

INSPECTION REPORT

STANBOROUGH SCHOOL

Welwyn Garden City

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117507

Headteacher: Miss G Tolley

Reporting inspector: Paul Cosway
2734

Dates of inspection: 20 - 24 January 2003

Inspection number: 249607

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lemsford Lane Welwyn Garden City
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Helen Wilkie
Date of previous inspection:	10/02/1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2734	Paul Cosway	Registered inspector	Citizenship	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9275	Candy Kalms	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Team inspector Sixth Form co-ordinator	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Physical education Economics	
8240	Elaine Dearmer	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Educational inclusion	
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography	
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Art	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History	
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education	
12276	Terence Payne	Team inspector	Music	

19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20420	Stuart Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Science Biology	
27983	Mary Sewell	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	
1224	Graham Todd	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stanborough School is a comprehensive school on the southern edge of Welwyn Garden City, educating girls and boys from the age of 11 to 19. It is in an area of expensive housing and so it is difficult to recruit teachers. This has caused some disruption to pupils' learning, especially over the last two years. The school has been oversubscribed for many years and was extended in 1998-9, when a local school, that had failed its OFSTED inspection, closed and its pupils were moved to this site. The school is average in size, with 838 pupils in the main school and 190 in the Sixth Form. There are slightly more boys (544) than girls (484). It is situated in a relatively advantaged area, but also serves areas of deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, around 10 per cent, is below the national average, but has doubled since the schools combined in 1998. Almost all the pupils are white, which reflects the ethnic composition of the local area, although the proportion for whom English is not their first language is slightly above the national average. These pupils represent a rich variety of cultural backgrounds. None is at an early stage of acquiring English.

Around 14 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs. This is below the national average, but has increased in recent years. Of these, 12 have full statements – a slightly lower than average proportion. Most pupils on the higher stages of the special educational needs register have learning or behavioural difficulties. It is also the locally designated school for pupils who are physically and neurologically impaired, but there were no such pupils on roll at the time of the inspection. The overall attainment of pupils on entry is average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has many good and very good features. It provides a satisfactory standard of education and has the capacity to improve further. There is a very good Sixth Form. The school prides itself on its inclusiveness, valuing all its pupils equally. Teaching is good overall. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the main school and good in the Sixth Form, where students' attitudes are very good because of very good teaching. Elsewhere, most pupils behave appropriately and form good relationships but there is a small minority who can be disruptive. Very good leadership from the headteacher has brought the school successfully through a difficult period of reorganisation. Management is satisfactory. Most middle and senior managers are very effective, but not all. Some are still becoming established and some posts are vacant or are temporary appointments. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- In some subjects, especially design and technology, history, physical education and English, pupils attain well at GCSE and results in these subjects are above national averages.
- Results at A level are well above the national average and students achieve very well.
- The school develops positive attitudes to education in the large majority of its pupils.
- Teaching is good across the school.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and these pupils make good progress.
- Good leadership, guided by a very good and experienced headteacher, is setting a clear direction for the future development of the school.

What could be improved

- There is insufficient emphasis on tracking progress and setting targets for pupils.
- A small minority of pupils can behave inappropriately. The management of behaviour in classrooms needs to be more consistent and effective.
- Difficulties in recruiting staff are affecting standards in some subjects, particularly music where the provision is less than satisfactory as a result.

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 1997. There have been so many changes since then in the size and composition of the school that most direct comparisons between the judgements in the last report and the inspection team's current findings are not valid. The school is much larger. It is now fully comprehensive in its intake, whereas it had an above average intake in 1997, and the proportion of pupils from economically disadvantaged families has doubled. There have been some clear

improvements, however, and satisfactory improvement overall. The quality of teaching, which was described as variable, with one in six lessons unsatisfactory or poor, has improved. There have been improvements in the curriculum, including the provision for technology.

Of the key issues in the last report, most have been fully addressed. Resources in information and communication technology and in the library have been improved, although more computers are still needed. School development planning is now good and the monitoring of teaching and learning is much improved. The provision for information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 is now good, rather than unsatisfactory. The school is planning to increase the amount of teaching of information and communication technology to Years 7 to 9 and across the curriculum, and this is necessary.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was close to the average nationally and average compared with that in similar schools. It was above average in 2001. Results in science and mathematics were in line with the average nationally and with similar schools, but in English the test results were slightly below average.

In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils who gained the higher grades, A* to C, was close to the national and similar schools' average, as was the proportion who gained five or more passes at grades A* to G. This level of performance has been maintained over the past four years. The proportion of pupils who gained at least one GCSE pass between grades A* to G has been slightly below the national and similar school averages over the same period. In some subjects, results are better than the national average in GCSE examinations. These are design and technology, English, history, mathematics, physical education, combined science and French. All other subjects were close to the average except for biology and drama.

The finding of the inspection is that attainment is close to average overall at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. It is well above average at A level. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average in physical education, history and English; well above in design and technology. It is below average in music and German. In the Sixth Form, students' attainment is well above the national average overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory: most pupils respond well to the school and value the opportunities it gives them to learn and attain well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils is satisfactory overall. The large majority is well-behaved around the school and in lessons, but a small minority can be disruptive.

Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good, among pupils and between pupils and teachers. A few teachers have difficulty relating to some pupils and this affects behaviour in their lessons. Most pupils' personal development is good. They develop the skills they need to work together as members of a group and take responsibility for their learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory: attendance is slightly above average compared with other secondary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In the lessons observed, teaching was good, overall. There were examples of excellent teaching. The teaching of English is good and in mathematics is satisfactory, with much that is good. Numeracy and literacy are taught satisfactorily across the school. There is much good and very good teaching in physical education, design and technology, history, religious education, art and geography. It is satisfactory overall in science and modern foreign languages. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects, effective planning and good relationships are features of the good lessons. In these, pupils respond well to their teachers' expectations. They know what to do to improve and make good progress. Almost all teachers get good response from all pupils. In a small number of lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory. This was usually because of the unsatisfactory management of challenging behaviour.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum is reasonably broad and balanced for Years 10 to 11. It is broad for Years 7 to 9, but there is insufficient coverage of information and communication technology. The consortium arrangements provide a very good and varied range of Sixth Form subjects, although the statutory requirement to teach religious education to all is not met. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is an inclusive school which works hard to provide an education for all, including reluctant learners as well as the gifted and talented.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English. Overall, the provision is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall: social and moral development is good. The provision for cultural development is good overall, though more attention needs to be given to the multi-cultural aspects of our society. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. There is not an act of collective worship for all every day, however.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The provision for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare is good. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good, but monitoring of academic progress and behaviour needs further development. It is very good in the Sixth Form.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is led well, with very good leadership from a very experienced head teacher. The management of the school is satisfactory overall. Most faculties and departments are led well, but this is not consistent across the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well, helping senior managers to plan for the strategic development of the school as well as monitoring its effectiveness.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Whole-school monitoring is good and assessment data are used satisfactorily to evaluate the school's performance and to plan future development.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes effective use of the resources at its disposal for the educational benefit of its pupils. The school is satisfactorily staffed in most departments but there are weaknesses in some departments and the difficulties of recruiting staff have affected standards. Resources and accommodation are sufficient.

The senior managers know the school well and know where to concentrate their efforts to improve it further. Some middle managers are giving very effective leadership to their departments or pastoral areas and they monitor work well. Some others are new in post or temporary and are not yet monitoring teaching and pupils' progress effectively enough. The school applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Of those parents who responded, between 80 and 90 per cent agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school, • The school expects their children to work hard, • Their children are making good progress, • the teaching is good, • The school is helping their children to grow into responsible adults; • the school is led well 	<p>Of those who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 per cent are not satisfied with the provision for homework • 39 per cent are concerned about behaviour in some lessons • 24 per cent would like more information about their children's progress and 32 per cent would like the school to work more closely with them. • 19 per cent would like a wider range of activities outside of lessons

The inspection team's findings support the positive views of parents. Many parents work hard to support their children's learning. The findings of the inspection were that homework is satisfactory, but it is not consistent and some teachers are slow to mark and return it; behaviour is satisfactory overall and much is good, but there are instances of poor behaviour disrupting lessons. The amount of information given to parents is satisfactory, but more could be done to tell parents about the progress that pupils are making. There is a satisfactory range of clubs and visits, though many of the after-school activities are sporting.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is of average size, with 190 students on roll. There are slightly more male students than female, particularly in Year 13. Students enter the sixth form mainly from the main school and they come from a very wide range of backgrounds. The school operates within a consortium that gives flexibility in the number of courses that are offered. These include AS and A level, and vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level. Attainment on entry into the sixth form is broadly average. In order to study a course, it is expected that students will have gained at least four A* to C passes GCSE or GNVQ. There is a very small number of students who have special educational needs, mainly dyslexia. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very small. Approximately 47 per cent of students stay into the sixth form. A very small number come from other schools. A small number of students stay for an extra year to improve their grades.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very effective sixth form that provides good value for money. Students enter with average attainment and make good progress to attain, overall, well above average results. The quality of teaching is very good and most students develop very good learning skills as a result. The overall leadership and management of the Director (the headteacher), head of sixth form and the Consortium Co-ordinator are very good. The consortium gives students flexibility of choice, so their needs are met well. Good attainment has been maintained since the previous inspection.

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management ensure that all achieve well.
- Attainment is well above average in relation to all schools and colleges that offer Sixth Form provision.
- Teaching and learning is very good overall.
- Students appreciate the good academic support they receive. Relationships are very good.

What could be improved

- There are no significant areas of weakness, but the requirement to teach religious education to all Sixth Form students is not being met and students would benefit from more access to information and communication technology equipment for individual research.

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	Very good. Teaching is very good and pupils learn very well. Their progress is good and standards are well above average at the end of Year 13.
Biology	Very good. Students achieve very well because the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Attainment is well above average.
Design and technology	Good. Teaching is very good so students learn well. Attainment is above average and students make good progress.
Economics	Very good. Students achieve very well in this subject as a result of very good individual student support and excellent teacher student relationships.
Physical education	Very good. Attainment is above average because of very good teaching. Very good teaching enables students to learn very well.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Geography	Very good. Attainment is consistently well above average and students make very good progress. Teaching and learning are also very good.
History	Very good. Students attain above average standards and they achieve well. This is because the teaching is very good, so students are encouraged to learn.
English	Very good. Teaching is very good so students learn very well. They make very/good progress and attain well/above average standards.
French	Good. Teaching is very good overall and individual students make good progress.

Lessons were sampled in German, English literature, physics, art, general studies, key skills, business, information and communication technology and religious education. The teaching in most subjects was very good and students are making good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students speak highly of the support they receive. Although shortage of staff means that some students have had several tutors, students are confident in them and receive good educational and personal guidance.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management	Very good overall. The director gives a very effective steer and is supported well by her head of Sixth Form, who is starting to introduce new management structures with the aim of improving the provision.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The choice of courses that allows them to follow courses that match their aspirations. The majority would recommend the Sixth Form to their friends. They appreciated the help they were given to settle into the Sixth Form Many feel that they are challenged to do their best. Many feel they are treated as a responsible young person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many think they do not receive enough information about their progress. A significant number would like more advice about what to do when they leave school. About a third do not feel they could rely on support if they had personal problems. About a quarter would like a greater range of enrichment activities.

The inspection team supports the positive views about the Sixth Form. In some subjects, more support in giving advice about how students might reach their targets would help. Inspectors disagreed with the view that enrichment activities are insufficient. There are many opportunities.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Strengths

- Attainment in some subjects was high in GCSE examinations in 2002: the most successful subjects were design and technology, history, physical education and English.
- The Sixth Form examination results were well above the national average overall.
- The inspection found that attainment is currently close to the national average in the main school and well above average in the Sixth Form.
- Pupils achieve satisfactorily in the main school and very well in the Sixth Form.

Areas for development

- Some subjects, such as music, are not getting the best out of the pupils, because provision is less good than in the more successful subjects.

For pupils from 11 to 16

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is close to the national average, although the current Year 7 attained slightly above average results in the national tests for eleven year-olds (Year 6 SATs). Standardised tests show that the pupils are, overall, in line with the national average, with no pupils showing exceptional ability and a significant number attaining below average scores. The results are lowest on tests that measure the verbal reasoning abilities of pupils, indicating that they are below average overall in literacy. This affects the abilities of the lowest attaining pupils to perform well in written tests and to understand concepts. The school is aware of this deficiency and has introduced additional help with literacy for those who need it. Progress is slow, however, and literacy problems affect the progress that some pupils make, in English and modern foreign languages particularly, right up to the end of their time in the school.
2. In general, pupils make sound progress and their achievement is satisfactory overall. Over the last three years, the trends in performance in GCSE examinations and National Curriculum tests have been steady: generally in line with the national trends. Attainment has fallen since the last report, because of changes in the intake and nature of the school since then. The school was close to meeting its targets in 2002, although the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE examination passes at grades A* to C was slightly below the target.

Performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9

3. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was above the national average in 2001 and in line in 2002, and average compared with similar schools. They have declined for the last four years for the reasons outlined above.
4. Results in English were average in 2000 and below in 2001, compared with results nationally and those of similar schools. Results in mathematics were above average in 2000, but average in 2001, against national figures and similar schools. In science, attainment was average in 2000 and 2001 and average compared with similar schools. There has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls when compared with results for boys and girls nationally. Over the past five years, girls have attained better results than boys in the tests, but the difference is exactly the same as the difference nationally.

Attainment at the end of Year 9

5. The finding of the inspection is that attainment at the age of 14 is in line with the national average overall, but that it varies from subject to subject. This represents good achievement in a number of subjects. In these, pupils' standards have risen from being average or below average on entry to the school to being above average by the end of Year 9.
6. Attainment is in line with the national average in English, although small numbers of pupils have failed to reach the expected level in the national tests. They still have literacy problems that affect their abilities to express their ideas clearly, fluently and accurately in a written form. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily and have sound reading and writing skills. Attainment in science is

close to but slightly above average and most pupils have secured a sound knowledge of scientific principles. In mathematics, attainment is broadly average. Almost all pupils are numerate. Achievement is satisfactory in all three subjects.

