. Overall, the achievement of students in the sixth form is satisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils appreciate the care and support that they are given; they feel secure and are very positive about the educational opportunities on offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Learning opportunities are enhanced by the orderly atmosphere of lessons. Pupils are courteous as they move around the school and they report very little bullying.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students and staff show each other respect, which helps to build very positive working relationships. The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. While attendance has risen substantially since the last inspection it remains slightly below the national average. Unauthorised absence is lower than the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

*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.*

Almost all the lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory or better but a lower than average proportion (based on inspections across the country) were very good or excellent. The impact of this was clear in pupils' learning. In most lessons pupils learn at a steady pace but when the teaching is of a high quality, such as seen in a Year 10 dance lesson and a Year 10 history on the development of medicine, pupils make much faster progress. Much of the very effective teaching observed was from more recently qualified teachers. Weaker teaching features tasks that do not take enough account of pupils' individual learning needs and lessons in which the teacher talks too much without involving or engaging the pupils. Overall, teachers' expectations of pupils' academic achievement are not as high as their expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The teaching of English, mathematics, science, literacy and numeracy is satisfactory while very good support is given to students with SEN. In the best lessons in Years 9-13 students are prepared well for examinations; they learn what they need to know and understand how to respond to examination questions. Key skills are taught well in the sixth form; all students have timetabled sessions to help them improve their key skills while subjects and the enrichment programme also make good contributions.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school has imaginatively developed a broad curriculum which offers very good educational opportunity to students of all abilities. The commitment to curriculum development is well illustrated by the wide ranging awards that it has received and the initiatives in which it is involved.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with SEN are supported well. The withdrawal and in-class provision is organised effectively by the co-ordinator. SEN assistants are appropriately involved in the planning of teaching and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school has only three pupils whose first language is not English. They are able to take full advantage of the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The values of the Salesian order pervade the school's work to impressive effect. The outcome is a school community in which individuality is nurtured, personal development is valued as highly as academic achievement and the pupils are helped to become valuable and self-confident members of society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pastoral provision is strong and the school is a safe environment in which pupils can learn. Procedures for child protection are very good.

The school works hard to develop partnerships with parents. Parents are very supportive of the school and attend events in good numbers; however, a significant proportion do not give enough priority to their children's academic learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher leads the school well and has ensured that the strengths reported by the last inspection have been maintained. The leadership team are cohesive and effective but there are weaknesses in the performance of some middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors support the school's work well. They closely monitor the school's adherence to Salesian values but they are not fully aware of the reasons why some subjects perform better than others.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has clear procedures for monitoring and evaluating its performance which have resulted in rising standards in some subjects such as mathematics. However, underperformance in other subjects has not been challenged decisively.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning is closely linked to improvement planning. Best value practices are applied well although governors need to develop their understanding in this area.

## 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>• Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve well.</li> <li>• Pupils are well taught and make good progress.</li> <li>• The school helps pupils to become more mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information they receive about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• The partnership of the school with parents.</li> </ul>

Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive, as reflected by the responses to the questionnaire from 40 per cent of the parents (a high return) and the comments of parents at the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors agree with parents that the school is well led and managed, that behaviour is good and that the school helps pupils to become more mature and responsible. Expectations of pupils' academic achievement could be higher and the quality of teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Parents are given good information about pupils' progress and the school works hard to develop partnerships with parents.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form serves 179 students, which is broadly in line with the size of an average sixth form; there are eight boys in the sixth form. The school is coming under increasing pressure to enrol students from other schools. Around two thirds of the students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form while half of the students in Year 12 continued their studies into Year 13 in 2002. The sixth form has grown significantly since the last inspection. A wide range of courses suitable for the full ability range are on offer including: A-level; AS-level; GNVQ; Vocational A-levels; and other vocational programmes. A number of other schools and colleges offer post-16 provision in the immediate area and the school is exploring opportunities to develop partnerships with two of them. Students enter the sixth form with below average GCSE results.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form offers good educational provision. The wide range of courses ensures that all students, including those with SEN, have appropriate educational opportunities after the age of 16. Standards are below average but they have risen since the last inspection and the achievement of the students is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in both academic and vocational courses. The development of the sixth form has been carefully planned and is well managed. It provides satisfactory value for money.

**Strengths**

- Provision in geography, history and psychology.
- The high proportions of students who pass examinations.
- The educational opportunity offered by the breadth of the curriculum including the provision for students with SEN.
- Students' positive attitudes to the sixth form.

**What could be improved**

- Standards and achievement in English and biology.
- The extent to which students of all abilities, including the most able, are given challenging work that maximises their levels of achievement.
- Levels of attendance.
- The use of assessment information by heads of departments and teachers to track students' progress.

*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.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards of work are currently average. They are higher than examination results because of improving teaching and standards on entry to the course; the achievement of students is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
Biology	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Standards of work are below average. While some of the teaching is good, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall because students do not achieve as well as they should. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards of work are below national levels. However, satisfactory teaching leads to satisfactory learning and, from a low level of attainment on entry to the course, students make satisfactory progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Courses have only recently been developed. All five AVCE candidates in 2002 obtained low pass grades. Module results for students currently on the course are higher. Teaching, learning, leadership and management are all satisfactory.
History	<b>Good.</b> Examination results and standards are improving; they are now broadly in line with national standards. Students have excellent attitudes to learning and this, together with good teaching, means that they achieve well. Leadership and management are good.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Standards of work are average and the achievement of students is good. Good teaching together with students' very good attitudes result in good learning. Leadership and management are good.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Results have been well below average since the course was first examined in 2001. Recent module tests and inspection findings show attainment much closer to the national average. Teaching and learning are good. A recent staffing appointment and many other improvement procedures have had a significant impact in raising standards in the department. Leadership and management are good.
English literature	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Although almost all students have passed examinations over recent years, results are below national averages and few students gain higher grades. Teaching and learning within lessons are satisfactory but students do not achieve well enough over the duration of the course. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.
French	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards of work are below average. Teaching is good but the achievement of the students is only satisfactory because students do not start the course with appropriately high speaking skills and therefore have difficulty in coping with the demands of the A and AS-level courses. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

A number of other subjects were sampled during the inspection: chemistry, physics, art, Spanish, dance, personal and social education, media studies, sociology, health and social care, leisure and tourism, performing arts, and the vocational access course. Overall, standards of work in these lessons were below average (compared with national standards), while the quality of teaching and learning was good. Some very good teaching was seen in a chemistry lesson on acidity where the students made very good progress because the teacher was knowledgeable, enthusiastic and gave very clear guidance to the students on how to conduct the practical work. In some lessons, for example in health and social care and sociology, the focus was not sharp enough and the pace too slow.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The sixth form pastoral team, led by the head of sixth form, supports students well and prepares those applying for higher education very well. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this enables guidance to take place in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Teachers and managers have very high expectations of students' attitudes to the school and to each other. Careers guidance is good although some students are not clear about the opportunities on offer. Assessment and progress monitoring is satisfactory but the quality of

	provision varies in subjects from good to unsatisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is organised and managed well. Good leadership has been shown in developing a curriculum that offers equality of opportunity for all students whatever their academic ability. A good strategy is also evolving to improve the curriculum further by developing partnerships with two other local schools and by applying for performing and visual arts specialist status. A structure is in place to assure the quality of work within subjects and this has had a good impact in some areas, for example, psychology. Weaknesses in other subjects such as biology and English have not been tackled as effectively.

### 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>• The support they get in developing independent study skills.</li> <li>• The breadth of the curriculum.</li> <li>• The help and support offered by teachers.</li> <li>• The arrangements for settling them into the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The degree to which they are treated as adults.</li> <li>• The quality of careers advice.</li> <li>• The responsiveness of the school to their views.</li> <li>• The information about how much progress they are making.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with students about all the strengths that they identified. Inspectors also agreed that some subjects (see the subject sections), do not give students enough guidance on what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Inspectors disagreed with all the other criticisms offered by the students.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Pupils achieve well in expressive arts, art, dance and Spanish.**

1. Pupils achieve higher GCSE results in expressive arts, art and Spanish than they do in their other subjects. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was well above national averages in all three subjects. A very high proportion of the pupils gained A or A\* grades. Standards seen in pupils' work throughout the various year groups and in the small proportion of lessons sampled confirmed the standards and achievement indicated by the examination results.
2. Dance is a relatively recent addition to the curriculum but standards are already above average and pupils are achieving well; this is due to excellent teaching. The teacher is highly skilled. Students' learning is well demonstrated by their practical skills and the fluency with which they use the subject's technical language.
3. In art a wide range of good quality two- and three-dimensional work from all year groups is on display in the art rooms. The teaching of art establishes close links between the tasks set for pupils and the work of artists. This approach develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of art as well as their skills. For example, pupils in Year 9 were seen producing 'op art' pieces inspired by the work of Bridget Riley while another group were creating ceramic pieces influenced by the work of Henry Moore. Good practice in a range of areas has been developed by the department; for example, they publish sketch books which the pupils buy for a small sum. This gives the pupils a good resource for developing their skills and it also encourages them to take pride in their work and in belonging to the school.
4. The teaching of expressive arts is good. A particularly strong feature is the high level of organisation of the teachers. They plan lessons very well to ensure that pupils clearly understand what they have to do, give effective guidance on how pupils should structure their work and draw together learning successfully at the end of each session. Pupils' coursework for GCSE shows the positive impact of this approach; it comprehensively covers the requirements of the syllabus and is very well presented.
5. Pupils are motivated to learn Spanish and in the one lesson seen, they worked very hard to develop their understanding and skills in speaking. This was encouraged by the teacher through a good use of language and the constant repetition of phrases which the pupils began to use fluently by the end of the session. Learning in the lesson was good.

#### **Results in the National Curriculum tests for English in Year 9 and in vocational examinations in Year 11 are good.**

6. National Curriculum test results in English were in line with national averages in 2002 and 2001. These results were well above average compared with the results of similar schools (based on the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals). Results in English over the past five years have been substantially higher than the results in mathematics and science.
7. The trend in results over the past four years is higher than the national trend and higher than the school's trend in mathematics and science. In English, pupils make very good progress between the tests that they take at the end of Year 6 (the last year of primary school) and the tests taken at the end of Year 9 that the rate of progress is again higher than achieved by the pupils in mathematics and science.
8. The reasons for the discrepancy between the very good National Curriculum test results in English and the underperformance of students in English in the sixth form are not clear.
9. The pass rate of pupils in vocational examinations taken at the end of Year 11 is good. In 2002, a higher than average proportion of pupils passed GNVQ examinations in leisure and tourism and ICT while the pass rate in art and design was slightly below the national average. The proportion of merit grades was also above average, particularly in leisure and tourism where double the national

average gained this award. The great majority of pupils who took RSA examinations in 2002 gained distinctions.