7. Attainment is average in art, with pupils achieving satisfactorily in all aspects of the subject. In design and technology because of the good resourcing and teaching, pupils achieve well in all aspects except resistant materials, where provision is only satisfactory. Girls achieve particularly well, and attainment is above average for both girls and boys. It is also above average in geography, because of the quality of the provision, especially the teaching. Pupils achieve well, especially in geographical enquiry and mapping skills. In history, attainment is above average. Pupils achieve well in the development of skills and knowledge.
8. Attainment is average and achievement satisfactory overall in information and communication technology, although the coverage of the skills and knowledge required of pupils at this age is inconsistent, and access to equipment is restricted in some subject areas. In modern foreign languages pupils achieve satisfactorily from a low starting point, but attainment is below average. There have been staffing difficulties in the recent past that have affected standards. Considerable staffing problems have had a significant effect on music provision. Achievement is unsatisfactory and attainment is well below average. All pupils achieve well in physical education. The subject is well resourced and well taught, so that it has a high status with pupils. Attainment is above average. Pupils achieve well in religious education because of good teaching and reach average standards by the end of Year 9.
9. Full details of what pupils do well and what they need to improve can be found in the subject reports in Part D of this report.

Attainment in GCSE examinations

10. Pupils achieve appropriately in GCSE examinations, making satisfactory progress from their levels of attainment at the end of Year 9.
11. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils who attained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* - C in 2001 was in line both with the national average and the average for similar schools. The proportion who attained five or more passes in the A* - G range was close to the national average. The proportion of those in Year 11 in 2001 - 2002 who attained one or more pass at A* to G was slightly below the national average and similar schools. The overall performance at GCSE, measured by the average point score for all candidates, was close to, but slightly above, the average nationally and for similar schools, as it has been for the past three years. Attainment overall, in both GCSE and the Year 9 national tests, has gone down since the last report, but this comparison is not valid because of changes in the nature of the school since then.
12. The most successful subjects at GCSE in 2001 were design and technology, history and geography. In these examinations, results were well above the national average. In design and technology, 31 per cent of those who were entered gained A* or A grades, far above the national figure of just below 13 per cent. Almost all the year group was entered, 157 pupils in all, a far higher proportion than that nationally. Half the year group was entered for geography and the overall A* to C pass rate was close to the national average, but a high proportion gained high grades. Just over 34 per cent attained A* or A grades, compared with 16 per cent in the country as a whole. In history, three quarters of the 64 candidates gained A* to C grades, compared with just over a half nationally, and again just over 34 per cent of these passed with A* or A grades. The provision in technology is very good in the school, the new accommodation and equipment providing a very good, well resourced learning environment that helps to give pupils positive attitudes to the subject and raise standards. The teachers are experienced and well qualified, as they are in the humanities subjects. They have good relationships with the pupils and plan their work very effectively to help the pupils to learn and succeed. In humanities, very good use is made of assessment information to help to track pupils' progress and to give them guidance on what to do to improve their work. All these factors work together to raise achievement in these areas of the school.
13. Attainment was also above average in the GCSE English examination. Almost 70 per cent of the candidates gained A* to C grades, well above the national average. A good, enthusiastic team of teachers is teaching a well-planned course and using their knowledge of the subject well to teach and motivate the pupils. Results in physical education were also above the national average.

Again, there are good facilities and experienced teachers. This good provision is motivating pupils, who have very positive attitudes to the subject and try hard to succeed and to improve their levels of performance.

14. Attainment in GCSE examinations was close to average in 2002 in combined science, information and communication technology, mathematics and art and design. There is a small group of subjects in which attainment is below average. These are biology, English literature, German and drama. In drama, a number of low attaining pupils failed to meet their target grades and better tracking of progress is needed. The biology course is only for low attaining pupils and these pupils achieved well.
15. Boys and girls attained equally well in 2001 compared with their peers across the country as a whole. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' levels of attainment observed during the inspection. The school came very close to its targets for test and examination performance in 2002 and expects to meet the slightly higher, but realistic, targets that it has set for 2003. Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is close to average by the age of 16. Oracy skills are satisfactory and developed well.

Attainment at the age of 16

16. The finding of the inspection is that the current levels of attainment of pupils in Year 11 are in line, overall, with the average nationally. There is some variation from subject to subject, however. Attainment is above the national average in English: above average in reading and writing, average in speaking and listening. Although writing is above average overall, there are still weaknesses in the quality and accuracy of the written work of a significant minority of the pupils, as was the case at the age of 14. Nevertheless, achievement is good overall. In mathematics, attainment is slightly above the average nationally. Achievement is satisfactory. Almost all pupils have sufficient command of numeracy skills to meet the demands of subjects across the curriculum. In science, attainment is slightly above average. Again, achievement is satisfactory and is improving over time.
17. Attainment is average in art, information and communication technology, with evidence of rising standards over time. Pupils' achievement is never less than satisfactory. In history, very good, well-directed teaching is leading to well above average attainment and good achievement. Design and technology and physical education are two subject areas with good accommodation and resourcing, where teaching of quality has also helped to create positive attitudes towards the subjects in pupils. As a result, pupils achieve well. Attainment is above average in physical education, religious education and geography, and well above average in design and technology.
18. The majority of students aged from 11 to 16, identified as having special educational needs, who are taught in the withdrawal groups achieve well and have positive attitudes towards learning. They are making good progress towards the targets set for them. The identified students who are supported in mainstream classes are making good progress. This is because of the close liaison between teaching and support staff regarding the students' learning needs. Although there are a few pupils for whom English is an additional language, none is at an early stage of acquiring English. Nevertheless, their progress is monitored carefully and they are given good support, so that they make good progress and achieve well - individuals who are strongly motivated achieve very well. Provision for these pupils is very good. Literacy development is a key focus. The head of special educational needs carefully assesses and records pupils' competency in using English language on their admission to school. The school has good links with specialist support from the local authority, although there are, currently, no pupils who require such support. Two pupils act as interpreters for their parents at parents' evenings.
19. The recent summer school for the gifted and talented pupils, along with master classes and extension work in many departments, helps to ensure that they achieve well in all subjects except music, where staffing problems have affected their progress.

Sixth form

20. In 2001, the average point score at GCE Advanced level of all students was well above the national average for maintained schools as it has been consistently in recent years. Male and female students performed equally well. In 2002, attainment was, overall, a further improvement against other schools. It was again well above average, the proportion of students gaining higher grades was slightly higher than in the previous year, and again there was no significant variation

between male and female. There were some remarkable performances from subject areas. In further mathematics, all four candidates passed with an A grade, for example. In English literature, five of the six candidates gained A or B grades. Very good teaching, from teachers with very good subject knowledge and wide experience of teaching examination work, ensures that the students at this school achieve very well.

21. Not all of the Sixth Form courses are taught on the Stanborough site. Students from this school also attained well in the subjects that are taught elsewhere in the consortium. These subjects include theatre studies, media studies, photography and fine art. The overall pass rate, of 94 per cent, was above average and an improvement on 2001.
22. In the work seen in lessons and from an analysis of students' records, overall attainment is well above national averages. Students are achieving well and making good progress compared with their results in their GCSE examinations. The very good quality of teaching across almost the whole range of post-16 courses leads to many students developing a very positive attitude to their work that results in good achievement. Standards are above average in economics, students showing a very good understanding of economic principles. Standards in AS and A level English literature are well above the national average. Achievement by the end of Year 13 is very good. Students' understanding of the ways in which authors make changes in form, structure and language in order to shape meanings is developing well, particularly at AS level. Higher attaining students have a secure understanding of their texts and are able to analyse how language and structure are manipulated to shape the meanings of a text.
23. Standards are well above average in mathematics, where, in Year 13, calculus is extended to include trigonometric functions. Students also study the elements of decision making using critical path analysis in the discrete mathematics module. The highest attaining students also study further mathematics.
24. Attainment is well above the national average in biology, because of good teaching, and students achieve very well. Students in Year 13 show very high quality of work in their files; the work is typically well organised and contains scientific knowledge of a high standard. All students achieve well in design and technology and attainment is above average overall. The strength of the students' work lies in the completion of very good quality project work. Many students put in extra hours, such is their commitment to the course. The quality of the created artefacts was of very good standard, the best being made from timber. In physical education, the students currently in Year 13 are achieving well and attaining above average standards. Students are able to engage in productive debates about a range of subject related topics, including the commercialism of sport, as well as excelling in practical work.
25. In geography, attainment is above the national average. Achievement by the end of Year 13 is good. Because of the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and the very interesting way this is conveyed, students learn and achieve well. Year 13 students showed an excellent understanding of the principles involved in all aspects of the subject, as they did in history, where attainment is also well above average and achievement good. In German, there are too few candidates to make national comparisons valid, but progress is good overall and students achieve well.
26. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology standards in the Sixth Form are above average. In general, Key Skills are areas of strength, but in the case of information and communication technology this is mainly because the students have good access to equipment at home. Provision in school is not strong. The small numbers of pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress, as do the gifted and talented and those for whom English is an additional language.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Students in the Sixth Form enjoy school and have very good attitudes to work.
- Attendance is in line with the national average.
- Pupils form good relationships with other pupils and adults, overall.
- They show respect for the feelings and opinions of others

Areas for development

- A small minority of pupils has unsatisfactory attitudes to school and is sometimes disruptive.

27. Pupils' attitudes to school and work are variable, but satisfactory overall. The attitudes of the large majority of pupils in lessons are good and sometimes very good. The attitudes of a small minority of pupils are unsatisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school and want to learn. They concentrate in class, listen attentively to their teachers, and respond well, especially in lessons where the work is interesting and the teaching good. They particularly enjoy practical activities such as design and technology, art and design and physical education. Some pupils can be quiet and reluctant to take an active part in lessons, but generally they participate well, asking and answering questions and joining in discussions. In a Year 11 English lesson, pupils studying 'An Inspector Calls' held a mature discussion on dreams, which increased their understanding.
28. The behaviour of pupils in the school is satisfactory overall. A high proportion of parents raised concerns about behaviour in school and the inspection found that, although behaviour is good or very good in the majority of lessons, there is a small, but significant, number in which unsatisfactory or poor behaviour adversely affects learning. In lessons where teaching is interesting and staff set clear expectations, pupils' behaviour is good and, on occasions, exemplary. In other lessons, less than ten per cent of the total observed, the behaviour of small numbers of pupils can be disruptive. Some teachers cope well and the flow of lessons is not seriously disrupted, but in other lessons this has an adverse effect both on the learning of the pupils themselves and the whole class. Around the school most pupils behave well, although there are incidents of pushing in confined spaces during movement between lessons. Last year, 50 pupils were involved in 126 fixed-term exclusions and five were permanently excluded. This figure is high and represents a significant increase since the previous inspection, reflecting the changes in the nature of the pupils admitted since then. Exclusion is only used for the most serious misbehaviour and the school works hard to stop it recurring.
29. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and their teachers are good across the school, despite the number of staff changes. There are very occasional incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour, but pupils reported that these are dealt with promptly when brought to the staff's attention. In most lessons, pupils settle to work quickly and work well independently in pairs or in small groups. They co-operate and work together and this helps them make progress in their learning. They listen to others' views showing respect for the feelings, values, and beliefs of others, as was illustrated in all religious education lessons. In these, pupils considered the traditions and beliefs of a range of different cultures with both interest and respect. Whilst most pupils treat each other, adults and the facilities respectfully, a small minority does not. Most pupils are aware of the impact that their actions can have on others, but a small minority does not appreciate that their disruptive behaviour in class can have an impact on the right of others to learn.
30. Pupils' personal development is good. The vast majority gain in maturity and confidence as they move through the school, responding well to the opportunities the school offers. Most pupils act as guides during parents' evenings and a number of Year 10 pupils have become mentors attached to Year 7 tutor groups, successfully helping these younger pupils to settle into school. Elected representatives for each tutor group, serving on both year group councils and the School Council, are developing an understanding of the issues involved in improving the school facilities.
31. Levels of attendance are satisfactory: broadly in line with the national average. They have generally remained stable since the previous inspection. There are no significant differences between groups of pupils. Variations occur between the different year groups and classes within the same year group. Year 11 has the highest level of attendance and Year 10 the lowest. Punctuality is satisfactory, although small numbers of pupils regularly arrive late for school.

Sixth form

32. Students in the sixth form enjoy school and have very good attitudes to learning. This is having a positive effect on the standards they achieve. They appreciate the opportunities available to them and are keen to learn. They are very well motivated and responsive to the good teaching and interesting work that they are given. In lessons, they listen attentively and work with interest and enthusiasm. They actively participate in lessons and not only answer but also ask questions, contributing ideas that challenge and extend their knowledge and understanding. Almost all show independence and excellent collaborative learning skills, working well together, supporting each other and sharing ideas.

33. Sixth form students enjoy good relationships with each other and with their teachers. They have a genuine respect for the views and beliefs of others as was illustrated in a number of lessons. During their time in the sixth form, students mature and grow in confidence in response to the good opportunities for them to take responsibility and use their initiative. Examples include the peer mentoring scheme, becoming prefects and accompanying Year 7 pupils to Cuffley Camp. They make a valuable contribution to others, both in school and in the local community through the programme of community service. They organise social and fund-raising events and lead the school council, meeting every two weeks with the headteacher. House captains organise inter-house events that include the annual house concert, with scripts written by pupils in Year 12.
34. Attendance is satisfactory, including that of pupils attending lessons in the consortium. Students are given responsibility for self-registering when they arrive in school and they do this diligently. Most students complete the courses they start.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall in the main school and very good in the Sixth Form.
- Examples of very good teaching were observed in almost all subjects, but especially in history, physical education and art.
- Pupils learn well, because they are interested and teachers have good knowledge of their subjects.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the last report.

Areas for development

- In a few cases, class control is unsatisfactory.

35. Teaching is good, overall. This leads to most pupils achieving well, because they make good progress, are interested in their studies and develop good learning skills. There is a small minority of pupils whose attitudes to education are unsatisfactory and this leads to unsatisfactory learning. Across all the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better in the very large majority. Only eleven unsatisfactory lessons were observed out of a total of almost 200. Just under a third of the teaching observed in the school was very good or excellent, with good teaching in just over a third of lessons.

The teaching of pupils aged 11 to 16

36. Teaching is good overall. In the lessons observed, it was unsatisfactory in only one lesson in every 14, with very good or excellent teaching in one in five lessons. Teachers' good subject knowledge and good management of lessons are key strengths of the good and better lessons. These lessons are brisk and well focused on clear learning objectives, with high expectations of pupils' work rates and conduct. Pupils develop good learning skills because of such teaching and make good progress. However, in a minority of lessons, the unsatisfactory attitudes of a minority of pupils cause problems for teachers if they do not motivate them well. In these lessons, pupils do not always work hard enough to make the expected progress. Teaching has improved significantly since the last report, when it was reported that in one in six lessons teaching was less than satisfactory, and that some of the teaching was poor. The school has made this a focus of recent professional development, basing some of their training on successful practice outlined in the Key Stage 3 national strategies, and this has led to a greater consistency of good practice through the school as a whole.
37. Most teachers plan their lessons effectively to take account of the varied needs of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and the few pupils for whom English is an additional language. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory across the school. Most pupils have sufficient numeracy skills to cope with the demands of subjects up to Year 11. Literacy is taught well in English. In many other subjects, teachers show a growing awareness of the need to reinforce and develop literacy skills, including the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary. However, not all teachers are sufficiently aware of their responsibility to assist pupils to become more literate. Homework is set regularly by most teachers and extends the opportunities for study provided in class. There needs to be more monitoring of homework, however, to ensure that it is set consistently. The pupils were concerned that teachers do not always set homework on the day that is expected, resulting in them having little homework one day and too much another.

38. Examples of very good teaching were observed in many subject areas, including geography, history, design and technology, religious education, art, English, mathematics and physical education. Such lessons are very well prepared to offer an interesting and appropriate range of activities to interest and motivate pupils. A good beginning to the lesson introduces the work in an exciting way and makes expectations clear. The result is that pupils know what is expected of them and are enthusiastic. The teachers' high expectations, very good relationships and management of pupils mean that no time is wasted and pupils respond very well to the work that is set. The work is reviewed towards the end of the lesson to consolidate learning. In an English lesson with low attaining Year 8 pupils, for example, there was a good introduction that made it clear what they were to do and captured their interest. Very good relationships and good control ensured that the pupils listened and learnt from the teacher, showing interest in the challenges presented by their work on recognising the differences between fact and opinion. The teacher used humour well and insisted on good behaviour, so that pupils who were so keen to answer that they called out learned to put up their hands as the lesson went on. The concepts were difficult for the pupils to master, but all tried hard and most worked hard because the teacher made the lesson relevant and interesting to them, with a varied and involving range of activities. By the end of the lesson, many were able to contribute well to the plenary session. They could quote opinions from the newspaper article that they were studying and explain why were they were not facts - showing a depth of understanding that was far beyond their reading ability at the start of the lesson.
39. The pupils in a Year 8 history class, studying the Renaissance, understood the lesson objectives well, because the teacher began the lesson with a very clear introduction. The teacher's good knowledge of the subject ensured that they were able to study the period in depth and her explanations were very clear, helping the children to understand and learn. The lesson was well paced so that they made good progress. The resources were well chosen and helpful. The teacher was aware of individual needs and gave good support to those pupils who needed it. As a result, all of the pupils achieved well, including those with special educational needs.
40. In the lessons that were less than satisfactory, this was usually because the management of behaviour was poor. Relationships - good in the large majority of lessons - were unsatisfactory and so the pupils were unwilling to listen to the teacher. In a Year 8 lesson in science, for example, the pupils did not listen well to the instructions or explanations and this slowed down their learning because information had to be repeated. The need for the teacher to reprimand pupils who were not behaving appropriately further slowed the lesson. The teacher had not planned the lesson well and the activities were not presented in a way that would interest or involve the pupils. Some of the class were bored or uninterested as a result. In a mathematics lesson for a Year 9 class, poor planning led to pupils losing interest and misbehaving. The teacher's examples were far from clear and they did not understand the purpose of the exercise they were set. They soon lost interest and very little was achieved. The teacher was not able to re-establish discipline in the class.
41. Across the curriculum, teaching of classes in Years 7 to 11 is at least satisfactory in all subjects, except music, where no specialist music teacher was available in the inspection week. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory and often good, with thorough coverage of the subject. Good subject knowledge leads to good teaching in English. In science teaching is satisfactory - sometimes good - for Years 7 to 9 as teachers develop the basic knowledge needed by pupils, and satisfactory, with examples of good teaching, in Years 10 and 11 as they extend them further. The teachers of design and technology manage classes skilfully and teaching is good overall for Years 7 to 9, though the teaching of resistant materials is not as strong as the other aspects of the subject. It is very good in all aspects to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good in information and communication technology. Good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject lead to good teaching in geography and religious education; very good teaching in history and physical education. Physical education teachers give good attention to skills development and make effective use of peer evaluation to help pupils to improve their expertise. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages. There are many examples of good teaching, but some instances of unsatisfactory teaching when teachers struggle to motivate reluctant learners in Years 10 and 11, some of whom have had a history of many changes of teacher.
42. There are many instances of very good teaching in art. The art teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm ensure that their pupils learn well. It was not possible to observe any lessons in music taken by music specialist teachers, because of staffing difficulties. These problems are affecting standards in the subject.

43. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes is good. The teaching for the small groups of pupils who are withdrawn at Years 7 to 9 is good. The teaching assistants support pupils well and their help is valued by the teachers. A number of departments make specialist provision for the gifted and talented. In music, there is good provision for instrumental teaching to pupils who are musically gifted. In physical education, gifted athletes are used to demonstrate their skills to their peers and set greater challenges in class on occasion, as well as being encouraged to join the many school teams. In mathematics, the setting allows the talented mathematicians to be entered for the higher level GCSE examinations. In modern foreign languages, there are master classes for the highest attainers. Provision is good overall. The progress of the pupils for whom English is an additional language is good because of the good provision. Although there are not, currently, any at an early stage of acquiring English, their progress is monitored carefully and they are given additional support whenever it is necessary.
44. The quality of teaching for students with special educational needs by specialist teachers is consistently good with some very good teaching being observed. These teachers are well trained and have a very clear understanding of how to teach students with learning difficulties.
45. Where information and communication technology is used in lessons, teachers use it well to improve learning and to motivate their pupils. Not all teachers have easy access to computers and the school needs to improve further the amount of information and communication technology equipment, especially to departments such as music that are some distance from information and communication technology suites. Overall, however, there has been a significant improvement in the use of information and communication technology and in the overall quality of teaching since the last report.

Sixth form

46. The very good quality of teaching is a significant factor in the good progress that pupils make. In the Sixth Form, teaching was good or better in almost all of the lessons observed. Half were very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the Sixth Form. The students are mature and responsible learners as a result of the generally very good provision. The best teaching is helping students to develop independent learning and research skills.
47. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well, progressively building students' knowledge, skills and confidence. Expectations are high. In almost all lessons, students are challenged and expected to make significant gains in learning. Most teachers structure the work and offer individual support and guidance so as to ensure that students make progress in their learning. There is a good pace to the teaching, which ensures that students work hard and cover considerable amounts in each session. All teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they are teaching, and this enthusiasm motivates and interests their students. This increases their commitment, ensures their concentration and encourages them to work hard. A history lesson with Year 13 students was an example of very good teaching. They were studying the decline of Spain between 1598 and 1665. The teacher explained the aims of the lesson and gave very clear instructions and explanations in the class throughout. This was particularly helpful to the student with a hearing disability, who was able to lip read throughout and made very good progress because of the teacher's care for individual needs. The work was carefully adjusted to meet the learning needs of the highest and lowest attainers in the class, the teacher using assessment well to monitor their progress. As a result, the learners grew in confidence, achieving well in the lesson and they had made very good progress over time. Many other examples were seen of very good and excellent teaching across almost all subjects.
48. Nine subjects were inspected in detail. Others were sampled. In the focus subjects, the quality of teaching was very good in history, English, physical education, economics, mathematics, design and technology, geography and modern foreign languages. Teaching was good in biology. Teaching was also very good overall in the sampled lessons in German, English literature, physics, art, general studies, key skills, business, information and communication technology and religious education.

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

Strengths

- The Sixth Form curriculum offers a very wide choice of courses
- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is broad and balanced
- The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Areas for development

- The coverage of information and communication technology is inconsistent for pupils in Years 7 to 9
- There is insufficient coverage of religious education in Year 13

49. Senior staff have a very good overview of the curriculum. They have looked ahead to 2005 and drawn up a proposal that takes account of new guidance and the changes in numbers in the school.
50. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and all subjects except for information and communication technology are taught in appropriate depth. The time for information and communication technology is too short for teachers to cover what is expected. In Year 7, pupils are taught in mixed ability groups, except in mathematics, where ability grouping has recently been introduced. In Years 8 and 9, pupils are taught in two populations, but uneven numbers means that in one population there are four groups and in the other, three. Departments manage the difficulties that this causes effectively.
51. The national initiative for teaching and learning for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been introduced successfully. The teaching of literacy is now established across the curriculum and the strategy for numeracy has just been put in place. Provision for these two areas is satisfactory. All members of staff have had training in teaching and learning styles and many teachers are beginning to use this knowledge in their teaching.
52. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is changing to reflect new guidance: more vocational courses have been introduced and continue to be developed. It is satisfactory, being generally broad and balanced. The school has worked with other schools and the college in a consortium for some time for post-16 students, and this arrangement has been extended to include 14 to 16 years olds. The work related programme has been extended so that pupils who need a different type of education can be catered for. Time for science is lower than that usually found, but this is not affecting standards in any significant way.
53. Staff rightly pride themselves on the care they take to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum and other activities. 'Compass', the school's new School Action provision, offers particularly good provision for pupils who have personal difficulties, helping them to adjust before returning to the main school. A summer school was held for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented and all departments have identified such pupils. The provision for these pupils is satisfactory, as faculties are still developing methods to ensure that these pupils achieve as well as they ought. Although there are currently no pupils who are at early stages of learning English, the provision is very good, with systems to identify their language needs and support across the school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, they are supported well and all have education plans. All teachers have copies of the plan for pupils they teach. Some take more account of it than others, and rightly use the plan as a basis for modifying the work to take accounts of the needs of the pupils.
54. Extra-curricular activities are good. There is a range of sporting and arts activities, as well as clubs such as car mechanics and video. The physical education department offers particularly good provision. Faculties run a wide range of activities, such as visits to places of educational interest to extend learning. They also encourage pupils to attend revision classes prior to taking examinations, particularly if they are falling behind.
55. The provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall. A comprehensive programme has been put together that is well supported by lesson plans. Citizenship has been included, as well as sex and drugs education. All tutors have been trained in using the programme. However, teaching the programme is inconsistent. Although many teach it well,

some tutors are less confident than others and some struggle to manage their groups. In these groups, the programme is not supporting the personal development of the pupils. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

56. Careers education is good and is well supported by outside agencies. It starts in Year 7 through personal, social, health and citizenship education and runs through to Year 13. Pupils undertake work experience in Year 11. Parents are invited to join their children in discussion with tutors and careers staff about their future choices in Years 9, 10 and 11. There is additional, good 'transition guidance' from a team of professional advisers to help pupils in Years 9 and 11 who need further support. Discussions are held with pupils in Year 9 about their option choices and each pupil has an individual interview in Year 11.
57. Links with the community are satisfactory. The school receives sponsorship from a small number of companies; one has supported the excellence awards that have recently been introduced. There are strong links with a local special school and pupils regularly visit to put on events and to support in school. Links with other schools are satisfactory overall, although the consortium is now playing an increasing role in this as it moves to a 14 to 19 consortium.
58. The last inspection found that provision for information and communication technology in Years 9 and 10 was unsatisfactory. This has been improved, although there is not enough consistency in pupils' experiences of information and communication technology and more needs to be done to ensure that there is an equal entitlement to all.
59. The provision for the majority of students with special educational needs is good. Of particular note, is the 'catch-up' programme, which is organised by the learning support department, to help students with learning difficulties who are new to the school in Year 7. The units of work in English are very well thought out and carefully structured to teach key skills. In mainstream classes, some good examples of planning for different groups of students were seen in many subject areas, such as English, mathematics, history, geography and design and technology. The use of information and communication technology to support students' learning and, for some students, as an aid to communication, is an area that requires further development.

Sixth Form

60. Students have a very good choice of subjects through the consortium and can opt to take A, AS and GNVQ courses at different levels. Students in Year 12 who are doing less than four AS also take key skills. The provision for key skills has been reviewed as it was felt to be ineffective. Students now choose to take one or more, guided by their tutor. Attendance on these courses is often low as students choose to do other work related to their AS courses. Students also take general studies. All students in Year 12 take religious education, but in Year 13, only those doing an examination take the subject, although there is some provision through the enhancement programme. In Year 13 therefore, statutory requirements are not met, because the time allocation is not sufficient to cover the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
61. All students attend an enhancement programme on one morning a week, including general studies. The quality of many of these lessons is high; one inspector commented it was at degree level. The provision includes ethics, German and French culture, some religious education and a design course. Digital photography has also been offered. All students are obliged to undertake some activity in the community through the Stanborough Community Involvement programme. Guest speakers are invited in frequently, such as the local MP and a lecturer from the local university. Careers guidance is good, students are pleased with the support they receive.
62. As in the main school, students are given full access to courses and other activities. Physically challenged students are welcome and are supported effectively. Those with other special educational needs receive good support.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Strengths

- The provision for the social, moral and cultural development of pupils is good.
- Provision has improved since the previous report.