**Pupils behave very well and pupils and parents have very positive attitudes to the school.**

10. The very positive attitudes of pupils and parents to the school are a strong reflection of its success in developing a secure environment where respect and care are fostered. Within this atmosphere pupils have the opportunity to learn and the great majority respond well to the teaching they receive.
11. Students' attitudes to learning are good overall. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson, for example, the outstanding concentration of the pupils helped them to overcome difficulties they were experiencing in using the language to describe travel.
12. While the students have positive attitudes to learning they need guidance to make the most of the opportunities on offer. Most of the pupils come from backgrounds where further or higher education qualifications are not typical. The school recognises this and works hard to convince pupils that they are capable of being successful in education. This is having an impact as more students choose to continue their studies after Year 11.
13. One of the key issues of the last inspection was to improve the facilities for pupils to study. Very good facilities for independent study are now available in the City Learning Centre and in the learning resource centre which some pupils use very well. However, pupils' independent study skills are still in need of further development.
14. The improvement in pupils' rates of attendance is a strong indicator of improving attitudes among those pupils most at risk of missing out on educational opportunity. The school has worked very effectively to raise levels of attendance.
15. The behaviour of the pupils is very good around school and in lessons. They have very good relationships among themselves and with teachers and this enables the school to function in an orderly and civilised manner. In a Year 11 lower set mathematics lesson, for example, the pupils worked hard and responded well when invited to plot coordinates on an overhead projector transparency by the teacher.
16. The very good behaviour of the pupils is acknowledged by parents and by other members of the community. For example, the manager of the local sports centre wrote to the school after sports day to say that the behaviour of the pupils had been the best of all the schools that had visited the centre during the year.
17. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were far more positive than is typically seen (from a relatively high return). For example, 97 per cent said that the leadership and management of the school were good, compared with 91 per cent nationally, while 89 per cent said that the school worked closely with parents, compared with 80 per cent nationally.

**Pupils' personal growth and self-esteem are enhanced by the excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.**

18. The values and beliefs of the Salesian order guide the school's work and this has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils know that the staff are concerned for their best interests and so even when there are disagreements about policy or practice there is no disagreement about fundamental values.
19. The headteacher made a very powerful statement about inclusion in her annual report to pupils at the school prize-giving. She said, "On television we are bombarded by reality shows...where the nation votes to eject the unwanted. That is not what we, as a school, are about. We want each and every one of you to succeed..." This is very much how the school functions. Individuals are valued and given encouragement to develop their particular skills and interests within a strong moral and spiritual framework.

20. Expectations of positive attitudes and behaviour are very high and this is clearly seen in the way pupils conduct themselves in lessons and around the school. These high expectations are reinforced through subjects and the pastoral system.

21. All years have the opportunity to take part in 'retreats'. These help pupils and staff to form strong social bonds as well as reinforcing Catholic values and beliefs. The chaplaincy offers pupils guidance and support at all times and is appreciated by the pupils even though most do not regularly attend church.
22. The school offers pupils a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility within the school and for the welfare of others in the community. The school council is active both in contributing to the management of the school and supporting charitable work. It has also recently sent a response to the government Department for Education and Skills on its recent green paper on education. Six pupils attend the Merseyside school parliament, which has a voice in the way education is organised across the city.
23. In lessons, pupils are given very good opportunities to reflect on complex spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson the teacher skilfully used the illustration of local tribal bigotry to develop pupils' understanding of the Holocaust.
24. The very strong work of the school in the performing arts both in the classroom and through performance gives many pupils very good social and cultural experiences. This work is recognised by parents and others in the local community and has also attracted a Schools Extra Award for school productions and orchestra.

**The curriculum is broad and this opens educational opportunity for pupils of all abilities.**

25. To ensure that all pupils have good educational opportunities, the headteacher and senior staff have developed a curriculum that is broad and diverse for all years and meets statutory requirements. Religious education takes a considerable proportion of curriculum time but this has not prevented the school from developing other subjects such as drama and dance in addition to the National Curriculum subjects. This is a good illustration of the school's commitment to offering pupils a rounded education.
26. The strength of the curriculum is reflected in the various awards that the school has won such as the Artsmark silver award, Education Extra awards, the record of quality in careers and work experience and the Healthy Schools award. The school was also chosen as a City Learning Centre thus giving it a much stronger focus on ICT and enabling it to share its facilities with other schools and the local community. While the City Learning Centre is used very well by the school, its use by the community is limited, particularly as the school is not a night centre.
27. The Excellence in Cities programme has improved provision in a number of ways. The City Learning Centre is part of this provision as is the improved emphasis on meeting the needs of more able pupils. The central provision for more able pupils is well developed but not enough is being done to maximise their progress within subjects.
28. Learning mentors, who have joined the school as part of the Excellence in Cities programme, are effective in enhancing the progress and personal development of some of the school's more challenging pupils.
29. The school offers a good range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the provision is continually being developed; pass rates have been good. Courses are currently offered in art and design, ICT, business and leisure and tourism. In addition, 18 pupils in Year 10 are involved in a programme which reduces their GCSE work load to help them make better progress in core subjects such as English and mathematics while extending their skills by offering them courses in leadership, careers and the opportunity to gain Duke of Edinburgh awards. The programme is an improvement on the course offered in Year 11, which is evidence of the school's constantly reviewing and modifying the quality of its provision.
30. The range of courses on offer means that all pupils are prepared well for continuing their education after the age of 16. Pupils with SEN, for example, are enrolled on a sixth form programme for which they have been prepared by the courses on offer in Years 10 and 11. Curriculum planning is a strength.

31. Aspects of personal and social education and citizenship are offered through the School SCHAPE programme which is timetabled for all years including the sixth form. This is a well-planned course which gives pupils good guidance on a range of issues including sex and drugs education. The school's policy on sex education is clearly and helpfully described in the governors' annual report to parents. Form tutors teach the programme and generally do this effectively. The school's provision for personal and social education is broader than the School SCHAPE programme and overall it is very good.

**The accommodation has been improved substantially in recent years.**

32. The accommodation has improved substantially since the last inspection. Much new building such as the City Learning Centre has improved learning opportunities and sent a message to pupils and the community that education is something to be valued. Pupils look after the building well; there is little evidence of litter or vandalism.
33. The school has suffered much theft and damage from intruders which takes place when the building is closed; this was similarly the case at the time of the last inspection. The effect of this is to demoralise both pupils and staff who work so hard to make the school a place of learning and opportunity for the whole community. Recently there has been an improvement in this situation owing to the diligent efforts of the school and others.
34. The accommodation is well maintained, a rolling programme of refurbishment having been organised by the business manager. Contracts for building and maintenance adhere to principles of best value.

**WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**GCSE results, particularly the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades.**

35. While pupils make satisfactory progress overall between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11, GCSE results are not as high as they could be; this is illustrated by the school's not reaching two of the three GCSE targets that it set itself in 2002.
36. The measure of progress from pupils' results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests to their performance in the 2002 GCSE examinations was below average compared with pupils nationally. By the same measure, GCSE results in 2001 were broadly average. These judgements are based on a wider statistical evidence base than the one used to give the progress grade in the school's annual Performance and data report which groups schools together into achievement bands based on the pupils' National Curriculum test results. (The outcome of the banding is that schools at the top of a band are treated in the same way as those at the bottom of the band. At St John Bosco, the National Curriculum test results in 1999 and 2000 were very similar but they fell either side of a band boundary; this marginal difference made a huge difference to the progress grade that was generated).
37. The proportion of pupils gaining A or A\* GCSE grades is well below the national average. While the attainment profile of the pupils on entry to the school is below average and therefore expectations of very high grades might be below average, some subjects have shown that they can help pupils to achieve at the highest level at GCSE. In expressive arts for example, 10 of the 25 candidates entered for the examination in 2002 gained A or A\* grades; in contrast, four of the 161 candidates entered for mathematics gained A grades and none gained an A\* grade. There is a range of reasons why pupils gain higher grades in these subjects than in others:
- Teachers have a very good understanding of examination requirements and keep a strong focus on this in all their teaching;
  - Pupils are trained to organise and present their work well;
  - The mix of practical and theoretical work enables pupils to demonstrate a wide range of skills;
  - Pupils are given opportunities to extend the depth of their understanding and skills through out of school visits, performances, work with professional artists and performers, exhibitions and involvement in projects such as the creation of the 2002 calendar.

38. One factor that limits the performance of mathematics and science is that too many pupils are not entered for GCSE examinations; this restricts their opportunity to gain appropriate qualifications. In 2002, 90 per cent of pupils were entered for GCSE in mathematics compared with the national average of 96 per cent. Similarly, the entry level in science was five percentage points lower than the national average. In contrast, the entry level in English was 94 per cent compared with the national average of 95 per cent.

**National Curriculum test results in mathematics and science.**

39. Over the past four years, National Curriculum tests results in mathematics, and in particular in science, have been well below results in English. While English results have been around national average levels for the past three years, mathematics and science results have been well below national averages.
40. In 2002, pupils made below average progress in mathematics and well below average progress in science between the National Curriculum tests that they took at the end of Year 6 (the last year of primary school) and the tests taken at the end of Year 9. Pupils made well above average progress in English.
41. Standards in mathematics have risen since the last inspection, when improving performance in this subject was made a key issue for the school. A great deal of work has taken place to tackle the issues and rising test and examination results indicate that much of this has been successful. However, standards are still not high enough and further improvement is therefore necessary.
42. As this was a short inspection and therefore gave limited opportunity to inspect subjects in detail except in the sixth form, the evidence base to assess why results in mathematics and science are low is limited. However, a number of points did emerge:
- Assessment is not used well enough to track pupils' progress;
  - Marking does not give pupils enough information about how to improve their work;
  - Pupils' science books indicate that some teachers do not expect pupils to produce work of a high enough standard;
  - The level of challenge in some science lessons is not high enough;
  - Science teachers do not ensure that pupils produce well-written and well-organised accounts of practicals.

**The proportion of teaching that is very good or excellent so that expectations of academic achievement match expectations of positive attitudes and good behaviour.**

43. In the 30 lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent, good or better in 60 per cent and very good or excellent in 13 per cent. This is a lower than average profile, particularly the proportions of lessons judged very good or excellent which, on average, are between 25 and 30 per cent.
44. More recently qualified teachers tend to teach in ways that more effectively generate pupils' interest and understanding. This is a stark generalisation and by no means suggests that all more experienced teachers are less effective, far from it. It is also an observation based on a relatively small sample of lessons; however, there is an issue here that the school needs to explore if overall teaching standards are to rise.
45. As the sample of lessons for Years 7 to 11 is small, a full picture of teaching in each subject cannot be reported. Because of this, specific examples of lessons where the best and least effective teaching was seen have not been identified. However, some general observations follow about features of teaching in some lessons that were particularly effective in promoting learning.
46. Some very good teaching was seen featuring:
- a good balance between whole-class teaching and well-planned activities;
  - individual guidance for individual pupils on how to improve the quality of their work;
  - different activities for pupils depending on their abilities or their progress through tasks;
  - clear aims for pupils' learning;

- discussions at the end of lessons drawing together the learning that has taken place.

47. More pedestrian teaching often features:

- use of a limited range of methods (most commonly instructing whole classes);
- teachers not involving pupils enough in lessons and thereby losing their concentration;
- use of few resources to bring the subject to life;
- activities sustained for too long and losing pupils' interest;
- all pupils being given the same task regardless of their abilities.

**Levels of attendance; they remain slightly below the national average despite substantial improvement over recent years.**

48. At the time of the last inspection, attendance was 87.9 per cent. The school has worked very hard and very effectively to raise levels of attendance since then and in 2001-02 it was 90.2 per cent compared with the national average for girls of 92 per cent. Unauthorised absence at the time of the last inspection was 1.32 per cent; it was 0.3 per cent in 2001/2 compared with the national figure of 1.2 per cent. The school has done very well to track the reasons for non-attendance and to reduce them substantially.