Areas for development

- There is not a daily act of collective worship for all and the lack of daily time for reflection is adversely affecting the spiritual provision.
63. Overall the school makes good provision for the personal development of its pupils.
64. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, although the school does not observe a daily act of worship or specifically plan for times of quiet reflection for its pupils, either in assemblies or during tutorial time. Religious education makes a very good contribution to spirituality within the curriculum. In key lessons, for example, pupils are helped to think about the meaning and purpose of life. In history, pupils are taught to appreciate the achievements of past times. The display in response to Holocaust day illustrates that in history pupils have been given the opportunity to reflect on issues of race, culture and discrimination. In English, the study of poetry encourages reflection and in art there are many moments of spirituality as the classes consider the work of great artists and craft workers.
65. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Assemblies seen during the inspection, although not always religious, contained moral messages. The Stanborough Code of Conduct is an appropriate moral code that encourages pupils to respect and value others. The school's four principles underlie all of its work: high expectations, quality learning, mutual respect and success for all. Several subjects, such as English, geography and history, encourage pupils to examine moral issues. For example, in history pupils are helped to recognise that actions have consequences by considering the results of past events and decisions. Religious education encourages pupils to reflect on moral issues in world religions, as well as to consider life after death and the problems of suffering.
66. The provision for pupils' social development is good. In many lessons they are encouraged to work in pairs or small groups and practise the skills of teamwork. This was particularly evident in physical education, where pupils work very well together and show their appreciation of each other's contributions. The school council, recently re-instituted, and the year group councils are beginning to play an important role in school communications and provide good vehicles for social development as pupils take responsibility for others and elect their representatives.
67. The provision for cultural development is good. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about their own culture through trips, field-work and a range of educational visits. Through the study of art, literature and music pupils develop an understanding of their own cultural heritage. Some departments explore cultures from across the world. For example, in geography pupils look at life in Brazil, Japan and Italy. Similarly, the work done in religious education, where they learn about the major celebrations and traditions of other faiths, helps to prepare them for life in a multicultural society.

Sixth Form

68. Sixth form students benefit greatly from the very good provision to support their social development.
69. The provision for spiritual development is good, although a daily act of worship is not provided. Frequent opportunities are provided for students to reflect on their own and other's feelings. 'Success in learning' promotes the celebration of success and encourages pupils' motivation. They listen to others and show respect for their ideas and views. They develop spiritual awareness by reflecting on the emotions of characters and the consequences of their actions in the literature they study.
70. Provision for sixth form students' social development is good. Social and collaborative skills are encouraged in the very many subjects where group or team-work is a feature, such as science and physical education. In history, students are encouraged to consider how different societies were organised and consider different political structures. They have opportunities to develop the social aspects of school life, organising social and fund raising activities. Sixth form students are encouraged to help those younger or less successful than themselves. As prefects assigned to pupils in Year 7, they help them settle into school life, as well as accompanying them to school camp.

71. Opportunities for cultural development are good. A range of activities, including theatre visits and field study visits, enriches their learning. There are many opportunities for students to become aware of their own society and culture, as well as other major world cultures, through opportunities for fieldwork and a wide range of educational visits and travel, especially the visit to Eastern Europe organised for students in Year 12.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good
- The support and guidance for Sixth Form students are good.
- Assessment in the Sixth Form is good.
- The quality of advice for Sixth Formers on future courses and careers is very good.

Areas for development

- The procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are inconsistent.
- The procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in Years 7 to 11 are inconsistent.

72. Good arrangements exist to ensure pupils' welfare health and safety. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. The deputy headteacher, designated as the person responsible, is aware of the new local authority guidelines. There is a health and safety policy and it is reviewed annually. Frequent informal checks of the site and premises take place and each year a more formal check is carried out. Appropriate action is taken where needed and any issues arising are recorded. Equipment is checked annually and departmental risk assessments take place. Arrangements for day-to-day first aid and care for pupils who are unwell are in place. Members of staff are qualified to provide first-aid, but they are few in number for such a large school. There is good support for children in public care.
73. Support for pupils' personal development is good. Tutors play a central role in the pastoral structure and, if possible, move up through the school with their tutor groups. Whilst some tutors know their pupils well, the frequent changes in staff have inevitably reduced their knowledge of individual pupils. The head of Year 7 helps pupils to settle smoothly in to the new school. A different head of year takes over in Year 8, remaining with pupils as they move through the rest of the school. Year heads have overall responsibility for their year group. Any issues or concerns about pupils are shared with tutors at regular year group meetings and frequent informal discussions. 'Compass' provides valuable individual support for identified pupils who are having difficulties in fulfilling the school's expectations and whose behaviour may lead to exclusion. A counsellor, the school nurse and the 'cellar project' provide additional help and support if necessary. Pupils' achievements are recognised and rewarded in a number of ways, including presentation ceremonies in the headteacher's office and celebration assemblies. Parents are kept informed of their children's successes through notes in the personal organiser.
74. Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour are satisfactory, but their implementation is variable and unsatisfactory overall. The school has developed a whole-school approach to managing and improving behaviour. The behaviour policy provides staff with strategies for managing behaviour. It includes clearly defined limits of unacceptable behaviour and a structure of suitable rewards and sanctions to use. Class teachers have all been given training and written guidance on how to promote good behaviour and how unacceptable behaviour should be dealt with, but not all follow the guidance consistently and the school code is not precise enough. Teachers and faculties are accepting different levels of conduct and imposing sanctions with greater or lesser assiduity. These inconsistencies are affecting standards. The large majority of teachers manage behaviour well, while others have considerable difficulty managing pupils in their lessons, especially those pupils with particularly challenging behaviour. Pupils spoke of occasional bullying. The evidence is that this is rare. The school has a clear anti-bullying statement and pupils confirmed that any incidents are dealt with appropriately.
75. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The school has procedures to monitor attendance and follow up unexplained absence and the school is routinely using data to identify or target all the pupils with attendance below 90 per cent and those who have persistent problems in arriving punctually for school. The school works closely with the education welfare officer to follow up the most serious cases. The recently introduced system of daily 'truancy calls' is an attempt to improve unauthorised absence and punctuality and it is

already having a positive effect. The problem of late arrivals is not being tackled sufficiently rigorously. Pupils persistently arriving late are being identified, but the system of detentions is not proving an effective deterrent. Good attendance is recognised and rewarded each term.

Assessment

76. The monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is satisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last report, when it was a significant weakness, but this is still one of the areas of the school's work that has been identified by the leadership team for improvement. The arrangements for supporting pupils within tutor groups are effective. Tutors and heads of year get to know the pupils very well. The annual, full report to parents on their child's work is long and detailed, the result of much work by teachers. Parents value it and it gives them useful information about their children's strengths and weaknesses and the areas they have covered in their courses. It would be useful for them to learn in advance of the topics that are to be covered, so that they could, if they wish, provide their children with additional support and resources. The quality of the comments is variable. Some teachers give good advice on how their pupils could improve their work in future, but others restrict themselves to general comments on the children's behaviour and attitudes.
77. Assessment information is gathered well, but it is not being used consistently to set appropriate work for pupils in some subject areas. The tracking and targeting arrangements are now in place to help to identify and record good effort and achievement, but not all departments are implementing these fully. It is done well, however, in history, geography, mathematics and science.
78. Across the school, by sharing information with pupils and their parents, teachers reinforce the parents' partnership with the school, and pupils' work is often recognised and praised. This is done termly for effort and effort grades are shared with parents and pupils. However, this has not yet been extended to include pupils' targets and how well they are in line to meet or exceed them. Teachers have target data for all their pupils, but a few do not understand it fully or share it. The targets are generally appropriate, but in some cases they are unrealistic and the systems for target setting are now under review. For those pupils in test or examination years, helpful information is made available. In Year 11, assessment data is used for the mentoring programme and to set targets for GCSE performance. These levels are shared with parents prior to the parents' evening. Similarly, target grades are set in Year 9 and used at the parents' evening to help parents to understand the progress that their children are making and where they can support them further. This good practice needs to be extended to all year groups in order to build a climate in which achievement is universally recognised and valued. The system of rewards points, and the rewards they bring, are not used consistently enough to support assessment systems and the positive attitudes that the good use of assessment data can develop.
79. Marking is generally carried out regularly and is useful to help pupils to improve their work. The quality of written work in a number of subjects, such as geography and history, is high, because coursework is well planned and assessed. This improves the presentation of pupils' work very effectively. Very good advice to pupils on how to improve their work, based upon assessment, is a strength in these subjects and also in many English classes. However, there is no unified assessment system. Each department grades in its own way, with some using helpful comments that provide constructive criticism and targets for future work - but not all. There is a need now for more consistency across the school.
80. The identification and assessment procedures for students with special educational needs are good and fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. The school liaises closely with primary schools, resulting in good transfer arrangements for students moving to Stanborough. Individual Education Plans are very good, the targets are precise and they are used effectively to measure progress in reviews. The students are fully involved in the assessment of their learning; for example, they contribute to reviews by writing about how they feel that they have improved and areas where they require further help and support. Effective help is received from a range of outside agencies such as the school advisory and psychological services. All teachers have copies of the plan for pupils they teach. Most take account of these plans and use them as a basis for modifying the work to take accounts of the needs of the pupils.

Sixth form

81. Sixth form students receive good guidance and support on both personal and educational matters. Induction arrangements are good with a well-planned programme on choice of sixth form courses beginning in Year 11. This enables students to feel confident in their new learning environment. Individual mentoring sessions ensure regular contact between tutors and students allowing time for both discussion and monitoring. Although some groups have experienced considerable changes of tutor during their time in the sixth form, the head of sixth form knows the pupils well and is freely available to provide any support and guidance needed by the students. They receive good information about choosing courses available to them for future study in higher education.
82. Formal systems are used to monitor attendance. These are satisfactory, although they are not as effective as the ones used in the rest of the school. Because of the consortium arrangements, it is not practicable for the Sixth Form to have a computerised system of registration.
83. Reports to parents are good. Reports and annual and interim statements are sent to parents. They find them helpful, and the detail in them is sufficient to give good guidance to students on how to improve further in post-16 subjects. The use of assessment data to monitor the progress of students and the effectiveness of Sixth Form teaching is good and it makes a positive contribution to the progress that students make. Information on entry scores, GCSE results and cognitive ability tests are assembled for all students and both the students and the teachers know the predicted grades. Their progress towards them is monitored regularly and a student review is applied to students who are perceived to be under-performing. The use of the assessment data is consistent across departments and is good overall.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- Most parents are happy with the work that the school is doing for their children.
- There is some good information to keep parents aware of what the school is doing.
- Reports are detailed and parents value them.

Areas for development

- Homework is not regular enough for all parents to support their children's work at home as much as they would like.

84. The large majority of parents hold positive views of important aspects of the school's work. They are particularly pleased with the school's expectations of their children to work hard to achieve their best and the ways that the school develops in them a sense of maturity and responsibility. They consider the school to be well led and managed, feel their children enjoy school, and are making good progress. In contrast, a significant number of parents who completed the questionnaire expressed concerns about some areas of school life. Over a third of parents who completed the questionnaire were unhappy with behaviour in some classes. Many parents did not feel the school works closely with them, expressed concerns about the levels and consistency of homework, and feel they are not well informed about progress. Inspection evidence supports the positive views expressed by parents and found some confirmation of their concerns.
85. Links with parents are satisfactory. Parents of pupils in Year 7 are invited to a meeting before their children start in school and a subsequent meeting, where they can discuss how their children are settling into school, after the first term. There are a few activities to encourage parents to work more closely with the school. They are welcome to attend some events, for example to view the advanced level art exhibition. The personal (home/school) organiser is the main link with parents. It is used by staff to communicate with parents about any particular causes for concern as well as communicating any commendations. Where there are more serious issues, personal contact is made. At times when their children make choices, the school arranges information evenings to ensure that parents are fully aware of the options available. A supportive Friends Association organises events and raises funds for the school's use.
86. The information provided for parents' is satisfactory, with some good aspects – such as the weekly newsletter, 'The Stanborough Times', which keeps them regularly informed about school matters, forthcoming events and diary dates. The prospectus contains basic information about

the school and is supplemented by a helpful induction booklet for parents of pupils in Year 7. Parents are kept suitably informed of their children's progress. Each term they receive either an individual effort report or a full written report on individual subjects. Although satisfactory, the information about progress in the skills of a subject is variable, as has already been mentioned. Each year group holds an annual consultation meeting, where parents can meet individual subject teachers to discuss progress. In addition, a system of learning review days has begun. This enables parents to meet tutors, but has not yet been introduced in all year groups. The school works hard and makes every effort to ensure that the parents of students with special educational needs are fully involved in the reviews of Individual Education Plans, transition and annual reviews of statements. Records and letters from parents indicate that they are pleased with the quality of support and care for identified students with special educational needs.

87. The involvement of parents with the school has a satisfactory impact on their children's learning overall. There are generally good levels of attendance at consultation evenings. Parents are interested in the work their children do at home. A satisfactory amount of homework is set overall, but there is inconsistency in the amount from departments and the regularity. The personal organiser provides parents with a timetable of the work pupils are expected to receive each week. Many parents ensure homework is completed and check and sign the weekly homework records in pupils' personal organisers.

Sixth form

88. Sixth form students who completed the questionnaire expressed mainly positive views about the school. Almost all would recommend the Sixth Form at Stanborough to other, younger pupils and both enjoy and value their time at school. A small minority expressed concerns about some aspects of their life as sixth formers. They do not feel they are sufficiently informed about what they should do in the sixth form or after they leave school. They do not feel they are kept sufficiently well informed about their progress. In discussions with inspectors, however, they spoke very positively about their life in the sixth form, especially the support and care given by staff and the inspection supported these views.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The leadership of the school by the headteacher and the executive team.
- The support of the governing body.
- Leadership in a number of departments, including English, science, physical education, history, geography, design and technology, religious education, art and information and communication technology.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Performance management, the induction of teachers and professional development.

Areas for development

- Monitoring of teaching and learning in some departments.

89. The headteacher has provided very good leadership to guide the school through the difficulties of the recent amalgamation of two schools and her experience and wisdom have been key factors in ensuring that the school is still highly regarded in the local area and considerably oversubscribed - with over 600 applications for the 180 places. Supported by the other senior managers, she provides clear direction for the work of the school. Her insistence that the enlarged school should be based on the old grammar school site has proved to be well-founded. Although there are still signs that not all pupils have adapted well to the ethos and expectations of Stanborough, the building blocks have been firmly established of an effective comprehensive school. Her skills have been recognised by the local education authority, who persuaded the governing body to release her for two terms to support a local school that was failing to provide its pupils with a satisfactory level of education. The commitment of the senior managers to the education and development of all adults who work in the school has been further recognised by the recent Investor In People Award. The parents who responded to the OFSTED questionnaire and attended the inspectors' meeting with parents were very positive in their views of the leadership of the school.

90. The work of the school is monitored effectively and this has led to remedial action being taken in a number of areas. In science, for example, it was recognised that there had been disappointing results in tests and examinations. Monitoring established that there were weaknesses in teaching and learning. The department was involved in a series of initiatives to develop teaching styles and to improve accommodation and resources. The science area is now one of the best features of the school, with attractive new laboratories that are valued by the pupils. The inspection found much good teaching in science and examination results are improving. There was an improvement in results in the national tests for 14 year olds (Year 9) in 2002, with 73 per cent (an increase from 65 per cent in 2001) of the pupils gaining level 5 or better, compared with 66 per cent nationally.
91. The school improvement plans are detailed and have been implemented effectively. Most of the areas that have been identified by the inspection team as key areas for further development have already been identified by the school. Much of the development has been concentrated, correctly, on the raising of attainment, improvements in leadership, the professional development of teachers and the further development of teaching styles. The results are very positive, as can be shown in the significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
92. The work of the middle and some senior managers is variable, but is satisfactory overall. Most provide very good or even excellent leadership and management of their teams of teachers or of whole-school responsibilities. The humanities faculty is led and managed very well indeed, for example, and the quality of provision and the achievement of pupils are high as a result. Staff absences and the difficulties that the school is experiencing in recruiting new teachers are adversely affecting the management of some departments and pastoral areas, however. For example, the music department is being managed on a temporary basis by a part-time teacher and, apart from this part-time teacher, music is taught by non-specialists.
93. Most management systems in the school operate effectively. The procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory, for example, and those linked to performance management are good. There is good management of educational inclusion. Through the 'Compass' provision and the school's overall ethos for learning, all are given equal opportunity to succeed. There is very good provision for pupils and adults with physical disabilities, for example, and the curriculum is designed to offer a good range of courses to pupils who would not benefit from a very academic curriculum. The school's rejection of racial abuse or bullying has led to good relationships between all pupils. However, there are deficiencies in the management of behaviour across the school and these are allowing some classes to be disrupted. Small groups of pupils are behaving inappropriately in lessons. Where the teacher does not manage behaviour well, this is affecting the education of other pupils. There are school systems for monitoring behaviour and records are kept of incidents and the action taken. The usefulness and accuracy of these records vary according to the efficiency of the teacher and faculty in recording and reporting incidents. Teachers are not consistent in the action they take. The Stanborough code of conduct sets out guidelines for what is acceptable in school and what types of behaviour should be regarded as unacceptable. The response to poor behaviour is, initially, action from the class teacher and, if this fails, faculty action is taken. In practice, teachers are not using a consistent series of sanctions and the ability of faculties to support teachers facing difficult classes is very variable.
94. The governing body is effective and is well equipped to monitor the work of the school and its finances. Governors visit the school regularly. There is a governor day every month when a programme of visits to lessons is arranged. They join in the meetings arranged for staff and governors to prepare the school improvement plan and make valuable contributions. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They represent a wide range of professional backgrounds and their wisdom is valued by the senior managers of the school.
95. New technology is used satisfactorily, both to assist in the administration of the school and to help in teaching. New developments are planned to make it even more effective, as more equipment becomes available. The administrative and clerical staff and the technicians support the teachers well to ensure that they can concentrate on their primary roles. The caretaking and cleaning staff work effectively to ensure that the school buildings, some of which are of poor quality, are as clean and tidy as possible.

96. The management of students with special educational needs is very good. The staff in the learning support department work cohesively as a team and know the students extremely well. The co-ordinator has ensured that all members of staff in the school have received training for the new Code of Practice. The policy has been updated to comply with the new Code of Practice and is in draft form, awaiting the approval of the governing body. Pupil records are thorough and are well kept. Statutory requirements, for students with a statement of special educational need, are fully met. The funding received is well spent, the majority of the money being used to fund teachers and support staff.
97. The school manages its budget effectively. The budget plan is reviewed each term. Priorities on the school development plan are carefully costed and the source of the funding is carefully documented. Ensuring good value for money is a high priority. A recent audit was satisfactory, raising only minor issues that have been or are being resolved. The cost per pupil is high because of the costs of providing education so close to London and the additional funding that has been provided to cover the school's transition to a larger comprehensive school. Despite this, taking account of the progress that pupils make, their personal development and the quality of teaching, the school gives satisfactory value for money. The large surplus on last year's budget is being used appropriately this year to resource the school, as the transitional funding ends.

Accommodation

98. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, but some parts are in need of decoration, both internally and externally. Some areas of the school have been enhanced by displays that illustrate and support effective learning, but this is not always enough to counter the rather drab accommodation in both classrooms and corridors. The building is spacious, although a few classrooms are small for the number of pupils in classes that use them. This is especially the case for mathematics and information and communication technology. Science and design and technology facilities are very good, as are those for physical education, which benefits from a very well equipped sports hall and extensive outdoor areas. In contrast, the accommodation for music and mathematics is in poor condition and does not provide either a stimulating or welcoming learning environment.
99. The building has been adapted to provide facilities for the physically and neurologically impaired. There is a therapy room and all parts are accessible via a lift and ramps.

Staffing

100. The recruitment of suitably qualified teachers to fully staff the curriculum has presented challenges at a time of national recruitment difficulties. The turnover of teachers has been very high over the last two years, and a priority has been to secure a more stable staff. Staffing difficulties have affected standards in the past, in English, for example, but the department is now fully staffed. In physical education, staffing is very good and all lessons are taught by very well qualified staff. In mathematics, staffing is only just satisfactory. In music staffing is inadequate, with many classes being taught by non-specialist, temporary teachers, despite the best efforts of the school to recruit.
101. There is a good induction system for newly qualified teachers, teachers new to the country as well as for more experienced teachers who join the staff. Professional development is well organised and in-service training suitably linked to the needs of the school and individual teachers.

Resources

102. Overall, resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. In some subjects they are very good, for example history. Shortages exist in information and communication technology, where the number of computers in the school is inadequate to meet the needs of all areas of the curriculum. The music department does not have enough resources to meet curriculum requirements. There is a lack of suitable music to sing and play as well as a lack of tuned percussion. Resources in the library are adequate overall and it is a very attractive space to read and work.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

103. Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are very good overall. The director gives a very effective steer and is supported well by her head of sixth form who is starting to introduce new management structures with the aim of improving the provision even further. Senior members of staff work effectively to ensure that all students have equal access to the provision.
104. Monitoring the quality of provision is the responsibility of heads of faculties and departments, and they do this well. The head of Sixth Form oversees the quality of teaching and monitors the work of staff well, through the very effective involvement of the school's senior managers. The pastoral support systems are managed very well and the Sixth Form students, in response to questions in their questionnaires, indicated how highly they value the advice and guidance they receive from their tutors and how well they were inducted into Sixth Form life. Governors are actively involved in the development of the Sixth Form, and the executive team has a clear vision and strategic plan for the future. The development plan has well thought out priorities and these are carefully costed. All students are provided with equal opportunities, and the curriculum is well managed to provide the closest fit to subject combinations. The head of Sixth Form works very closely with the local consortium co-ordinator, who visits the school regularly and makes a good contribution as part of his role in the strategic development of post-16 education in the local area.
105. The professional development for staff attached to Sixth Form work is very good, especially in the requirements for specific curricular initiatives as courses develop and change.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

106. The overall standard of accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory overall and some aspects are good. The students benefit from the new science laboratories and the excellent facilities in design and technology. There is a large communal area where sixth formers can socialise
107. Sixth form resources are satisfactory and are used well to promote learning. There is however a shortage of computers and this includes very little access to information and communication technology in the pupils' private study area.
108. Teachers' experiences and expertise are well matched to curricular needs and the quality of staffing is good. There have been recent difficulties in recruiting specialists in some areas, for example, business studies and some problems ensuring students in Year 12 have the stability of a permanent tutor. The sixth form is, however, now fully staffed to meet all students' needs. Although there is a small subsidy from the main school budget to the sixth form, there are benefits in the presence of these students on the site, such as their very positive interactions with younger pupils that raise their aspirations and provide them with good role models for personal responsibility and behaviour. The Sixth Form gives very good value for money, because the high of quality of education it provides leads to students achieving well.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

109. This is an improving school. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment further, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, should:

Improve the use of assessment information by:

- using assessment information more consistently and effectively across faculties, giving pupils and their parents regular information about subject target grades and the progress made towards meeting them;
- publicising and rewarding pupils who are on track to meeting their targets, rather than using reward point systems inconsistently to reward effort;
- seeking to create, through these strategies, a culture in which achievement is valued, in order to raise the importance of success at school in the minds of the minority of pupils who at present have poor attitudes to education. (paragraphs 76, 77, 78, 79, 84, 121, 122, 133, 145, 146, 154, 161, 167, 186, 204, 211, 218, 225, 280)

Seek to improve the behaviour and attitudes of the minority of pupils who do not achieve well and disturb the learning of others by

- sharing the best teaching practice so that pupils are equally well interested and motivated in all lessons and
- improving the behaviour management policy so that expectations of pupils' conduct and the sanctions used to correct inappropriate behaviour are more consistent and effective across the school. (paragraphs 27, 28, 35, 40, 74, 84, 93, 144, 145, 159, 165, 191, 209)

Put in place an improved policy for the recruitment and retention of staff, seeking practical support from the local authority. (paragraphs 41, 42, 92, 99, 107, 122, 135, 145, 171, 172, 195, 209, 210). There is a particular need to improve the staffing and provision for music, by seeking to ensure that the staffing, resourcing and teaching are at least satisfactory. (paragraphs 42, 92, 99, 207, 208, 209, 210)

Minor issues

- The provision for information and communication technology does not ensure that all pupils cover the required aspects of the subject in sufficient depth. (paragraphs 8, 45, 50, 58, 101, 134, 148, 154, 165, 179, 186, 189, 202, 217, 225)
- There is not a daily act of collective worship for all. (paragraphs 55, 64, 69)
- Homework is not set regularly or consistently enough. There is a need for more effective monitoring of homework provision. (paragraphs 37, 84, 87)
- Although attendance is satisfactory overall, the school is not sufficiently systematic in its tackling of lateness. (paragraphs 31, 75)

Sixth form

- Meet the statutory requirement to teach religious education to all. (paragraphs 60, 226)

Minor issues

- The need to improve access to information and communication technology resources for Sixth Formers. (paragraphs 101, 106, 231, 245, 256, 266, 271)
- There is not a daily act of collective worship for all. (paragraphs 55, 64, 69)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	157
	Sixth form	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	7	23	53	53	10	1	0
Percentage	5	15	35	35	7	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	18	18	2	0	0	0
Percentage	5	45	45	5	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. [When the total number observed in either the main school or the sixth form is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for [enter Years [] – [] and/or the sixth form here] as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100 in both, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	838	190
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	103	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	153	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	26

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	6.8	School data	1.3
National comparative data	7.8	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	69	80	149

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	32	45	44
	Girls	55	60	65
	Total	87	105	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (64)	71 (70)	73 (65)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (32)	48 (50)	32 (37)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	50	43
	Girls	56	64	62
	Total	90	114	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (68)	75 (66)	70 (64)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (31)	44 (46)	33 (38)
	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	101	71	172

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	41	92	98
	Girls	45	63	67
	Total	86	155	165
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (46)	90 (92)	96 (95)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.9
	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	N/A
	National	N/A

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	41	28	69

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	41	28	69
	Average point score per candidate	21.5	19.1	20.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	41	28	69	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	21.5	19.1	20.5	0	0	0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	0	0	0

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		81.0

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
933	117	5
7	0	0
14	2	0
6	1	0
1	0	0
11	4	0
6	0	0
9	0	0
7	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
22	2	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)	51
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	384

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	0
Key Stage 3	23.4
Key Stage 4	20.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	3537629
Total expenditure	3474377
Expenditure per pupil	3376
Balance brought forward from previous year	263078
Balance carried forward to next year	326330

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	40.87
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	36.48
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
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	1028
Number of questionnaires returned	187

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	62	9	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	27	60	10	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	9	47	30	9	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	56	22	9	3
The teaching is good.	10	71	15	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	57	18	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	32	50	14	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	43	6	3	2
The school works closely with parents.	11	55	25	7	2
The school is well led and managed.	24	57	9	3	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	64	6	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	45	16	3	13

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

At the OFSTED meeting for parents, many were concerned about the impact of disruptive behaviour on their children's education in a number of subject areas. In addition, and linked to this, they were disappointed at the staffing shortages that the school has experienced and believed that the numbers of temporary teachers that had been, of necessity, employed was having a detrimental effect both on behaviour and the quality and continuity of teaching and learning.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership provides clear direction for improvement.
- Teaching incorporates a good range of teaching and learning styles that help pupils to learn.
- Planning is very good and provides clear support for temporary and non-specialist teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards for boys, especially in English literature.
- Increase use of information and communication technology to enhance learning.