49. Attendance of the great majority of pupils is high. Around 10 per cent of pupils have attendance levels below 80 per cent and this is largely the reason for attendance levels being below average overall.

50. The rise in attendance in recent years is impressive and gains such as these are hard won; however attendance is still slightly below the national average and raising it further remains a priority.

51. Measures that have been successful in raising attendance include offering attractive rewards for high attendance, referring pupils to learning mentors for support, ensuring that procedures are applied consistently by form tutors, contacting parents on the first day of absence, developing relationships with those parents most at risk of keeping their children away from school and rigorously applying all procedures so that pupils know that they are being monitored carefully.

**The use of assessment information by heads of departments and teachers to track pupils' progress.**

52. Systems for assessing pupils' work and monitoring their academic progress are satisfactory but there are strengths and weaknesses. Good data collection procedures ensure that information about each pupil's progress is readily available. In recent years the information about the standards achieved by pupils before joining the school has improved and, together with testing conducted by the school in Year 7, this has given a more reliable baseline from which to judge pupils' subsequent progress.

53. The school has bought commercial systems for analysing pupils' progress, which have enhanced the information that they already have from national systems. This is used well by senior managers to overview the performance of subjects following the publication of examination results but it is not used as effectively by subject heads.

54. The marking of work in some subjects does not give pupils a clear enough idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This is a particular weakness in English, where the marking is supportive but does not give pupils enough guidance on raising the quality of their work, particularly higher ability pupils. The result is that pupils are not stretched to achieve the standards of which they are capable and this is one of the reasons why pupils make less progress in English during Years 10 and 11 than they do in Years 7 to 9. There is a similar issue about the quality of marking in mathematics and science.

55. In Years 7 to 9 the school is only just beginning to assess pupils regularly against National Curriculum level statements. By not fixing assessment against national criteria, the monitoring of pupils' progress during these years lacks rigour. Discrepancies between the National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science and teachers' assessments in these subjects highlight the impact of not using standardised assessment procedures. While this is an area of the school's work that is improving, further improvement is necessary so that pupils' progress can

be monitored more effectively. For example, by assessing against sub-divisions of the National Curriculum level statements.

56. The school has only just adopted a system of target-setting which goes beyond identifying predicted grades. For some time predictions have been used rather than targets and the weakness of this is that pupils may be underperforming during the assessments on which their future predictions are made and therefore will be set targets that are too low for their abilities.

57. A significant number of heads of department do not use assessment systems well enough to track pupils' progress. This means that they do not ask themselves whether each pupil is making progress that fully reflects his or her capabilities and therefore that they do not identify underachievement quickly enough. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress but, by definition, this could be higher and some pupils underachieve.
58. In science, for example, teachers and the subject leader are unsure about whether the underperformance indicated by the National Curriculum test results in 2002 was replicated in previous years. This was in fact the case and it is surprising that this is not known as the subject has had a lot of additional management support to help raise standards.
59. Another impact of the lack of analysis by some subjects about pupils' performance is that they are unable to assess accurately how well they are performing as a teaching team and what modifications to the curriculum or to teaching practices might be beneficial.
60. The school reports pupils' progress three times per year to parents through the review day and interim reports issued at the end of terms. The frequency of this reporting is good.

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

61. In order to raise standards and improve educational provision the headteacher, staff and governors should:
  1. Improve GCSE results, particularly the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades by:
    - Ensuring that pupils understand how to meet examination requirements;
    - Giving pupils better guidance on how to improve the quality of their work;
    - Offering pupils, particularly the more able, more opportunities to extend the depth of their understanding;
    - Agreeing challenging targets with the pupils for GCSE performance.  
*Paragraphs 35-38*
  2. Improve National Curriculum test results in mathematics and science by:
    - Ensuring that the reasons for the well below average results are understood by all teachers and managers;
    - Developing action plans to tackle the reasons for underperformance;
    - Using assessment information to check whether action plans are having an impact;
    - Developing stronger partnerships between heads of department and senior managers to refine action plans and make them more effective.  
*Paragraphs 39-42*
  3. Improve the quality of teaching by:
    - Ensuring that teachers evaluate the impact of their teaching on learning and then modify their practice;
    - Extending the range of methods used by teachers to meet pupils' individual learning needs;
    - Sharing good practice within departments and throughout the school.  
*Paragraphs 43-47*
  4. Raise levels of attendance by:
    - Increasing the incentives and pressure on the minority of pupils (and their parents) who have less than 80 per cent attendance;
    - Continuing to apply the strategies that have been successful in raising attendance over recent years  
*Paragraphs 48-51*
  5. Improve the monitoring of pupils' progress by:
    - Making sure that pupils are assessed against National Curriculum level statements during Years 7 to 9;
    - Subdividing National Curriculum level statements so that pupils' progress can be measured and recorded more readily during Years 7 to 9;

- Agreeing targets with pupils that reflect their capabilities and monitoring progress towards them;
  - Improving heads of subjects' understanding and use of progress data;
  - Using data analysis and the management structure to monitor pupils', and therefore subjects', performance more effectively.
- Paragraphs 52-60*

## **Sixth form**

1. Raise standards in English by:
  - Developing schemes of work that enable pupils of differing ability profiles to maximise the quality of their work;
  - Expecting students to produce work of the highest quality;
  - Giving students more precise advice on how they might improve the quality of their work;
  - Making sure that students are fully equipped to meet examination requirements well; for example, by producing high quality textual analyses.

*Paragraphs 63,64,70,72,92,126,128,164*
2. Raise standards in biology by:
  - Challenging students to think and not just to follow instructions, particularly when conducting practicals;
  - Improving students' general awareness of biology;
  - Marking work thoroughly and giving students more precise advice on how they might improve the quality of their work;
  - Monitoring students' progress more effectively.

*Paragraphs 63,64,70,73,84,126,128,146,147*
3. Ensure that students are given work that maximises their levels of achievement by:
  - Making sure that examination requirements are thoroughly covered;
  - Giving students a range of opportunities to extend the breadth of their subject understanding;
  - Taking more account of their individual learning needs.

*Paragraphs 80-92*
4. Raise levels of attendance by:
  - Increasing the incentives and pressure on the minority of students whose motivation and attendance are too low;
  - Continuing to apply the strategies that have been successful in raising attendance over recent years.

*Paragraphs 79,110*
5. Improve the monitoring of students' progress by:
  - Agreeing targets with students that reflect their capabilities and monitoring progress towards them;
  - Improving heads of subjects' understanding and use of progress data;
  - Using data analysis and the management structure to monitor students', and therefore subjects', performance more effectively.

*Paragraphs 87,112,113,116,124*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	30
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		49

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	1	3	14	11	1	0	0
Percentage	3	10	47	37	3	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	1	7	29	19	0	0	0
Percentage	2	12	52	34	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 as each lesson in Years 7-11 represents more than three percentage points while each lesson in the sixth form represents more around two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	900	179
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	405	66

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	172	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	64

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	0	181	181

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	134	99	73
	Total	134	99	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (71)	55 (65)	40 (55)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (32)	23 (37)	8 (18)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	109	99	70
	Total	109	99	70
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (69)	55 (53)	39 (40)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (18)	20 (20)	6 (13)
	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	n/a	178	178

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	0	0	0
	Girls	67	150	164
	Total	67	150	164
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (36)	84 (83)	92 (95)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE points score
Average point score per pupil	School	33.3
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	77
	National	71

### 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	n/a	41	41

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	41	41
	Average point score per candidate	0	12.3	12.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	35	35	0	6	6
	Average point score per candidate	n/a	11.5	11.5	n/a	17	17
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

## Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - 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
1063	12	1
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	70.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.33

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	545.5

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.2
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	0
Key Stage 3	23.7
Key Stage 4	20.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	3,539,082
Total expenditure	3,560,395
Expenditure per pupil	3,280
Balance brought forward from previous year	314,487
Balance carried forward to next year	293,174

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1079
Number of questionnaires returned	433

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	44	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	40	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	44	8	2	0
The teaching is good.	54	43	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	43	12	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	32	3	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	20	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	44	10	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	65	32	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	40	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	36	5	1	5

### Other issues raised by parents

All other issues are raised in the main body of the report.

## PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and students' achievements

62. The achievement of students in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Standards are below average, as they are when students enter the sixth form.
63. Standards of attainment seen in students' work during the inspection were below average compared with national standards. In the nine subjects providing the main focus of the inspection, standards were: average in mathematics, ICT, history and geography, and below average in English, biology, business studies, French and psychology.
64. Students' achievement and progress vary by subject. In the nine subjects providing the main focus of the inspection, the achievement of students is: good in history and geography, satisfactory in mathematics, business studies, ICT, French and psychology, and unsatisfactory in English and biology.
65. In 2001, examination results were below average. A and AS-level results were well below average between 1999 and 2001. Results in 2002 were similar to those in 2001 but as yet, no national comparisons are available. Since the last inspection examination results have risen by a similar margin to the rise in national results.

#### Completion of courses

%	2001-02
A/AS/AVCE	88
GNVQ Intermediate	77
Foundation level courses	70

No national statistics are available to compare course completion rates.

#### Pass rates

%	2000 - 01	2001 - 02
A-level	87	82
AS-level	29*	96
AVCE/AGNVQ	100	78
GNVQ Intermediate	88	88

\* This figure relates to Year 13 pupils who took old style AS level examinations.

66. A-level results are well below average. The A-level pass rate in 2001 was below average, the national pass rate being 90 per cent. The proportion of students gaining A or B grades at A-level is well below average. In 2002 and 2001 it was 15 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. The proportion of students gaining A or B grades nationally in 2001 was 38 per cent.
67. AS-level pass rates were well below average in 2001 but rose dramatically in 2002. The great majority of students passed the examinations in 2002 but a relatively small proportion gained A or B grades.
68. Pass rates in Advanced vocational courses were above average in 2001; they were lower in 2002. The proportion of students gaining A and B grades in 2002 was lower than the provision national average but three of the five candidates in performing arts gained A or B grades and one student gained a B grade in travel and tourism.
69. Pass rates in GNVQ intermediate examinations were above average in 2001 and 2002 while the proportions of students gaining merits and distinctions were broadly in line with national averages.

70. Students have made satisfactory progress over the past two years when a comparison is made between sixth form examination results and the same students' results at GCSE two years previously. In 2002, students sustained their level of performance well in history and geography but their performance in English, biology, psychology and ICT declined.
71. Students achieve well in history and geography because: teachers expect students to produce high quality work; teachers put a strong emphasis on developing students' independent learning skills; marking tells students what they need to do to improve their work.
72. Students do not achieve well enough in English. Almost all students pass examinations and this represents at least satisfactory achievement for those starting the AS-level course having achieved below average GCSE results. More able pupils, however, do not sustain their levels of achievement as well. The reasons for underachievement include: the lack of a scheme of work; teachers not expecting students to produce work of a high enough standard; not enough advice for students on how to improve the quality of their work; and insufficient preparation of students to meet examination requirements.
73. In biology, students do not achieve well enough because: they are not given enough opportunities to think for themselves; they do not have a broad enough awareness of the subject's knowledge base; marking does not give them enough advice on how to improve the quality of their work; and their progress is not monitored rigorously.
74. Standards have risen in psychology during the current academic year in response to effective action taken by teachers and managers following the poor 2002 A-level results. The key reasons for this improvement are: an improved curriculum that better reflects coursework and examination requirements; teaching which takes more account of students' learning needs; and better monitoring of students' progress.
75. The school is very effective in helping students with SEN to achieve well and continue their studies in the sixth form. Of the 18 Year 11 pupils on the 2001/2 SEN register, 14 enrolled on sixth form courses. In the sixth form, the school's vocational access course enables students with SEN to make good progress, which helps to build their self confidence and prepares them well for further study or employment. This is a very good example of the way in which the school responds to the needs of all students.