110. Standards of attainment in English on entry in Year 7 are in line with national expectations, based on the national tests for pupils in Year 6. Standards in English at the end of Year 9 (at the age of 14) in the 2002 national tests were below average when compared to schools nationally, and below average when compared to similar schools. There was a difference in performance between girls and boys, with a greater proportion of girls achieving the higher levels than the boys. Although the Year 6 results demonstrate that attainment on entry has been steadily average since 1999, this is not reflected in the verbal reasoning scores. These standardised tests indicate that attainment is below average on entry.
111. Current standards in Year 9 are higher than the school's 2002 national test results for 14 year olds suggest and are improving. Standards of work seen in English during the inspection are now broadly in line with national expectations in Year 9. Achievement for pupils in Year 9 is satisfactory.
112. Standards in the English language GCSE examinations in 2002 were above average compared with results nationally. Standards in the English literature GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average when compared to schools nationally. Standards seen on inspection were higher and do not confirm these disappointing GCSE English literature results, which were well below those in recent years. Attainment is above average overall. Girls significantly outperform boys in both English and English literature. Achievement for pupils in Year 11 is good overall, but varies across teaching groups.
113. In Year 9, most pupils speak with confidence when talking about familiar things. In a Year 7 lesson on 'Adrian Mole's Diary' the teacher's skilful questioning encouraged pupils of all abilities to express personal thoughts and feelings well.
114. Standards in reading are broadly consistent with expectations. In most classes, time is set aside to develop personal reading. However, this reading is not recorded in reading logs or monitored and its impact on raising standards is uncertain. Lower attaining pupils do not read beyond their lessons and this limits the range of their reading repertoire. Some still have very poor reading skills and this impedes their learning and their success with test papers.
115. Pupils' writing is also showing an improvement; a particular strength is the way in which pupils are shown how to develop the skills of writing rather than focusing only on the finished piece. The essays which are written as a response to reading are good. One such example was the extended work produced by Year 9 on 'Macbeth'. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to write creatively or imaginatively and these pieces are weaker.
116. Lower attaining pupils are still struggling to overcome basic spelling and grammatical errors; this is made worse in some groups by inadequate marking. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons and make good progress. Pupils who have a first language other than English are making very good progress and are learning well.
117. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Higher attaining pupils achieve well and many exceed their target grade. However, small numbers of lower attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This underachievement is directly linked to a history of staffing difficulties, poor attendance and the low aspirations of some boys.

118. Standards in speaking and listening are average. There is insufficient focus on this element of the course. As a result, pupils are not as confident about expressing opinions or discussing texts without the skilful intervention of teachers. Standards in reading are good and most pupils enjoy reading, some using the library regularly. In an excellent lesson on 'A View from the Bridge' pupils read sensitively with a high level of discussion about Arthur Miller's use of characterisation. In this lesson all made excellent progress.
119. Standards in writing for pupils in Year 11 are good overall, with some exceptional standards in the higher attaining groups. Coursework demonstrates significant differences between the standards for boys and girls. Lower attaining boys are still writing short pieces, frequently marred by grammatical and spelling errors. The department is aware of the need to use strategies to raise standards for boys and is beginning to implement them. Presentation is often excellent and shows a high level of commitment to the subject. There is evidence of pupils of all abilities drafting and redrafting their work, some using ICT as a tool for improving presentation. Higher attaining pupils are producing work of exceptionally high quality in response to poetry. A good example was a Year 11 pupil writing in response to World War 1 poetry:

'----- I thought, get me out of this place
But I couldn't see, for you were my friend,
Too blind to see in your face,
that this was the end'.

120. In lessons that were stimulating and well planned, pupils behaved well. Most pupils respond in a very mature manner and concentrate well. Unfortunately, in classes where pupils have experienced high levels of staff turnover, this is not always evident and some lessons are spoiled by disruptive behaviour.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The English team has a clear view of how standards can be improved and has already made major changes to teaching and learning styles. Almost all lessons observed had very good features. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to adapt the excellent schemes of work appropriately to learners' needs. Work was carefully tailored for all learners and, as a result, pupils with special needs are learning alongside others in inclusive lessons. Where teaching is very good, pupils are taught different ways to learn. In one such lesson, on 'fact and opinion', pupils were taught how to select appropriate textual evidence and, as a result, developed critical reading skills. In good lessons, the use of the National Literacy Strategy ensured that the purpose of the lesson was shared with the pupils at the outset and revisited at the end to reinforce the learning. This provided a clear structure and pupils understood what was expected of them. Where expectations were high and a range of teaching styles were used, achievement was very good, as in a lesson on 'An Inspector Calls'. In this lesson pupils confidently shared ideas and predicted the plot. This atmosphere of collegiate learning was the result of consistently high quality teaching. Marking is detailed and provides good guidance but the criteria upon which assessment is to be made are not shared with the pupils.
122. There are some aspects of teaching that can be developed further. The use of information and communication technology is confined to enhancing presentation and is not used sufficiently as a resource to extend knowledge and understanding. Checks on pupils' progress against predicted targets are not frequent or rigorous enough to identify early underachievement.
123. This is an enthusiastic and energetic department, very well led and managed. The team shares a commitment to raise standards and have already put into place many effective strategies, some focused particularly on raising boys' achievement. It is not appropriate to make a judgement about improvement since the last report, because the school has changed so much since then. In the last two years, staffing difficulties have affected not only standards, but also professional development. The department is now in a position to put in place closer checks on pupils' progress, more focused use of information and communication technology for learning and the planning for individual ways of learning for the highest attaining pupils. The team is very hard working and has an infectious enthusiasm for their subject. This is appreciated by the large majority of pupils, who enjoy English lessons as a result.

Literacy

124. There is a whole-school policy for raising standards in literacy but this is not reflected in all department policies. A literacy co-ordinator has been appointed and a staff meeting has taken place to introduce the strategy. A literacy audit has taken place in most departments. There is no Literacy Action Plan, but the initiative is monitored by the Key Stage 3 strategy manager.
125. Standards of reading are satisfactory, with pupils confidently exploring a variety of texts. The pupils read with a satisfactory level of understanding both literal and inferential. They are able to select, retrieve and edit information; the best examples were in history, religious education and geography. However, although many pupils read in tutorial time there is no school strategy to promote reading and as yet few books borrowed from the new learning resources area.
126. Standards in writing vary across subject areas but are generally satisfactory. Some subject areas have technical vocabulary displayed to assist the pupils' spelling. The best examples of these were in English, information and communication technology and design technology; the weakest in music. Pupils of all ages are writing in a variety of styles. Good examples of these were observed in geography where pupils wrote extended pieces of work on a range of environmental topics. Other good examples of sustained pieces of writing were in English and history.
127. The presentation of pupils' work is very variable. In the best examples the pupils obviously take pride in their work and take time to word process it at home in order to improve presentation. Good examples were seen in geography, English and art. However, there were many examples of poor presentation and unfinished pieces of work, generally linked to temporary or part-time staffing arrangements.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Overall departmental planning
- The very secure subject knowledge of teachers
- The willingness of teachers to adopt and use new ideas

Areas for improvement

- Staffing, so that the department is fully staffed by subject specialists
- Individual lesson planning by some teachers
- The application of number skills across the curriculum

128. The standards in mathematics of pupils on entry to the school are close to, but slightly above the national average. In the 2002 national tests for pupils at the age of 14 (Year 9), the school's results were in line with the national average for all schools and for similar schools. The results for girls were slightly better than boys; this is contrary to the national difference. These results indicate that progress is at least satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 9. However, pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make good progress.
129. The results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were close to and slightly above national figures. Overall the boys' results were slightly better than the girls, but there were only a few boys who gained the highest grade, A*. Progress was satisfactory when compared to previous results. Mathematics results were similar to those gained by the other core subjects.
130. These overall standards are reflected in the work seen during the inspection. Attainment is average at the end of Year 9 and slightly above average, overall, at the end of Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory for both groups. Pupils in Year 7 all follow a similar course for the first term and are then set into groups according to their ability. They know and can use simple number patterns and can analyse simple data, displaying this in different ways. Their number skills are reinforced at regular intervals. This provides a good foundation on which the subsequent work is built. By the end of Year 9 the higher attaining pupils have progressed so that they can solve equations of various types, including simultaneous equations, with confidence and solve right angled triangles using Pythagoras' Theorem. Average attaining pupils' skills in

equation solving are not so well developed, but they have made satisfactory progress from their previous levels of knowledge. They can use trial and improvement methods to solve equations. Lower attaining pupils reinforce their numerical skills in a range of ways. They use simple ratios and solve money questions with and without a calculator.

131. The work for Years 10 and 11 builds upon previous knowledge and understanding. Higher attaining pupils follow the higher course for GCSE so that, by Year 11, they can confidently work with standard form numbers and they can analyse data using sophisticated techniques to draw relevant conclusions. Average attaining pupils solve linear equations and can draw charts and diagrams accurately. Lower attaining pupils follow the foundation course they solve simple equations and can apply a range of number skills to practical situations. The department aims to enter all pupils for a GCSE examination at the end of Year 11. The standards are rising and there are now more pupils following the higher-level course in Year 10 than in Year 11.
132. These standards are a reflection of sound teaching. In Years 9 to 11 only two unsatisfactory lessons were seen; all others were sound or better with about one-third of lessons judged to be good or better. The better lessons start well and contain material that is well suited to pupils' ability and presented in a coherent manner with good pace. In these lessons, the preparation is thorough and the work demanded of pupils is selected to give sufficient practice for pupils to become confident in using their new knowledge. For example, in a Year 9 lesson there was sufficient practice for pupils in their number work to enable them to progress rapidly in recognising the patterns involved when dividing by 0.1, 0.01, 0.001 and the subsequent powers of 10. As a result, they could start to use standard index form with confidence. The skilful planning and delivery enabled the learning to be very good.
133. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is still satisfactory, but slightly better than for the younger pupils, with almost half the lessons seen being judged good or better. There was one unsatisfactory lesson; this was due to the very poor attitude of pupils who, despite a range of strategies used by the teacher, did not respond in a positive manner. Elsewhere, the challenge of external examinations motivates pupils to work well. The better lessons are well planned and teachers use an open style of questioning that encourages pupils to think. Teachers also use good practical illustrations to enable pupils to understand the work being covered. One good example, from a Year 10 lesson with high attaining pupils, was the use of a simple box to enable pupils to visualise the long diagonal in three dimensions. From this they found a way of calculating this length using Pythagoras' Rule. Teachers also skilfully develop pupils' responses so that non-mathematical descriptions are changed into correct terminology. For example, one response to a graphical question was "The wiggly bits are closer together!" The teacher helped the pupil to change this into a response that referred to the scale on the horizontal axis being changed by an appropriate factor to condense the curve.
134. Teachers endeavour to use a range of teaching methods. The use of more open style questions would, in some cases, help pupils to develop more enquiring minds. Space is limited in some classrooms. This means that practical and group work is difficult and the lack of space can affect discipline. Marking is full of encouraging comments, but rarely points the way forward for pupils and there are inconsistencies across the department. However, many pupils are aware of their level of working, especially those in Year 11, who are well-informed about their target grades for GCSE examinations. These provide a realistic, but achievable, challenge for them. Some of the good preparation for lessons seen included well-made transparencies for the overhead projector, but the lack of suitably mounted screens meant that the presentation suffered and this is reflected in the work seen in pupils' books. The learning environment in the mathematics department is enhanced by some attractive displays of pupils' work and the corridors contain good displays of mathematical interest. However, the attractiveness of these only highlights the poor decorative condition of the rooms.
135. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements by being broad and balanced. All Attainment Targets are covered and ample opportunities for investigational work exist in the overall scheme. Assessment opportunities both formal and informal are included in the plan for each year. There is a lack of access to computer facilities and this means that computer use is inconsistent.
136. The mathematics scheme of work provides a sound basis from which to work. It is referenced to the National Curriculum and the National Numeracy Strategy. The head of department is an experienced teacher who leads the department well. Teaching and learning are monitored and the shortcomings of individual's planning are being closely supported. The head of department and the second in department have only been in post since the start of the school year and have

worked closely together to develop teaching within the department. They are aware that there is still work to be done to move the department forward and the development plan, which is centred on raising standards, illustrates this. There is a teaching vacancy in the department and covering this is causing difficulties for the team, but they are working hard to ensure that pupils do not suffer. Resources to support teaching and learning are just adequate, but there is a lack of textbooks in Years 9 and 11. Suitable practical equipment is available for teachers and where possible this is well used, but there are no computers for use in the classrooms.

137. This is a department with potential. Since the last inspection standards appear not to have risen, but this was some considerable time ago and the many changes since then mean that it is now a very different school and valid comparisons cannot be made. Teaching is more varied and overall better than at the time of the last inspection. Standards are sound and appear to be rising, especially in the current Years 7 and 8. This is a good base for the future.

Numeracy

138. Standards of numeracy are adequate for pupils to have access to the curriculum. However, identification of reinforcement opportunities are not identified in all subject documentation. The National Numeracy Strategy is in place and number skills are regularly taught and reinforced in mathematics lessons. It is recognised that the audit of skills across the curriculum is in need of renewal and this would assist in identifying where number skills can be reinforced. Pupils use calculators effectively but some pupils are over reliant on them for basic calculations. Some good examples of data handling and the display of charts and graphs occur in geography. In modern foreign language lessons, pupils calculate costs using Euros and also use graphs and charts. The use of formulae is well developed in information and communication technology lessons, where pupils use spreadsheets to analyse data and to model situations where data changes. Students in the sixth form appear very confident when using number skills in a range of subjects. Again, skills are sufficient for them all to have access to the whole curriculum.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Very good accommodation.
- Typically good pupil teacher relationships.
- Is up-to-date with current initiatives
- Produces attainment in line with national standards.
- Committed, able, hard working and forward looking teachers with a will to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Target weaknesses in teaching by:
 1. ensuring learning activities match learning objectives
 2. challenge able and support weaker students
 3. ensure clarity in presentation of ideas and activities
 4. develop strategies with senior management to effectively manage difficult pupils
- Further develop marking by providing advice on what pupils should do to improve
- Secure resources to deliver the information and communication technology requirements effectively.
- Further improve text book resources.

139. The attainment of school's intake for the last few years has been close to the national average.
140. The attainment of pupils aged 14 (Year 9) has been just above that attained nationally for the last five years and above that in similar schools. Boys' and girls' performances are very similar. Achievement is good overall at the end of Year 9. The majority of pupils aged 14 in 2002 achieved or exceeded their expected levels of attainment.
141. In 2001, the attainment of pupils in GCSE biology, chemistry, physics and combined science was below that achieved nationally, showing unsatisfactory achievement. Since changing course to double award science for the majority of pupils, the 2002 A* - C results made a significant

improvement to rise to just above that attained nationally for all pupils and with girls' attainment being above that of boys. These results, confirmed by inspection findings, show that attainment is slightly above average at the end of Year 11 and achievement is now satisfactory.