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

76. Students' attitudes, values and personal development in the sixth form are very good. Their attendance is below average.
77. Students are very positive about the school and value almost all of their experiences in the sixth form. They participate well in the various activities that are available in the school and the community and they are very good ambassadors for their school. Relationships between students, with their tutors and younger pupils are very positive and constructive; many provide support for these younger pupils in lessons and with their reading. They work with primary school pupils, for example, in connection with a youth sports leader award scheme. Their respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is exceptionally good. Students' conduct is almost always very good and often exemplary. They take on responsibility very well, for example, through their own sixth form council and when offering support in summer schools.
78. Students set about their work conscientiously and most work reliably under their tutors' direction. They extend their studies through a degree of independent research but could improve their study skills further and this would help them achieve higher standards. Students respond well to the advice and guidance of their tutors and most are well motivated to achieve their agreed targets.
79. Most students develop mature attitudes, responsible conduct and very good awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The good attendance of the majority of students demonstrates their commitment to study. A minority of students, however, have low aspirations and are not well motivated about their education. Their poorer attendance record adversely affects the overall attendance rates of the sixth form that in total are below average. No students were excluded from the sixth form in 2001-02.



## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

80. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It was judged good at the time of the last inspection. In the 50 lessons observed, all were satisfactory or better, 66 per cent were good or better and 14 per cent were very good or excellent. The proportions of good, very good and excellent teaching are lower than average proportions of grades awarded during inspections across the country. The quality of learning is also satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress overall. The quality of teaching and learning is lower than reported by the last inspection.
81. While satisfactory overall, teaching is not as good as it could be because: teachers do not challenge students to produce work that fully reflects their abilities; a significant proportion of lessons do not contain a variety of approaches to fully engage students; marking does not give enough guidance on how students could improve their work; and work is not planned to fully meet students' diverse learning needs. Teachers' expectations of students' attitudes and behaviour are high: they do not have similarly high expectations of their academic performance.
82. Recently qualified teachers tend to demonstrate a range of teaching styles to promote learning. A significant proportion of more experienced teachers also teach in ways that reflect the different learning needs and motivations of the pupils but a minority rely on communicating information to whole class groups as their predominant teaching style. This has a more limited impact on both students' learning and their motivation to learn.
83. The great majority of teachers have good subject knowledge. Very good relationships in the classroom between teachers and students are beneficial to the learning process. Students enjoy the challenge of the work they are set and respond well when given opportunities to take responsibilities for their learning.
84. Students' skill in improving their own learning and performance is developed very well in some subjects such as history but not in others such as biology and business studies. In history, for example, students take notes carefully during lessons, recording learning from each other as well as from the teacher. A good illustration of this was seen in Year 13 lesson on the rise and fall of Napoleon. In biology, students are too often given tasks that require them to follow instructions rather than to think, such as in two Year 13 biology lessons on the digestion of fats. Similarly in business studies, students are not given enough opportunities to discuss and debate issues.
85. All four curriculum routes in the sixth form have planned provision for teaching key skills and students are entered for the key skills examinations. This gives a focus for the course but because the qualifications have a low profile for both universities and employers, most students do apply themselves very well. Attendance at key skills lessons is lower than for other lessons, and in some cases it is very low.
86. Learning is enhanced by the use of the computers in the City Learning Centre, particularly for Internet research. It is used for this purpose by students in a number of subjects, for example French and performing arts, but its potential is not yet being fully realised. Some students, including those taking ICT courses, have difficulty gaining access to computers during non-teaching periods. This has a detrimental impact on learning.
87. The quality of marking and assessment is very variable. Where it is good it supports students' learning very well and this is readily seen in the way that the quality of their work improves. Conversely, where marking and assessment are weaker, students' work reveals slower rates of progress. Progress in history is improved by the good quality of marking. The strengths and weaknesses of students' work are accurately identified and they are given very good guidance on how to improve. In contrast, marking and assessment in English are unsatisfactory and this limits students' progress. While work is regularly marked and teachers' comments are supportive, not enough specific advice is given students on how they might improve the quality of their work.
88. In some lessons, teachers did not have a sharp enough focus on the learning that was expected to take place, and, as a result, the pace of the lessons was too slow and students did not make as much progress as they could have done. This was a feature of lessons seen in sociology and health and social care.

89. While dance was not one of the nine subjects sampled in detail, the quality of teaching and learning seen in the two lessons observed (one of which was not in the sixth form) was so high that it demands special mention. The dance on offer is a GCSE course which the students have elected to take after one year's study during sessions in the enrichment afternoon. Standards are high with all the students expected to achieve grades at the top end of the range. This is because they are learning at a very fast pace in response to excellent teaching. The teacher uses the language of dance throughout the lesson either in demonstration or discussion. Students assimilate this and become absorbed in their work. Confidence in their abilities and trust are shown in the mature critiques that they offer of each other's performances, which in turn act as a spur to raising levels of achievement.
90. Some teachers are very effective at preparing students for assignments and examination questions. This was a particular feature of teaching in performing arts, where examination requirements are explicitly referred to during lessons, thereby continually reinforcing students' learning needs.
91. Students with SEN are well taught on the vocational access course. Their needs are well known to staff, the course is appropriate for their abilities and they learn well. Support staff are very well used and are effective in promoting students' learning. Teachers give students good opportunities to use ICT, which develops both their skills and confidence. No students have a language other than English as their first language in the sixth form.
92. More able pupils generally learn at a similar pace to others. In some subjects, such as geography, they learn well because they are given appropriately challenging tasks. This follows on teachers' careful assessment of their progress and future learning needs. In contrast, the curriculum in English is not planned carefully enough to ensure that more able pupils achieve high examination grades.

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

93. The school offers a very good range of opportunities for students to study in the sixth form at a variety of levels. The range of courses offered enables students with different strengths and interests to build on their learning from previous years. The curriculum has been very well planned and organised into four distinct pathways through the sixth form. It has been designed to be inclusive and to offer equal access and opportunity in keeping with the school's fundamental aims. Evaluation is a very strong feature, with provision reviewed each year to ensure that courses on offer meet the needs of incoming students. Future planning is well established, including discussions with other schools about extending the range of courses further.
94. All students follow a core of studies that is broad and balanced and all have good opportunities to combine the study of key skills with their chosen courses. One route for sixth formers provides a very good range of opportunities to study subjects at A-level. The courses on offer combine "traditional" subjects including English, mathematics, science and humanities subjects, with "new" subjects including psychology, sociology and media studies. There are, in addition, a good range of vocational A-levels comprising travel and tourism, health and social care, business, ICT, and performing arts.
95. A second route extends students' opportunities by offering them AS-level art and ICT courses over two years. These are usually only offered as one-year courses but this arrangement extends opportunity to students who would otherwise have found the courses too demanding.
96. A third route offers GNVQ intermediate one-year courses in business, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. All three courses link well with advanced courses in the same areas of study so that students have good opportunities to extend their studies further.
97. A fourth route is a vocational access programme which prepares students for future study or employment. It includes a school-based study of life skills including health and safety, personal presentation skills, including interviews and running an event, and ICT skills. ICT is well used to give students diagnostic feedback on the development of key skills. The course includes one day each week at college where students follow an NVQ course in ICT.

98. The one-year courses serve individual students very well to give them the confidence, self-esteem and skills to then undertake further courses of study either in the sixth form or at college. Students are very positive about these courses and about wanting to continue their studies further.
99. All Year 12 have a taught programme of key skills covering application of number and ICT. Key skills are sometimes examined, where appropriate, by portfolio. The course is soundly planned and the lessons well thought out. Two lessons were seen, one good and one satisfactory. However, the standards attained by the students are not high enough, because many do not really value the course and there is an uneven input from the subjects that they are studying. There is a sporadic attendance at the lessons by many students and in one of the lessons observed only a third of the girls came. Outside the course some lessons make a good contribution, with key skills being emphasised by the teacher. Such was the case in biology where the students were writing an essay on the pros and cons of genetically modified (GM) crops, but often opportunities to emphasise and to exploit key skills are missed.
100. Provision for students with SEN is very good. The school's vocational access course is very effective in offering students very good opportunities for achievement and this in turn has a direct and positive impact on building their self-esteem. Support staff are very well used and are a vital ingredient in a course that is able successfully to support students with a very wide range of needs. This support includes the college component of the course as well as the school-based programme. ICT is well used as an integral part of the course so that students have frequent opportunities to develop their confidence and skills through independent study. The course provides both a challenging and supportive environment in which students can develop their skills and potential. Provision is enhanced by the school's very good procedures for monitoring and reviewing progress that include the full involvement of parents and teaching staff.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

101. The excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the main school is carried over into the sixth form. All students have opportunities to participate in curricular and non-curricular activities that substantially enhance their personal experiences and development.
102. Assemblies and form periods encourage thoughts about fundamental spiritual, moral and social issues and students respond very positively to them. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are met. Spiritual dimensions are also very well developed in lessons. In modern foreign languages and psychology some of the language material encourages students to question their values in relation to current moral and political issues. The positive impact of the school's philosophy and promotion of 'mutual respect' is seen strongly in the response from both students and staff.
103. An excellent ethos for learning is maintained throughout the sixth form and students respect and appreciate the learning resources provided for them. There is a richness of personal and social support between staff and students. For example, the "buddy system" where Year 12 students give caring support to some Year 7 pupils who have problems settling into their new school.
104. Cultural and social development is well served by work experiences, gallery and museum visits and involvement in school productions and orchestras. The senior choir has recently performed in the reopening of the Royal Court Theatre. The richness of culture represented by sixth form students' heritage and skills is a source of pride to the school.
105. All students are treated equally from whatever ethnic background. The Salesian order is active throughout the world and its work gives students insight into the lives and cultures of others.

### **Enrichment**

106. The school consciously promotes a wide range of timetabled activities to give additional enrichment to the curriculum. As part of their personal development a group of students chose to study GCSE dance. They are on course to achieve above national average results in half the normally allocated time. In art and design students develop a deeper creative understanding of ceramics when involved in creating large chess pieces. Those who follow the Junior Sports

Leader Award conduct themselves very responsibly when they direct local primary school pupils in the use of the school's climbing wall.

107. The involvement of students in local work placements, summer schools, university open days and Excellence in Cities opportunities further enriches their work outside the curriculum. Sporting opportunities are diverse and the school has a high reputation for musical, dramatic and dance productions. The vast majority of students agree that the school provides a good range of worthwhile extra-curricular activities and enrichment courses.

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

108. The quality of pastoral care is very good and the ethos of the school, with its underpinning Catholic principles and practices, promotes an atmosphere of calm and security. Students feel valued individually and considerable mutual respect and support are evident throughout the school including the sixth form. Relationships, based on kindness and trust, are a significant and impressive feature. The arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of the students are very good, including, for example, the monitoring of students' whereabouts. The social and private study facilities for them are satisfactory.
109. The school provides very good information and advice about the courses available and life in the sixth form during Year 11. Induction into the sixth form is effective. While care for students' welfare is very good, personal support and guidance, although good, could be better. Form groups are large and this inhibits the school from providing the very highest standards of personal mentoring in order to raise standards and raise attendance and retention rates. Nevertheless, the students are pleased with the quality and accessibility of personal support and guidance from their tutors and other members of the sixth form staff.
110. Attendance procedures are good. The great majority of sixth form students attend well, but a minority are less motivated and have poor attendance records. The school works hard to raise attendance and is having increasing success. Key strategies that are successful include contacting parents on the first day of absence and inviting parents of poor attendees into school to discuss strategies.
111. Information and preparation for higher education are very good. A careers advisor is available on a 'drop in' basis but the school and the adviser do not successfully encourage all students to take advantage of this service.

### **Assessment**

112. The overall monitoring of students' academic performance in the sixth form is satisfactory. There has been recognition and early stages of provision for a more robust system of student monitoring and target setting based on national comparative data. Predictions are made for each student based on past performance in GCSE examinations. At present the tracking systems used to monitor progress and help students towards successful completion is inconsistently applied across the sixth form. For example, although students know their predicted grades, they do not always know what they must do to achieve and improve on them.
113. In psychology and history an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in students' work has been instrumental in improving results generally. However, further work is needed in all subjects to use assessment data to inform curriculum review and the next stages in planning and teaching. This includes a need for further rigorous and accurate analysis of results to assess how much added value is being added in sixth form studies.

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

### **Parents' views**

114. Parents hold the school and its leadership in high regard. They are, justifiably, very pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided. They consider that the standard of teaching, support and guidance enables their children to make good academic and personal progress although inspectors judge that teaching and academic progress are satisfactory overall rather

than good. Parents confirm that their children like school and that the school is very

approachable. A small number of parents feel that they are not well enough informed about their children's progress. Inspectors judge that reporting and consultation arrangements are more than adequate.

### **Students' views**

115. Students are very positive about the school and are proud of it. They are right to describe some of the best features of the school as the quality of relationships amongst students and with their tutors and that they are all valued individually. All respondents say that they enjoy almost all of their experiences in the sixth form and they are well satisfied with what the school provides and has enabled them to achieve. They were able to take up their preferred choices from options that suited their needs. They appreciate the enrichment opportunities, extra-curricular activities and the nature of the annual retreats.
116. The students say that they are aware of the standard of their coursework, how they are progressing towards their targeted results and what they must do to improve through the frequent feedback from their tutors. This information is also discussed with parents during consultation meetings. Inspectors feel that some teachers do not give students enough guidance on how to improve the quality of their work.
117. Students say that subject tutors are very accessible and helpful. Students intending to go into higher education confirm that they are very well informed and prepared. Careers advice and guidance for other students is optional and they are not nearly so positive about this service and some choose not to use it.
118. Students say that for the most part they are treated in an appropriate manner as young adults but feel that some of the rules that apply to the lower school should be relaxed for them and more opportunities for private study at home should be permitted. The school listens to the representations of their own student council but does not always respond promptly or agree to all of their proposals or requests. Students are satisfied with their common room although it is very crowded when all of them are there. Facilities for private study in school and access to computers are mostly satisfactory, but difficult at times.

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

### **Leadership and management**

119. The school's aims and values are seen clearly in the way that the sixth form is led and managed. Courses aimed at the whole ability range, including students with SEN, have been introduced to ensure that all students have opportunities to continue studying in the sixth form and to be well prepared for life after leaving school. This is entirely in keeping with the values of the Salesian order.
120. Since the last inspection the range of vocational courses has increased as has the range of courses offered at A and AS-level. The school has good plans in place to develop the sixth form further. Partnerships are being explored with two other local schools to widen the school's provision further and other developments, such as the application for specialist school's status will also extend opportunity in the sixth form.
121. Governors are supportive of the headteacher and senior managers' work in developing sixth form provision. They take an active role in development planning and bring a range of valuable expertise to decision-making processes.
122. Salesian values are strongly evident in the care shown for students' welfare and personal development. The mission statement, "to foster care, quality and equality for all in the tradition of St John Bosco" is fulfilled.

123. Pastoral provision is organised well by the head of sixth form. A team of tutors provides most of the guidance with additional elements offered through the personal and social education programme and by subjects. Record-keeping is thorough. Detailed information about students' academic and personal development is kept by the head of sixth form to assist tutors and managers in giving students support and guidance. The very good relationships between students and staff reflect the mutual respect that the school fosters. Students are very appreciative of the care and guidance that they are given.
124. The school has satisfactory procedures and structures for monitoring the quality of teaching and other aspects of educational provision in the sixth form. Senior managers are linked to subjects and formal monitoring of lessons and students' work takes place twice per year. In addition there is an annual review of examination performance. The system has been very effective in raising the quality of work in some subjects but it has been less effective in others.
125. A-level results in psychology were poor in 2002. To tackle the issue, senior managers have worked closely with the department to identify why students underachieved and have generated an action plan. The impact has been immediate. Standards seen during the inspection were much higher than the levels indicated by the previous year's examination results as a result of appropriate modifications to teaching and assessment methods and to the curriculum.
126. The monitoring of subjects has been less successful in English and biology. Weaknesses in both areas have not been fully identified and as a result they have not been tackled.
127. Governors' monitoring of the performance of subjects is largely conducted following the publication of examination results. They do not have a full understanding of the reasons why some subjects perform better than others.
128. Subject leadership is: good in geography, history and psychology; satisfactory in mathematics, business studies, ICT and French; and unsatisfactory in English and biology.
129. Racial harmony is promoted well through the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity. International links are good. For example, the work experience in Spain for students taking Spanish A-level and the contact students have with the international work of the order.

## **Resources**

### **Finance**

130. Accounting procedures are securely in place, although external information does not always give sufficient detail to enable the most rigorous tracking of income. The most recent audit report showed that procedures were good. It highlighted a small number of minor concerns which have all been dealt with.
131. Income in both the main school and the sixth form is above average. The likely school budget is notified to schools by the local education authority in the late autumn and the business manager then constructs a roll-forward budget model for discussion by the leadership team and the governors. Governors are aware of the main strands of the school development plan and allocate resources accordingly. This year, for example, the school has increased teaching staff to lower the pupil:teacher ratio and support for pupils with SEN. An above average budget surplus is largely accounted for in spending plans over the next two years.
132. There is secure understanding by managers and governors about the use of specific grants. The use of this money is effectively monitored.
133. The business manager appropriately produces a monitoring report every month for the leadership team and the chair of governors. Other members of the governors' finance committee would be kept more aware of their responsibilities if this report were also made available to them. The business manager has produced good guidance for governors: a model code of practice for the finance committee and a best value strategy. When all governors are fully conversant with them, these will provide a very good basis for the committee's work.

### **Staffing**

134. The qualifications and experience of staff are good and this supports the teaching of the sixth form curriculum. Staff are well matched to the needs of the curriculum; for example, staffing is very good in French, where both teachers are native speakers.
135. Staff development is a strength of the school. External courses and in-school opportunities given by visitors or the school staff respond to the needs of the whole school, departments or individuals. These needs are identified in development planning or performance management objectives. The school acknowledges that it has not yet fully developed a model for passing on outcomes from courses to other colleagues.
136. The induction for newly qualified teachers (NQT) and other staff new to the school is excellent. There is a weekly programme of information on the various aspects of school organisation available to all new staff. NQTs are given non-contact time for their personal development and are not given form-teacher duties in the first year. Mentors are in place and are timetabled to have non-contact time at the same time as the NQT. The school produces a "welcome" booklet and makes good use of the local education authority's NQT development programme.
137. Performance management is satisfactory. While procedures are good, they do not always result in key quality issues being tackled effectively. Support staff are fully included in performance management arrangements.

### **Accommodation**

138. The school makes great efforts to ensure a good-quality safe learning environment. The learning environment has improved substantially since the last inspection. There is a rolling programme of maintenance and improvement. Contracts are fully negotiated to ensure best value.
139. The number of pupils and students is close to the building's net capacity and there are several times in the week when almost all rooms are in regular use. A number of small sixth form groups occupy large classrooms and this appears to be an uneconomic use of space.
140. Accommodation for the teaching of the curriculum is good in most areas. The City Learning Centre provides a very good learning environment for ICT and is available throughout the school day for other subjects to use. It is also used regularly by other schools. Business studies is well served by very good accommodation and has a fully-equipped ICT suite.
141. The dining room is too small and the hall has to be used to accommodate all the students and pupils who require lunch. This has a detrimental impact on learning for those classes that use the hall either side of the lunch break.

### **Learning resources**

142. Learning resources in the sixth form are good and have been substantially improved since the last inspection. The most significant improvement has been the construction of the new learning resource centre. There are now 16 books to every pupil, which is above average. The centre is run by a qualified librarian and offers access to the Internet and Intranet, although this latter is still in need of development to be fully effective. There are daily papers, a good section on careers and universities but a limited range of periodicals, especially those of scientific interest.
143. The learning resource centre is not just a passive source for students; departments identify their curricular needs and this enables the library staff to advise students, focus their purchasing and borrowing requirements and to recommend Internet sites. It is a very effective resource.
144. ICT resources have also improved substantially since the last inspection, particularly as a result of the construction of the City Learning Centre. The ratio of computers to pupils is a little above average, with much of the equipment being of an appropriately high quality. Good evidence was seen of sixth form students using ICT regularly, particularly for word-processing and Internet research.

## 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 AS-level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average points score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	0	62	0	15	0	1.5
Physics	1	0	52	0	4	0	0.9
Biology	1	0	52	0	2	0	0.8
Chemistry	1	0	43	0	5	0	0.8
Art	2	100	88	100	44	4.5	2.9

### ***GCE A-level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average points score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
A level unless stated		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100	87	0	43	2.0	5.8
Biology	7	43	88	14	34	2.3	5.3
Chemistry	4	100	90	25	43	5.5	5.9
Physics	2	100	88	0	40	2.0	5.7
Art	1	100	96	0	46	2.0	6.6
Communication Studies	15	100	93	47	31	6.9	5.5
Classical Studies	5	80	95	0	49	2.8	6.5
Geography	11	100	92	9	38	5.1	5.7
History	2	100	88	0	35	2.0	5.5
Religious Studies	6	0	92	0	38	0	5.8
English Literature	21	100	95	10	37	4.3	5.9
French	5	100	89	60	38	6.8	5.6
Spanish	5	100	89	80	39	8.0	5.7

### ***Vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business - Advanced	6	0	15	17	28	83	17
Health and Social Care - Intermediate	16	94	47	6	16	0	1
Leisure and Tourism – Intermediate	9	67	47	22	18	0	1

Business - Intermediate	6	50	45	0	16	0	1
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## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

Mathematics is offered at A and AS-level but in practice is run as a two year course to A-level. It attracts modest numbers - five students taking the A-level examination in 2003. The department is also responsible for the application of number part of the Key Skills programme. Within the programme students have the opportunity to re-take GCSE mathematics in order to gain a grade of C or above.

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers' commitment to improve standards.
- Teachers' subject understanding and knowledge of examination requirements.
- Very good relations between teachers and students.
- Students' positive attitude to the subject and to school in general.

#### Areas for improvement

- The systematic analysis of assessment information in order to take the appropriate steps to improve teaching and learning.
- Continue to develop ICT as means of improving learning.
- Increasing opportunities for students to become more independent and active learners.