142. The work seen in pupils' books up to the age of 14 shows clear progression, with good quality work covering all aspects of the National Curriculum. Able pupils produced very good quality work and have a good understanding of scientific principles, along with a good knowledge base, but there is opportunity to challenge these pupils more. Lower attaining pupils show the same progression, but some work is incomplete and whilst there are worksheets to help, there is a need to consider use of further materials to help the slower pupils to make more rapid progress. Pupils in Year 7 clearly understood human reproduction and how to detect acid or alkali solutions. Older pupils knew the links between microbes and disease and able pupils in Year 9 could distinguish between mass and weight, showing good understanding. Most pupils of the same age know the features of animal groups and the symbols and names for common chemicals. Able pupils have produced investigations of a good standard.
143. Pupils aged 16 (Year 11) also showed logical progression in their work and the large majority of pupils had exercise books which would provide a very good basis for revision for examination purposes. The work in the higher attainers' books showed a greater proportion of theoretical rather than practical work and this balance should be reviewed. Some topics showed a need for better development of concepts and others for better consolidation of ideas. Some lower attaining pupils in Year 10 knew about chromatography and filtration whilst others showed confusion, thinking sand would dissolve in water - however a friend quickly pointed out the problems of this at the sea-side. Another could not explain the principle of filtration during a filtration practical activity. Some pupils showed insecurity in understanding chemical formulae, symbols and the difference between elements and compounds. Able pupils in Year 11 showed very good understanding of organic chemistry. All pupils could explain the difference between alkanes and alkenes and an able pupil could explain fractional distillation based on boiling points linked to length of carbon chains. He could also explain why propane was used in preference to butane for bottled gas in winter. Able pupils had produced very good quality investigations.
144. Teaching in science is satisfactory. However, both good and unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Where teaching was good, as in a lesson about materials in Year 9, the teacher established control at the start of the lesson using standard routines of entering quietly, standing behind desks and quickly taking the register. The lesson continued with a question and answer session recapping outcomes of the last lesson about features of materials. The teacher was confident, firm yet friendly. Pupils were given real materials such as Wellington boots or plants to examine. The work was supported by clear, laminated prompt sheets to guide pupils in their work around a variety of activities. Time was well used in the lesson, learning was reviewed at the end and the class dismissed in an orderly manner. In a lesson about organic chemicals in Year 11, the class entered sensibly and stood quietly at the start and the register was taken. A question activity followed where the class each had coloured true/false cards to use to answer questions. This allowed the teacher to quickly see the distribution of right and wrong answers round the class. Pupils' ideas were used to define the term "organic chemical". Meanings of new terms to be used were clarified and practical techniques clearly explained, with good reference to safety issues. The class was well managed during the practical activity and the outcomes reviewed towards the end of the lesson.
145. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, as in a lesson about chemical reactions, the introduction was confusing. A practical activity was described with little explanation of background, why it was to be carried out or why the method was to be used. The method of working written on the board - in preparation for the lesson - was not referred to sufficiently. Delivery of information was slow and not stimulating. There was little use of scientific terminology or reasoning. The management of difficult pupils was insufficiently assertive. The situation led to a deterioration of pupils' attitudes and little science was learnt.
146. A number of factors contributed to the unsatisfactory teaching seen in the department. There is a significant minority of pupils who show a poor work ethic and levels of co-operation. These pupils require particularly strong management and not all teachers are capable of this. Some teaching shows a lack of clarity in linking clear learning objectives to activities, a lack of assertiveness and also a lack of clarity in presentation of ideas and practical details to pupils. The department has been operating with one member of staff short since the start of the year, since it is difficult to recruit staff. This has required considerable additional effort by the existing staff and has required the head of department to repeatedly re-write the timetable to provide science teacher coverage

for classes. As a result, some classes have had three different science teachers each week teaching three different topics. This has adversely affected the attitudes of some pupils to their science lessons.

147. The department is building a substantial data base of pupil attainment. This shows a track record of previous achievement and is added to using termly test data. It is used for monitoring pupils' progress against their targets and effective remedial action follows this monitoring, where necessary. Under-achieving pupils are given help in lessons by visiting Sixth Form pupils, support staff or through after-school lessons. The department has made good efforts to monitor the marking of books and the key stage co-ordinators have been actively involved with this. Their work is evident in pupils' books. All work is regularly marked by teachers, spellings are mostly corrected and some errors in understanding are identified. However, advice to pupils tends to be congratulatory or targeted at the improvement of presentation (which does matter), with insufficient clear advice on how to improve the standard of achievement in science.
148. Management of the department is good. The key stage co-ordinators are making effective contributions to the work of the department. A well-organised audit file has been developed which represents considerable effort. This shows records of monitoring the work of the department and tracks in-service training. Development plans are included and the budget is maintained up-to-date. Schemes of work are in place, but these need further development to become helpful and useful working documents. A literacy policy is in place and the use of key words in classes is evidence of this. A numeracy policy is developing and an audit has been carried out.
149. The accommodation for science is very good; the laboratories are all recently refurbished. The department has further improved the working environment by adding display materials of a good standard to classrooms and corridors. Resources are satisfactory. Pupils have access to shared text books, but in order to improve standards there is a need for more text-books for individual use and so that pupils may take books home. Equipment is satisfactory overall, but information and communication technology provision and resources are barely adequate.
150. The school has changed greatly since the last inspection, making comparison difficult. However, given these changes, the management of government initiatives and the problems the department has had with staffing, there has been good progress since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The transmission by teachers of passion and enthusiasm in the best lessons.
- Good strategies to focus learning.
- The wide range of work, skills and styles in the curriculum.
- Literacy work, such as the link between language and visual expression, between colour and emotion.

Areas for improvement

- Information and communication technology as an artistic tool in Years 7 to 9.
- The development of a programme of gallery visits in Years 7 to 9 to reflect that in Years 10 and 13.
- The spreading of best practice in the organisation and management of pupils.
- The development of clearer criteria for success in all topics in Years 7 to 9, to further develop self assessment and to standardise assessments at the end of Year 9.

151. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is at the national average for the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or better. GCSE results are at the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades and average points score. The department has been aware for some time of the significant negative impact on pupil motivation- especially boys - of some teaching in recent years. There are now in place successful strategies to redress the balance, and to build a more positive attitude in pupils, especially at GCSE level. Over the last three years, attainment in GCSE has shown consistent improvement. Attainment in lessons and work seen in Years 7 to 9

was at the national average and a significant proportion of pupils attained above this level. Indications are that the Year 11 group's attainment is above average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers and show consistent progress.

152. Some very good work was seen from Year 7 in their clay work. Year 9 charcoal drawings of fish and paintings of Dorset cliffs showed good observational drawing skills. Year 10 fashion drawings in a 'time' topic were of a good quality and there was much evidence of exciting, high quality work in the development stage of a Year 11 final topic. Display is very well used both to celebrate pupil attainment and to inspire others.
153. Teaching and learning are both very good at all levels. The best teaching is characterised by very good relationships: where pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well known and, consequently, pupils feel secure and learn well. Preparation and planning are very good, with clear targets set and shared, and clear links are drawn with mainstream art from a wide range of historical and geographical contexts. The teachers' informal advice to pupils in lessons is also very good, and helps pupils to develop their skills well. Teachers demonstrate expertise, passion and enthusiasm, and pupils respond very well as a result. Organisation and management are generally efficient, but sometimes a small group of boys disrupts the learning of all. Pupils learn and achieve well through good use of observation and analysis, by research and development of their topics, through good use of the sketchbook and above all by the review and refinement of the work in progress.
154. Pupils' response is very good at all levels. Almost all pupils are positive, open, keen, enthusiastic, co-operative, hard working and responsible - taking great pleasure in their own work and success. A small number of boys arrives in lessons ready to be difficult and non-co-operative. The staff has to work very positively on building pupils' self esteem. The attitude of the Year 11 pupils to each other's work in the session involving mutual and self assessment was impressive, and a highlight of the inspection.
155. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes appropriate elements of world and historical art, as well as very good links with mainstream art. Information and communication technology is used effectively from Year 10, but less frequently in lower school. Curriculum content and method are appropriate for all. Assessment is good, but there is potential for further development in refining criteria for success and pupil self-assessment. Leadership and management in art are good, and now that staffing has settled, a firm foundation has been laid for exciting developments and the pursuit of excellence.
156. Progress since the last inspection has been good. All the issues have been successfully addressed, and a firm foundation laid for future developments.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in this subject is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The overall standard of teaching is satisfactory.
- The achievement of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Systems for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress.

157. The school has an effective programme for developing citizenship. Provision is mainly through the personal, social and health education programme.
158. Pupils make good progress. Almost all, including the pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, achieve well. Generally, boys and girls respond equally well to the opportunities offered for discussion and debate in citizenship and personal and social education lessons and this helps to raise standards. There are a few, however, whose attitudes towards the subject are unsatisfactory and who can waste their time and that of others. In Year 9, almost all are at least at the expected level for the subject. They understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, both through direct teaching and through the opportunities the school offers them to make choices about their leisure and learning and represent the pupil body on the

School Council. They can justify their opinions on a wide range of social issues, both orally and in writing. The higher attainers are able to write persuasively and well, addressing issues in a way that demonstrates their maturity of thought and their knowledge and perception.

159. The development of citizenship skills is further enhanced by the emphasis the school places on personal responsibility and the opportunities that pupils have to take responsibility in the school. In achieving this, the Student Council is particularly effective. It is a truly democratic system, involving all pupils.
160. Teaching is satisfactory overall, in personal and social education lessons and in citizenship lessons. Most teachers develop good relationships with their pupils. This helps to create a climate in which meaningful discussion can take place on challenging issues. Teachers plan lessons well to ensure that there is a good and interesting range of work and most pupils respond well, always showing interest and entering into discussion enthusiastically. Challenging questioning ensures that the pupils' thinking and understanding are extended, helping them to make good progress in mastering sometimes difficult concepts. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that they are able to make the work relevant to the present and future lives of the pupils, which in turn helps to motivate the pupils to concentrate and learn. In a Year 7 lesson on responsibility, for example, the teacher used questioning very well to draw out ideas from the pupils and to engage them in useful debate that took them forward in their thinking. However, where teachers are less successful in maintaining a good working ethos, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. In a Year 10 lesson on sexually transmitted diseases, for example, the lesson was not planned well and the pupils became bored, misbehaved, and learning was unsatisfactory.
161. Most pupils show positive attitudes to the subject, enjoying the many chances they get to discuss issues that will help them to become more informed about the world around them. They are eager to take on responsibilities, such as representing the views of their peers or organising charity events and older pupils respond well to opportunities to mentor younger ones.
162. A senior member of staff monitors the teaching of the programme and it is led and managed well. Teachers are given good support and the scheme of work is clear and helpful. Resources are satisfactory and support teaching and learning. The co-ordination of work across a number of learning areas is effective and specialist accommodation, such as information and communication technology rooms and the school library, is available to support teaching and learning when required. The school has not yet implemented a system for assessing pupils' progress, although this is being planned.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The number of pupils achieving grades of A* or A at GCSE is very high.
- The high quality of craftsmanship shown in many projects.
- The high quality accommodation and facilities available for the subject.
- The extensive extra-curricular opportunities offered for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology in designing and making.
- The methods of assessment need to be reorganised so that pupils understand their progress in the National Curriculum more clearly.
- The overall performance of boys.

163. The majority of pupils entering the school at the age of 11 (Year 7) have average skills in the subject, although the range of ability is quite broad. In the most recent tests taken in 2002, the school reported that the pupils of Year 9 were working above the national average. The girls did distinctly better than the boys and were significantly above the national average. In the course of the inspection it was found that Year 9 pupils' attainment is above the nationally expected level. Achievement is good overall. The progress of the pupils from entry in Year 7 to the end of Year 9 is satisfactory for the boys and good for the girls.

164. The GCSE results over recent years have fluctuated, reflecting the varied intake of pupils to the school over this time. In the most recent examinations taken in 2002 approximately 60 per cent of the pupils achieved a grade between A* and C, the national average being 52 per cent. The girls did significantly better than their national average in gaining an 81 per cent pass rate against the relative national figure of 60 per cent. Boys achieved a slightly higher figure of 46 per cent against the national figure of 43 per cent. What is remarkable are the high figures of pupils achieving an A* or A grade in these examinations. Fifty four per cent of the girls and 22 per cent of the boys achieved this high standard, a very creditable result. In 2001 the faculty's results were amongst the best in the school, and nearly as good again in 2002. The widening gap between the performance of girls and boys does need to be closed, however, and the faculty needs to implement strategies to support the boys more effectively. Of the individual subjects followed to GCSE level, textiles, food technology and graphics all achieved commendably high results. Resistant materials did not do well last year, with a pass rate of only 22 per cent at A*-C, but immediate steps were taken to improve matters and the prospects for this year seem much better.
165. The way in which pupils are encouraged to produce high quality practical work in all materials is of particular note. The faculty has an honest commitment to craftsmanship in all areas and this is particularly true in both resistant materials and food in Years 10 and 11. Some practical work of excellent quality was observed during the inspection. Pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11 have good understanding of the principles of the subject, with good design and evaluation skills, but it is the high quality of their finished products that is outstanding.
166. Teaching quality is generally good in Years 7 to 9. It was good or very good in almost all lessons seen in all areas of the faculty, apart from resistant materials, where the standard was lower. In this aspect, the range of teaching quality varied from satisfactory to poor. Where teaching is good it quickly becomes clear that the teacher is very knowledgeable about the subject matter and the lesson is taught in an enthusiastic way. This clearly interests and challenges the pupils. The teaching observed in food technology and textiles is of a consistently high level. Teaching overall in Years 10 and 11 is very good and is generally of a higher quality than in Years 7 to 9. This is particularly true in resistant materials, where a higher challenge was given to pupils in Years 10 and 11 and tasks were better suited to the abilities of the pupils. Food and textiles are once again taught to a high level. In the observed lessons that were of average quality or below in Year 9, it was the behaviour of a small group of pupils that caused distinct problems. These disruptive pupils affected the learning of others considerably and steps need to be taken to ensure such occurrences are dealt with effectively and swiftly. The use of computers as aids for designing and making is noticeably absent and this is affecting the overall quality of the work being produced. Comparatively little teaching using computers or involving students in their use was observed during the inspection because these machines are not available for regular use in work areas. Pupils with special educational needs get some targeted support in classes and this is effective, but if this practice were to be extended, additional pupils would receive great benefit. The ancillary support in both resistant materials and food technology benefits the pupils significantly.
167. Pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning in design and technology. Most have good or very good attitudes and behaviour and this is seen in all areas of the faculty. It is perhaps in food technology where the enthusiasm for the work is at its highest. In these lessons, the ambiance and ethos are very professional and pupils of all ages work very hard to produce high quality work. All teachers write the lesson objectives on the board at the beginning or prior to the lesson starting. When they are used objectively and referred to during the lesson proper, they become useful tools in helping pupils learn what was planned. Most teachers form appropriate and warm relationships with their pupils. This helps pupils to enquire and explain more easily and this is a beneficial feature in many lessons. 'Key Words in Technology' are displayed on the walls in nearly all work areas. Their use could be significantly extended, particularly when a new technique or process is demonstrated. It was observed that in a number of classes, the opportunity to enhance the pupils' numeracy was missed by the teacher failing to draw sufficient attention to the use of calculations, approximations or comparisons.
168. The curriculum pattern for Years 7 to 9 is unnecessarily complex for both pupils and staff alike. The complexity of the module sequence and length, differences of provision between year groups, approaches to projects and detail on the documentation is unhelpful. The classes in this age range comprise a wide range of ability and more needs to be done to ensure tasks are matched to the pupil's individual ability. At the present time the pupils receive a grade based on a rather idiosyncratic scale developed within the school. This does not relate easily to the levels

of the National Curriculum and explains why very few pupils are able to give account of where they are placed in national terms. It also means that pupils do not readily understand what they have to do next in order to make progress to a higher level.