#### Standards

Tests and examinations	<b>Below average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Average</b>

*Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.*

The numbers taking AS and A-level are relatively small, with typical group sizes of about four students. As a result, valid yearly comparisons or comparisons with other subjects are not possible. Overall standards, judged on average points scores, viewed over four years are below national averages for both AS and A-level. Over the same time roughly a half of all students gained an average or above grade and almost one in four failed to achieve a grade. However, during this time one student gained the top grade at A-level, including a piece of coursework which was awarded full marks. No students fail to complete their AS or A-level course. It is encouraging to note that several more students are currently taking AS/A-level mathematics than in previous years. In contrast to the examination results, scrutiny of work, including coursework and notebooks together with classroom observation shows standards which are broadly in line with national averages. The prime reasons for this are higher standards on entry to the course and the department's growing expertise with the new AS/A-level structure and its demands on students. Students have difficulty with aspects of algebra. Given the small numbers taking the subject it is not possible to perform a statistical analysis, based on students' attainment at GCSE, to measure overall progress in AS-level or A-level mathematics. Success of students re-taking GCSE mathematics varies. In the November 2002 entry about a third of students gained a C grade or better. The figure for 2001 was almost a fifth.

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Good</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Very good</b>

## Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Satisfactory</b>
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*Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do.*

Students make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a good understanding of examination requirements.

Teachers have made significant improvements to the quality of their work since the last inspection but further improvement is possible. Their expectations of the quality of students' work are satisfactory: to raise standards further they need to be higher.

The particular modular AS/A-level course is well chosen to give students the best opportunity to succeed. It includes several coursework tasks which help to develop students' study skills; students enjoy them and learn at appropriate rates.

Small group sizes ensure that individual students' needs are catered for.

Students' attitudes to the subject are positive; they concentrate well and this enhances their learning.

Students find AS/A-level mathematics difficult, especially the algebraic demands.

Relationships between students and teachers are very good and this gives students the confidence to ask when they do not understand.

To raise the overall quality of teaching, students need to be given greater responsibility for their own learning; students rely too much on teachers to provide them with information rather than trying to think for themselves.

## Educational provision

Quality of teaching	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Satisfactory</b>

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Satisfactory</b>

145. Leadership and management are satisfactory and are improving. There is a clear sense of direction and a realisation of what more needs to be done in the future. The department is well staffed, all teachers being subject specialists with a balanced yet diverse range of experience.

## Biology

A-level and AS-level courses in biology were the focus for the inspection, but one lesson was observed in chemistry and another in physics.

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

### Strengths

- Good subject knowledge of the teachers gives potential for good learning.
- Warm relationships with teachers, always willing to help, facilitate learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Achievement could be improved by more challenging teaching, with students generating ideas and experiments and then developing them.
- Achievement could be improved by more rigorous marking providing more guidance as to what level students are working at and how they could improve.
- Achievement could be improved by using information about students' progress to guide future teaching.

#### Standards

Tests and examinations	<b>Below average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Below average</b>

*Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.*  
Standards at A2 were well below the national average in 2001. In 2002 they improved, but remained below what might be expected. However, with such small numbers, there are wide fluctuations from year to year.

Standards at AS-level in 2001 were below average; similar standards were exhibited by the present Year 13 in 2002 and have continued into the A2.

Judged by their performance at GCSE, the achievement of Year 13 in both 2001 and 2002 was unsatisfactory. Year 12 is evenly split with half making satisfactory achievement, relative to their GCSE results, and half whose achievement so far has been unsatisfactory.

In 2002 three quarters of the students who set out on the AS course completed it, whereas only one student who set out on the A2 course failed to finish it.

Students have significant gaps in their knowledge, for example, about GM food. They also demonstrate misunderstandings, for example, about the digestion of fats.

Students' independent learning skills are under-developed; little evidence was seen of their taking notes during lessons except when directed to by teachers.

The number of girls wanting to do biology in the sixth form has been steadily rising in recent years.

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Good</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Very good</b>

#### Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
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#### *Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do*

A number of factors contribute to the unsatisfactory achievement of the students. One is their general level of awareness of biology in everyday life, which has more significant effects at sixth form level, as exemplified by their very thin prior knowledge about GM crops. Another is the overall unsatisfactory quality of the teaching.

Although no unsatisfactory lessons were seen, examination of the students' work showed disorganised notes and evidence of expectations of students that are too low.

While the examination work is well covered, marking is not rigorous enough. Too much goes unmarked, too much goes uncommented on with too few corrections and suggestions for improvement.

In weaker lessons, students tend to be told rather than made to design experiments and to develop ideas. Such lessons also lack a crisp focus and generate few questions from students.

In all lessons the objectives and how they are to be achieved are clear to the students. The teachers have good subject knowledge, which gives the potential for good learning; but this is not always realised.

Where teaching is at its best students are challenged to think for themselves. This was seen in a lesson planning for an essay on GM crops in which they were successfully encouraged to fill out the structures needed for such a work. They were then pointed towards independent learning activities that would inform them and allow them to formulate their own views with a sound biological backing. The lesson was also well linked to the key skills study programme.

Relationships are good and the teachers are always willing to help students in their own time.

## Educational provision

Quality of teaching	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Good</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Very good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

146. Learning is encouraged by very good accommodation, good resources and a satisfactory curriculum, enhanced by some visits such as the AS revision course at Salford University.
147. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because students' progress is not monitored carefully enough. This means that gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills are not picked up and rectified. For example, some students would move oxygen by osmosis and some confuse enzymes and hormones.

## Chemistry

148. One very good Year 13 lesson was seen. It resulted in very good learning. By the end the students could confidently explain, using ionic equations, how they had identified three metals by the reactions of their salts. This was the result of skilful, lively and demanding teaching. It encouraged all the students to think and to be involved with considerable success. Examination results were at the national average in 2001; they declined in 2002, but standards look higher again in the present Year 13.

## Physics

149. One good lesson was observed. At present there are only two students, one in each of Years 12 and 13. One was working purposefully through questions on forces and the other was competently performing an experiment concerning the degree of protection from radiation afforded by various thicknesses of metal. The teacher oscillated between the two, checking learning with challenging questions and adding extra information. Both students were making good progress. Numbers doing physics have been very small over the last five years and the results have been mostly below average. Nonetheless the present students look set to do better than this.

## BUSINESS

Business education is offered at AVCE and GNVQ intermediate levels. Group sizes are average for AVCE, but are smaller than average at GNVQ Intermediate.

### Business education

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

#### Strengths

- Stable team of well qualified teachers.
- Good accommodation.
- Good ICT resources.

<p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching does not always encourage students to become more independent learners.</li> <li>• Students do not read sufficiently widely around the subject in order to become more independent learners.</li> <li>• Lack of textbooks, particularly in Year 12, hinders students' revision and preparation of homework.</li> <li>• The diagnostic element of assessment procedures are not yet sufficiently developed.</li> </ul>
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## Standards

Tests and examinations	<b>Well below average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Below average</b>
<p><i>Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.</i></p> <p>In the AVCE, completed for the first time in 2002, students' results were well below provisional national results. Work seen during the inspection indicates rising standards.</p> <p>Students demonstrate clear understanding of business concepts and their work is thorough and covers the requirements of the assessment evidence grid in a broad way. The strengths of the students' class work is the steady accumulation of knowledge and their basic understanding of subject matter.</p> <p>Project work seen in the inspection was above average. Students use the very good ICT resources well to present their work. Relative weaknesses are the interpretation and analysis of data and students' failure to retain knowledge and understanding over time, leading to weaker performance in examinations. A major factor in the students' low examination results is their lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject.</p> <p>In the GNVQ Intermediate course, standards seen during the inspection were below national averages. The department's open door philosophy concerning entrance to the course echoes the philosophy of the school, which is to encourage students to enter a sixth form which is broad and which offers opportunities for success. Numeracy is a weaker area. Some students lack confidence in pursuing calculations.</p> <p>Literacy skills in all courses are weak, demonstrating the lack of wider reading.</p>	

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Very good</b>

## Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Satisfactory</b>
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<p><i>Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do.</i></p> <p>In Years 12 and 13, students make progress in understanding the central ideas of the areas of the subject that they are studying. However, their achievement is no more than satisfactory overall. This is due to a lack of wider reading around the subject, and the failure to retain examination techniques.</p> <p>The rapport between teachers and students is good and teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.</p> <p>Teachers have a tendency to provide too much help for students at the expense of ensuring that students have enough practice in the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become more independent learners. Too often, the higher attaining students are the only students to offer voluntary contributions while their colleagues are happy to remain passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.</p> <p>The access to ICT resources within the department enhances learning as does the good quality of the accommodation.</p> <p>The lack of textbooks hinders students' ability to review, revise or prepare work.</p> <p>The department is effective in supporting students' personal development but is less effective in evaluating and developing the academic progress of students. The diagnostic elements of assessment are in their infancy.</p>	
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## Educational provision

Quality of teaching	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Good</b>
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

## Leadership and management

Leadership and Management	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Satisfactory</b>

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology is offered as an AVCE. For the first time during the current session Year 12 and 13 students are working towards the qualification based on three or six units. Year 12 students not taking this qualification work towards a key skills qualification at level 2.

### Information and communication technology (ICT)

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

#### Strengths

- Some teaching is of good quality.
- AVCE students have positive attitudes.
- Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge.

#### Areas for improvement

- The most able students are insufficiently challenged.
- Students respond poorly to the key skills provision.

## Standards

Tests and examinations	<b>Below average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Average</b>
<p><i>Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.</i></p> <p>The school has only recently begun to provide ICT courses in the sixth form. In 2002 the first group of five students completed a three-unit AVCE award. All five achieved pass grades. However, all pass grades were at the low end of the range.</p> <p>The work of the current students, including their portfolios of evidence, suggests that a greater range of pass grades will be achieved by those completing the AVCE programmes in 2003. Several students have produced particularly good quality work relating to the unit involving the presentation of information. Students are also able to confidently use the advanced features of software packages.</p> <p>Standards of work relating to key skills are below average for the majority of students. Poor attitudes and attendance of significant numbers of the students are having an adverse effect on standards that they achieve.</p>	
Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Good</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Very good</b>

## Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Satisfactory</b>
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*Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do.*

Students on the AVCE programmes in ICT make satisfactory progress. They are becoming increasingly confident when undertaking a range of practical tasks. Most are able to utilise a range of advanced features of software and apply them to different situations. Students are also gaining appropriate knowledge and understanding of the basic theoretical aspects.

AVCE students have positive attitudes to their work in ICT. They are attentive during the group work and respond well to the questioning by the teacher. Group work frequently results in good interaction between the students and the teacher. Students are sufficiently confident to seek clarification on aspects if they require this. They are particularly well motivated when undertaking practical work. A few students fail to complete the AVCE programme on which they initially enrolled.

All teaching is at least satisfactory and some is good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject matter. Lessons are well planned, though opportunities to further challenge the most able students are not always taken.

During practical work most students are able to work largely on an independent basis though teachers provide individual help and support if these are required. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards during the group work. Detailed and good quality handouts are also used well to explain aspects of the work.

Good quality computer hardware and software available during the time-tabled classes support both teaching and learning well.

Relationships between students and with the teacher are very good. Teachers keep good records of students' progress. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of individual student strengths and weaknesses.

Poor attendance of students at the key skills classes leads to unsatisfactory progress and achievement for a number of Year 12 students.

## Educational provision

Quality of teaching	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Good</b>

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Satisfactory</b>

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Good</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Satisfactory</b>

150. Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. Specialist courses in the sixth form are more effectively managed than those relating to the cross-curricular provision. Staff involved with the AVCE programmes are well qualified and are working well as a team. They meet regularly and share learning resources and ideas. Monitoring and evaluation procedures include regular lesson observations by the co-ordinator and checks are also made on the setting and marking of work. The development and support of the recently introduced specialist AVCE programmes have meant that the co-ordinator has had insufficient time to effectively co-ordinate the cross-curricular work.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

None of the courses in this section was part of the main sample. A small sample of lessons and students' work was covered in vocational travel and tourism, leisure and tourism and health and social care.

### **Travel and tourism (advanced)**

151. One Year 12 and one Year 13 lesson were seen. Teaching and learning were good. In the Year 12 lesson students received clear advice on using Internet sites to gather information about routes to Sydney and they did this with confidence. The advice given on information needed was well matched to course requirements. In the Year 13 lesson the teacher gave individual support to three students preparing a portfolio on the structure of the travel and tourism industry. Course requirements were well used to set appropriate tasks for the students. They used ICT well and produced their own bullet point summaries of information found. Teaching was effective in focusing students' attention on how they might improve their chances in the examination.

### **Leisure and tourism (intermediate)**

152. One Year 12 lesson was seen. Teaching and learning were good. Students used ICT well to produce a series of brochures for their coursework on tourist destinations at home and abroad. They knew the course requirements well regarding the content for each brochure. The teacher had developed detailed monitoring records showing each student's progress regarding coursework completion. Students were given clear advice on how to improve their grades. They knew their learning and progress were being monitored closely and they worked hard.

### **Health and social care - intermediate**

153. One Year 12 lesson was seen. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. Students worked in groups to categorise toys in terms of how they contributed to children's development. They applied their previous learning about child development well. Their collaboration was good and each group achieved a high standard in the presentation of completed work. There was not enough time for group presentations at the end of the lesson and not enough questioning of individuals to check their understanding and to carry their learning forward.

### **Health and social care - advanced**

154. One Year 12 and one Year 13 lesson were seen. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the Year 12 lesson and good in the Year 13 lesson. Year 12 students worked productively to scan a national health service annual report and select relevant information for a new topic. The lesson introduction, however, was too long and did not engage students productively or check their understanding. The Year 13 lesson was well matched to portfolio requirements and built well on students' previous lack of understanding of the role of different agencies in supporting children. Students examined case studies and, through challenging questioning, gained a good understanding of different agencies and the links between them.

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

None of the courses in this section was part of the main sample. A small sample of lessons and students' work was covered in art, performing arts, media studies and dance.

### **Art**

155. One A-level lesson was seen in Year 13 together with a Year 12 enrichment class. Teaching and learning were very good in the A-level lesson. The teacher spent most of the session with one student discussing in detail her most recent artwork. His guidance revealed high expectations of what the students can achieve. He boosted the student's confidence and at the same time gave clear evaluations of the work's strengths and guidance on how to improve it. Good references were made to the work of artists enabling the student to research how they tackled the challenge

of, for example, creating the effect of candlelight. The enrichment lesson was well-taught, enabling students to create and decorate king-size chess pieces.

## Performing arts

156. One lesson was seen in which teaching and learning were good. Students had prepared well for the lesson and this meant that the lesson began at a brisk pace and with a clear focus. The teacher capitalised on this well by using the lesson to guide students' further thinking about how they would tackle their next practical tasks. While ideas were offered by the teacher, she skilfully put the onus on the students to solve their own problems. Students' files are very well organised reflecting the teacher's high level of organisation. This enhances learning because it shows that students are expected to produce work of a high quality and to think clearly. Examination requirements were referred to throughout the session, ensuring that students work efficiently as well as creatively.

## Media studies

157. Two lessons were seen. Teaching and learning were good in a Year 12 lesson and very good in a Year 13 lesson. Year 12 lesson tasks were well matched to course requirements. Students had clear objectives and worked productively. The majority of students used ICT very well in designing pages for magazines and newspapers, to complete an examination brief. Some students adopted a different approach and impressively combined the use of video and music with ICT. They were all highly motivated and were able to explain the ideas behind their own work. Year 13 students examined a photographic image in a lively discussion. Class discussion was very well managed so that students examined the image from many different perspectives. This enabled them to develop their own analytical skills very well including the use of appropriate terminology.

## Dance

158. One dance lesson was seen in Year 12. Students are enthusiastically following a one-year GCSE course during the enrichment afternoon. All the students achieved above average standards as a result of excellent teaching. The teacher demonstrates well and gives students the confidence to express themselves through the language of dance. Students assess their own and each other's work with sensitivity and skill. This is a major factor in helping them to raise their levels of performance.

## HUMANITIES

A-level and AS-level courses in history, geography and psychology were inspected in detail while two lessons were seen in sociology.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Examination results and standards are improving.
- The subject provides very well for students personal development.
- The subject is well led and managed.

#### Areas for improvement

- The analysis and use of assessment information in target setting and curriculum planning.
- Few students obtain the higher A-B grades in examinations.
- More students could be encouraged to continue their studies from AS-level to A2.
- Marking helps students to improve their work but does not always provide sufficient indication of the standards reached.

## Standards

Tests and examinations	<b>Average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Average</b>

*Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.*

Looking at the four years up to and including 2001, it is not always possible to make reliable comparisons between the school's results and national averages because the number of students taking history has been low. Where numbers are sufficient to allow the comparison to be made, then results have been well below average and students have not done as well in history as in their other subjects. In addition, they have not always achieved as well as might be expected from their starting points on entering the sixth form.

In 2002, results improved significantly. In the A2-level examination, two of the six candidates obtained the higher A-B grades and all obtained at least a pass grade.

The AS-level results in 2001 were average. In 2002, six of the seven candidates obtained at least a pass grade though none obtained the higher A-B grades. Nevertheless, their overall achievement was good in relation to their starting points at the beginning of the course.

Although course completion rates are very good, only a minority of students following the AS-level course have chosen to carry on to A2-level.

The three students currently in Year 13 are in line to improve upon their performance at AS-level and they reach above average standards in their work.

Students in Year 12 and 13 work very effectively in discussion and debate both with the teacher and each other, and they come to lessons very well prepared for this. The written work of Year 12 students indicates that they are making good progress in coming to terms with the demands of advanced level study. Both the length and quality of writing, for example in essays analysing opposition to Tsar Nicholas I, has clearly improved since the beginning of the course. They reach overall average standards although comparatively few reach the standards needed to obtain the higher A-B grades at AS-level.

The lowest ability students make particularly good progress and some reach average standards.

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Excellent</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Excellent</b>

## Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Good</b>
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*Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do*

Students are making good progress because knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching capitalises well on the excellent attitudes, that the students bring to their learning.

Recent changes to the organisation of the A-level examination system suit these students well, as does the particular subject specification, that the school has chosen to teach; this also contributes to the effective learning which takes place.

Teachers and students have very good relationships which enhances learning.

Small classes enables students to be stretched because they are under greater pressure to contribute towards the learning than would be the case in larger groups.

The heavy emphasis placed on independent learning prepares students well for the demands they will find in higher education.

Students appreciate this and value their learning experiences in history. They feel that they are helped to appreciate their own strengths and weaknesses as learners and are encouraged to be actively involved in setting the agenda for improvement.

Students are well served by the teachers' marking, which helps them to see how they can improve their work although it does not always provide sufficient indication of the standards being reached.

They appreciate the fact that their teachers are prepared to go that extra step on their behalf, for example by providing revision lessons if required. Teachers have a clear understanding of the progress being made by students, and the standards they are reaching, and take into account personal factors which may influence students' achievements.

History also contributes very well to students' personal development through the broad opportunity it provides to enable them to investigate and reflect upon moral issues emerging from the curriculum.

The subject also contributes well to the broadening of students' horizons through, for example, participation in an annual trip abroad.

### **Educational provision**

Quality of teaching	<b>Good</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Good</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Good</b>
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Good</b>

### **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Good</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Good</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Very good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Good</b>

159. Recent changes in the management and leadership of the department have resulted in the creation of an effective agenda for improvement based on a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Curriculum changes together with the implementation of an effective strategy for increasing A-level teaching experience and improving expertise through well-targeted in-service training are having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning. This is beginning to result in improved standards and examination results, and is making the subject more attractive to potential students. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection has been good, although assessment information could be analysed and used more effectively in target setting and curriculum planning.

### **Geography**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Good progress maintained over time.
- Good teaching that promotes mature attitudes to learning in class work and fieldwork alike.
- Good relationships that underpin achievement.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- More rigorous use of data to track individual progress and identify specific targets for improvement.

### **Standards**

Tests and examinations	<b>Average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Average</b>

*Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.*

In 2002 one third of the fifteen students entered for the A-level examinations reached the grades A or B; all students passed.

At AS-level in 2002 only six students were entered and none reached the A to B standard. Four of the six passed the examination. In 2001 five of the eighteen AS-level students gained the A to B standards and all but one passed.

Most of the students in the present Year 13 have re-taken their AS papers, but the results were not available at the time of the inspection.

Over the years since 1998 A-level results have been broadly in line with national averages, with the

numbers of those entered being on a rising trend until this year when the numbers dropped. In each year, all students passed the examination.

The current students in Year 13 are generally on line to attain similar levels of success in gaining a grade in the A to E range at the end of their courses, though not to repeat the percentages at the highest levels.

Students have sound geographical knowledge and use of technical language appropriately, for example in the fieldwork reports on river flow where they are skilled in using statistical tools.

Students have good skills in presenting and developing arguments during discussions.

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Very good</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Very good</b>

## Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Good</b>
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*Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do*

Students make good progress in the sixth form. Analysis of students' A-level results in relation to their GCSE results show that they make more progress in geography than they do in most other subjects.

Teaching groups have been small over the years, but, until last year, were growing in size. Students develop their individual research skills and independence of learning throughout the Years 12 and 13.

Most students begin their course having not attained the highest grades of A\* to B in GCSE and in some cases not having done geography at that level. In Year 12 they develop sound map and photographic interpretation skills when, for example, finding out why people move from urban to rural locations in northeast England.

In Year 13 students discuss competently the differences between urbanisation in less and well economically developed countries.

Students have positive attitudes to geography, listening carefully to teachers and their classmates alike, which supports their good progress. They think hard about what they hear and respond both to questions from the teacher and to comments from other students with enthusiasm. Whether discussing or working at written tasks, they maintain concentration and proceed at a good pace.

The work in the projects shows a keenness for using primary evidence and practical procedures to seek out new knowledge.

The quality of the finished modules shows great pride in their work, with high quality of work processing graphic and spreadsheet computer work. They use the Internet frequently to gain up-to-date material for their work.

The quality of teaching is good. High standards of geographical knowledge are used to encourage the students to become progressively independent learners. Good relationships help to mature the attitudes of the students, by the good quality of discussion in most lessons.

Teachers keep records of what each student has done and the marking of very good quality shows the students not only how they are achieving but also how to improve standards. The use of the data is not so well developed and recorded as it is in the main school, which restricts the close analysis of results, for example in tracking added value.

Students are expected to produce high quality work and to use geographical vocabulary in their work. Attendance of a minority of students gives rise to some concern over its effects on their attainment and examination success.

## Educational provision

Quality of teaching	<b>Good</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Good</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Good</b>

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Good</b>

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Good</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Good</b>

160. The department is effectively managed with regular monitoring of both students' and teachers' work. The compact room arrangement of the department is an advantage for the team ethos of the teachers, helping the committed staff work well together and also their dedication to continue to strive for higher standards.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- Good self evaluation procedures and subsequent development planning.
- Good teaching.
- Good academic and personal support for students.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising standards further.
- Improving the level of challenge in lessons to tackle the variable level of students' understanding.

## Standards

Tests and examinations	<b>Well below average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Below average</b>

*Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.*  
 In 2001 the AS-level results were very low in comparison with the national average; they were at a similar level in 2002. In that year, A-level results were well below the national averages when they are compared to the equivalent 2001 statistics.  
 In all these exams a very high percentage of students did not achieve a pass when predicted to do so. A small number exceeded expectations by achieving B and C grades.  
 Inspection findings show a sharp rise in standards, especially amongst the present Year 13 A-Level group. This group is on line to achieve a profile of results much closer to the national average. There is a significant increase in the amount of students' course work that is assessed at A and B grades.  
 Particular strengths include the application of theory into practice and the use of key learning skills in lessons and research. For example, the use of communication skills and data analysis in aspects of modular work.  
 Major reasons for the recent improvement in standards include an increase in teachers' and students' understanding of coursework and examination requirements together with innovations in teaching, curriculum design and assessment procedures.  
 Psychology is a popular choice for students and the present cohorts are very interested in the work they do.

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Good</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Very good</b>

## Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Satisfactory</b>
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*Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do.*

In previous years achievement has been unsatisfactory, with many students not making expected progress in their sixth form studies.

Present students make good progress when compared to their GCSE entry profile and predicted grades, even though overall standards are below the national average. More able students make good progress.

Achievement is good in the development of key skills and knowledge and understanding of theory and its application in clinical and investigative terms. The application of theory to contemporary issues in synoptic exercises is also improving.

The motivated and successful students are involved in more research and independent writing than is common.

Recent improvement in achievement is attributable to the good quality of the teaching and support given to the students. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables students to learn effectively and to improve their understanding of examination techniques and key areas of knowledge.

Teachers have made good progress in assessing individual students' levels of understanding and tracking the progress being made. This now needs to inform planning on a daily basis so that individuals are further challenged at their appropriate levels.

Relationships with the students are very good and this enables a productive yet relaxed atmosphere in classrooms. Students' have positive attitudes to psychology.

Students listen well to complex psychological theory but a small number do not always understand what they have heard. Teachers need to develop strategies in lessons to make sure that all students have grasped the concepts under discussion.

The two boys who recently joined the sixth form are making sound progress towards predicted grades.

## Educational provision

Quality of teaching	<b>Good</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Good</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Very good</b>

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Good</b>

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Very good</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Good</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>N/A</b>

161. Senior and middle managers have acted swiftly and successfully to improve the poor results in psychology since its introduction in 2001. The department is raising its expectations for students to produce higher quality work and the team of teachers is highly committed to improving standards. Perceptive analysis of the reasons for previous failures has resulted in a very good development plan that addresses the key issues of under-achievement. A much more coherent curriculum now enables students to cross-reference key areas of learning in all modules studied. Assessment procedures allow teachers to track individual progress. This is enabling some students to add good value to their predicted grades.

## Sociology

162. One Year 12 and one Year 13 lesson were seen. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. Resources were well matched to course requirements in both lessons and tasks were appropriately challenging. Class discussion was a strength in the teaching, with students challenged well to use appropriate terminology and their knowledge of sociological perspectives. Methodology was weaker in guiding students to undertake group and individual tasks, in assessing their progress during such work and in allowing them sufficient time to focus on activities without interruption.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature is offered at A and AS-levels although the course is largely intended to run as a two-year course to A-level. It is a popular subject, with 21 students taking the A-level examination in 2002. French and Spanish are offered at A and AS-level; the inspection focus was on French.

### English literature

Overall, the quality of provision in English Literature in the sixth form is **unsatisfactory**

#### Strengths

- Teaching is satisfactory with some strengths.
- Good support is given to lower attaining students.
- Students are very satisfied with their choice of English as an A-level subject and are appreciative of the support they receive.
- Good use is made of visits out of school to enrich the curriculum.

#### Areas for improvement

- To raise the attainment of all students.
- To put in place schemes of work to act as clear guidance to teachers.
- To put in place clear structures for the consistent identification and support of under-achieving students.
- To make full use of assessment information to measure achievement during and by the end of the course.

### Standards

Tests and examinations	<b>Well below average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Below average</b>

#### *Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen.*

In 2002 results were similar to those in 2001, which were well below the national average. No students gained grade As and only a small proportion gained grade Bs. A large majority of students attained grade D and E. Over the past four years there has been no improvement in the percentage of As and Bs while the percentage of students attaining D and E grades has increased.

While most students have clear understanding of the narrative, characters and contextual setting of the texts they study, they tend to restrict their comments to these factors and avoid close textual analysis. They are severely hampered by having a limited vocabulary, find the language of their texts impenetrable and do not in general make sufficient evaluation of the way in which authors use language to achieve an effect on their audience. Many students find it difficult to meet precisely the requirements of their written assignments and tend to offer general answers.

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Very good</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Very good</b>

## Achievement and progress

How well students achieve	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
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*Statements explaining why students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL) achieve as they do.*

Since there is a very flexible attitude to entry to the course, students start the course with a wide range of prior attainment. However, a very substantial majority of students in both the current Year 12 and Year 13 have attained high grade GCSE results in English. Their achievement during the A-level course is generally unsatisfactory, since most students do not fulfil the potential suggested by their GCSE grades and in 2002 more than two thirds of students attained one of the two lowest grades. The minority of students who enter the course with lower attainment make better progress than higher attaining students. This is in response to the good support which they receive from their teachers. Most students make insufficient progress in the development of the key A-level skill of close textual analysis in order to examine how writers use language to effect their readers. Their answers tend to place too much emphasis on sociological factors and on the examination of character and motivation at the expense of the examination of language.

Students have very good attitudes to the subject and work hard to overcome the difficulties which they experience. For example, students are very aware of their limited vocabulary and make extensive use of dictionaries and thesauruses to broaden their command of language. They express a very positive attitude to their choice of English as an A-level subject and are appreciative of the fact that teachers are always willing to find the time to offer support.

Teachers have good classroom skills. For example, they make good use of questioning and discussion to extend students' thinking and check their progress and they provide opportunities for students to learn by making contributions to lessons. However, a lack of planning to meet the needs of all students across the range of prior attainment means that while lower attaining students receive good support, higher attaining students are not being stretched and their progress is unsatisfactory. Teachers' expectations of higher attaining students are too low.

There are many examples in teachers' marking of missed opportunities to give specific advice to students on what they need to do in order to improve.

## Educational provision

Quality of teaching	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Good</b>

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Adequacy of resource	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

163. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. There are inadequate systems in place to adequately support teachers and ensure consistency of practice. There are no schemes of work. This means, for example, that there is no identification of those parts of the curriculum which particularly require a range of provision for students across the attainment range in order to ensure that there is an effective balance of challenge and support. Although there is a range of information available on the attainment of students, there is no coherent structure for the identification and support of students who are not achieving their potential. This is left to the initiative of individual teachers. There is no structure to measure the achievement of students

during or at the end of the course and the underachievement of most students has not been identified and addressed.

## French

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

### Strengths

- High quality models of spoken French provided by teachers.
- Students' behaviour and commitment in lessons.
- Examination results in the last two years.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' speaking standards.
- Students' reading and listening to a wider range of material in French to support work in the classroom.

## Standards

Examinations	<b>Average</b>
Seen during the inspection	<b>Below average</b>

*Commentary including explanations for any differences between exam/test results and standards seen*  
Standards in AS and A2 examinations have been average overall for the small groups of students following a course in French. The results at A-level have been inconsistent but have improved since the last inspection. Half the students entered in the last two years have attained A or B grades. These results demonstrate very good achievement. The results at AS-level are broadly average.

There is a wide discrepancy between standards seen during the inspection and examination results, the reasons for which are not entirely clear.

Year 12 students have below average standards in listening and reading and well below in speaking and writing. They lack confidence in speaking and tend to think in English, which makes them hesitate and lose fluency. Their written work contains elementary errors and poor examples of dictionary skills. They have still to develop a greater range of vocabulary and structures to reach the necessary standards of speaking and writing.

Year 13 students reach average standards in listening, writing and reading but have well below average skills in speaking. Their writing is a mixture of good style and elementary errors.

Students' attitudes to the subject	<b>Good</b>
Students' behaviour	<b>Excellent</b>
Development of personal and learning skills	<b>Satisfactory</b>

## Achievement/progress

How well students achieve	<b>Satisfactory</b>
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*Statement about any differences in progress between students (girls/boys, SEN, most able, EAL)*

Progress from GCSE to the most recent AS and A-level results has been good. Those students exceeded their targets, based on their GCSE results.

Teaching is in very small groups and students have the opportunity of individual support, which they recognise and value.

Learning is only satisfactory in response to the good quality of the teaching because students have not yet developed appropriate speaking skills; for example, to enable them to take part in discussions. This is particularly the case in Year 12. Year 13 students are making better progress in this area but can still be hesitant.

Students have practised tenses, structures and other grammatical points successfully in exercises but are unable to use this knowledge in extended writing. The lack of spontaneous answers to spoken French, because students are still thinking in English, is the greatest barrier to their progress and affects writing as well as speaking.

Students in both years are gaining insights into French values and culture through the topics they study.

They fulfil the tasks set but do not show real enthusiasm for the language, despite the example generated by their teachers, who introduce them to a good range of authentic materials and their native command of French.

Teachers are encouraging them to recognise the roots of words which appear in both French and English, as a guide to understanding new vocabulary.

Teaching is challenging students to raise their own standards of French but they are finding the pace and content of some topic materials difficult. Teachers' marking and assessment enable them to target areas for improvement. The students in Year 13 have been unable to spend a period of work experience in France because of the cost. This experience would have been very beneficial.

### **Educational Provision**

Quality of teaching	<b>Good</b>
Quality of learning	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Quality of the curriculum	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of assessment and progress monitoring	<b>Good</b>

### **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management	<b>Satisfactory</b>
Effectiveness of action to improve quality	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Adequacy of resources	<b>Good</b>
Adequacy of accommodation	<b>Good</b>
Improvement since the last inspection	<b>Satisfactory</b>

164. Leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory but management roles need clarifying. The teachers responsible for the course have informal responsibility for sixth form French but the arrangement needs formal recognition. This must include strategies to improve the speaking standards, that students bring to their sixth form course, through greater opportunities to extend speaking skills, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Assessment procedures are good. They fulfil the needs of the examining boards and provide teachers with information which helps them to plan the curriculum. Students have had the opportunity to spend time undertaking work experience in France, although the school recognises that the cost can be prohibitive. The skills of the teachers and the potential of students provide evidence of the capacity to make and consolidate the necessary improvement.

### **Spanish**

165. One Year 13 lesson was seen in which the teaching was very good. Use of the language was at the heart of the teaching. Students had just returned from work experience in Spain and were able to fluently and enthusiastically share their experiences; they have a strong commitment to the language. Students initially lacked confidence in tackling the main topic of the lesson, which was about pollution in Madrid. As their understanding of the issues grew, their speaking regained its fluency and they made good gains in learning.