169. The faculty is managed very well overall. The leadership is clear in direction and shows an educational vision, with a clear commitment to high quality manufacturing in projects. There is also a commitment to improving standards across all the teachers in the department. It is not appropriate to make a judgement about improvement since the last report, because the school has changed so much since then, but the way in which the recently new buildings have been developed into a teaching and learning area is highly commendable. The management of health and safety is good.

Drama

The provision for drama is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils are enthusiastic in performance.
- Drama is accommodated in a purpose built drama studio.

Areas for Development

- Planning to ensure a cohesive approach to all aspects of drama.
- Pupils' written work is below average.
- Resources need developing to ensure experience in all aspects of performance.

170. Attainment is below average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. Recent results in GCSE examinations have been below the national average. At the end of Year 9, pupils are able to perform simple improvisations, if well supported by structured teaching. An example of this was in a Year 7 lesson, where the focused teaching of drama skills supported the pupils' portrayal of village life. Pupils are able to use mime with varying degrees of success. In one Year 8 lesson, most pupils produced good quality mimes to demonstrate a range of professional occupations. In a Year 9 lesson, slow progress was made in the development of the skills of 'hot-seating' and 'freeze-frames' because the pupils lacked concentration and behaviour was unsatisfactory.
171. Most pupils in Year 10 and 11 are achieving satisfactory standards in drama in practical work. However, in one group pupils had not got a thorough understanding of drama terminology, which indicated the lack of some performance techniques which are usually observed in Year 11. Although most of these Year 11 pupils made detailed critical comments about their work orally, a small minority lacked focus and concentration. Their written work is below average.
172. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It was good in the majority of lessons seen, but a few lessons are taken by non-specialists and these are sometimes unsatisfactory because of the difficulties that these teachers can have managing some inappropriate pupil behaviour. Planning needs to concentrate on developing a progression of drama skills over time. At present, skills are not built up sequentially and insufficient importance is paid to written work. The pupils need to make more effective use of a drama notebook or log to reinforce learning. This will ensure that the critical appraisals made orally are recorded and used later in written assignments.
173. There is no subject leader as yet to provide the organisation and management that is needed. Drama is satisfactorily resourced, although there is a lack of appropriate scripts. Some lessons are taught in a classroom rather than a studio and this hinders performance. Drama was not reported on in the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Attainment in Years 7 - 9
- Assessment of pupils' progress
- The quality of teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

- Facilities to use information and communication technology in teaching and learning

174. GCSE results for 2002 were in line with the national average after above-average results in the two previous years. The relatively poor 2002 performance can be attributed to poor coursework by a small group of disaffected boys and steps have been taken to ensure that this does not happen again. There is no clear trend between the results of boys and girls. Pupils entered for geography in 2002 achieved similar results as they did in the average for all the other subjects.
175. Standards are above national expectations by the end of Year 9. Pupils have a good range of geographical enquiry skills, shown in the transport enquiry being conducted by Year 8 pupils and in the coursework they have done on ecosystems. They are competent in mapwork and the higher attainers have an excellent understanding of the location of different places worldwide, their climates, and their states of economic development. The work of lower attainers is in line with expectations for the end of Year 9, but on occasions shows some lack of attention to detail. Pupils' work in years 7 to 9 shows a steady progression of learning of skills and knowledge due to the very well-planned teaching and very good management of classes that ensure everyone has the opportunity to learn well. This picture represents good achievement from pupils' attainment on entry to the school.
176. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average overall, which represents satisfactory achievement. The highest attaining pupils have produced extensive written analyses about such topics as global warming, illustrated by high quality maps and diagrams. Knowledgeable teaching with varied and interesting resources leads to pupil attitudes that are almost always positive. Year 10 pupils were learning about the processes of coastal erosion and could quickly draw conclusions about the rates of erosion of the underlying rocks that formed the Dorset coastline. Year 11 pupils were making informed decisions about the siting of new industry in rural locations. However, the pace of work was not always positive in Year 11, which led to a slower rate of learning, and some pupils had unfinished work in their books.
177. In most year groups the progress of pupils with special educational needs is in line with that of their classmates because they are well-supported by additional help from teachers and by work that is adapted to suit their needs. Occasionally, lack of attention leads to incomplete understanding, which slows their progress. Gifted and talented pupils were not consistently individually identified but they progress well because they are provided with extended and thought provoking exercises in many lessons.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall from Years 7 to 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and in some excellent lessons teachers fully engaged the interest of pupils by their humorous and enthusiastic delivery of material. Learning objectives are always shared with pupils at the start of the lesson so that they know what is expected of them and whether they have learned effectively. Opportunities to read, speak and write are built into all lessons and made the most of. Where there was a comparative weakness in a few lessons, it was in a lack of pace that left some pupils with little to do while they waited for a teacher's attention. Most pupils have very good attitudes to their work but inattentive behaviour by a few pupils sometimes interrupted lessons. This was always quickly and effectively dealt with by teachers.
179. Assessment of pupils' progress is a strength of the department, both in day-to-day marking and in the regular assessed pieces of work that pupils complete, but the data gathered from this assessment are not yet sufficiently well analysed to identify underperforming pupils or groups. Pupils have the opportunity to assess their own work in class so that they know how well they are doing.

180. Pupils word-process their coursework, use the internet for research and information and communication technology exercises are built into the schemes of work. However, regular access to facilities for class use is limited and therefore there is not yet enough use of information and communication technology as an integral part of teaching and learning.
181. The subject is well led by the head of department, who is also head of the humanities faculty. New schemes of work have been written, lessons are regularly observed and pupils' work monitored. There is a team of enthusiastic subject specialists who make very good use of the accommodation and resources. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. This includes a better standard of teaching and learning; assessment in Years 7 to 9 is now more refined and accurate and a range of resources is provided to meet the needs of pupils of differing attainment. Information and communication technology provision has improved, but this still remains an area for development. A lot of work has gone into strengthening the department and there is good capacity to develop the provision of geography still further.

HISTORY

The quality of education provided in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, which promotes good learning and well above average attainment at GCSE
- Teachers plan and structure their work very effectively, accommodating a range of learning styles
- The department is very well led and managed
- There is a clear commitment to review progress and raise standards

Areas for improvement

- Use of information and communication technology, because resources are insufficient
- A marking policy which gives stronger emphasis to literacy
- Develop further the target setting for individual pupils

182. In 2002, GCSE results were well above the national average for all maintained schools: 75 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C. There was little disparity between the attainment of boys and girls. However, in terms of the relative performance, the attainment of the boys was significantly above the national average and boys reached higher average standards in history than they did in all other subjects in the school. In terms of the relative performance of girls, history was one of the strongest subjects in the school. As in previous years, a high proportion of pupils, including thirty four per cent of boys which was double the national average, gained the highest grades of A* and A.
183. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Year 9 standards are above nationally expected levels, and pupils are achieving well in terms of their attainment levels on entry. Overall, pupils show knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence. All, including those with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial sources. The more able pupils recognise bias and can interpret sources accurately. They are aware that ideas and attitudes are often related to circumstances, and can explain the importance of different causes and consequences. The majority of pupils have satisfactory oral, listening and writing skills. Lower attaining pupils can write in simple sentences to describe historical events but their work is often flawed by poor grammar and spelling errors. Higher attaining pupils write with fluency and their work, which is generally well presented, can show substantial creative effort. For example, pupils responded to an assignment on World War One by producing an imaginative range of diaries depicting life in the trenches. Overall, pupils show a developing sense of chronology and can use historical terms appropriately.
184. At the end of Year 11, overall attainment is well above the nationally expected level. Pupils' historical knowledge and understanding has deepened. Pupils show independence in following lines of enquiry, as exemplified in a Year 10 lesson where pupils assessed the reasons for the build up of tension and superpower rivalry during the Cold War. In written work, higher attaining pupils analyse evidence critically to produce reasoned arguments, and can explain how and why

different historical interpretations have been produced. Lower attaining pupils can select and organise material, and use sources to support simple narratives. Pupils work conscientiously in class and demonstrate good levels of recall.

185. Pupils arrive at the school with few skills in the subject. They make good progress over time owing to the highly focused teaching of basic skills and the selection of appropriate topics that stimulate interest. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, make similar rates of progress as their peers because of the individual support which they receive from their teachers. As a result of careful planning on the part of teachers, the quality of differentiated materials produced and the use of skilful interventions in class, every lesson is made accessible to all pupils. Following a whole-school initiative, very good provision is also being made for gifted and talented pupils, specifically through extension activities.
186. The high quality of teaching is a strength of the department. Good lessons lead to clear gains in learning. Without exception, lessons given by history specialists are well planned, paced and structured. Across the range, learning outcomes are clearly outlined and shared with the pupils at the start of every lesson. Knowledge and skills are systematically consolidated. Particular attention is paid to the reinforcement of literacy skills. Numeracy skills are also incorporated into history teaching. Specialist teachers are confident in their possession of subject knowledge, and exposition is both clear and precise. By challenging pupils appropriately, for example through skilful questioning, teachers are able to encourage meaningful participation in class. Specialist teachers have high expectations of their pupils, and secure relationships contribute to good levels of classroom control. Good quality resources, including a wide range of worksheets, are used to stimulate interest and help understanding. History is a popular subject with pupils and many show their interest by opting to continue to study the subject at GCSE.
187. A talented head of department provides effective leadership and management. Clear objectives and policies underpin a firm commitment to sustain and raise standards. Levels of co-operation are excellent as the two specialist teachers work very hard and share good practice openly. Lessons successfully incorporate a diversity of learning strategies, styles and activities that promote high expectations of achievement. The department is particularly aware of the need to promote the performance of boys. Good schemes of work are in place and departmental materials are efficiently maintained. The head of department recognises the need to enhance record keeping, tracking and monitoring procedures including value added analysis, and appropriate initiatives are underway. Assessment procedures and practices have recently been upgraded. However, as yet individual targets are not set at departmental level. Marking is generally satisfactory, but there is some lack of rigour in correcting errors in literacy. In the same way, diagnostic feedback although positive, is sometimes insufficiently detailed to be meaningful. Displays in the history teaching rooms are of a generally good standard and designed to celebrate pupil achievement. An interesting programme of visits is organised each year to enrich the curriculum. As yet the department provides few opportunities to develop information and communication technology skills. This is due to the current pressures on a limited number of school computers. Pupils can borrow books from the school library, which is particularly well resourced for the study of history.
188. The department has a positive profile in the school and contributes to cultural, moral and social education, in addition to the teaching of citizenship. For the future, there are plans to initiate whole-school events with a historical character and to draw more directly on the resources of the local community.
189. The good quality of teaching, learning and departmental management recorded at the last inspection has been maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The overall provision for direct teaching of information and communication technology in Years 9 - 11 is **good** but in Years 7 and 8 it is **unsatisfactory**. Inconsistent provision means that it is not clear that statutory requirements are being met for all pupils.

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge
- Schemes of work are well documented and provide a sound base on which teachers are able to construct lesson plans
- Leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards overall and in particular for gifted and talented pupils
- Provision for continuity of learning to meet teaching objectives for information and communication technology in Years 7 and 8
- Computer resources to meet the needs of the curriculum

190. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that standards overall were below the national average in 2002. Boys attained well below the national average while girls attained well above. The standard of work seen is generally in line with national expectations and well presented. The quality of provision in Years 7 and 8 is unsatisfactory at present, because yearly teaching objectives cannot be met in the time allocated for discrete information and communication technology teaching. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop their ICT capability. However, the school has addressed this issue and plans to introduce appropriate allocation of time in the next academic year. It is not appropriate to make a judgement about improvement since the last report, because of the many recent changes in the school.
191. Standards by the end of Year 11 have been below average, with the majority of students failing to complete an examination course in 2002. Three students were entered for examination in 2002. They achieved A*-C grades. In addition, a small proportion of students participated in and entered a GCSE Information Studies examination for the first time in 2002. 55 per cent attained an A*-C grade. This is just below average, with girls achieving significantly better than boys. In the current Year 10 and 11, all students are participating in a GCSE Short course in ICT and a small group of Year 11 students are preparing for a full GCSE qualification. They are given opportunities to develop their information and communication technology knowledge and skills in line with examination requirements and attainment is now average and achievement satisfactory.
192. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and good overall. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan lessons well and use a variety of resources, such as multi-media projectors, to enhance learning. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory and lesson aims are generally met. Classes are well managed and behaviour in lessons is generally good. Where behaviour is unsatisfactory, teachers' classroom management is poor. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress.
193. In all years, most students show a positive attitude to learning. They participate well in lessons and use computers with confidence to develop an understanding of the subject. Evidence shows that most pupils are able to use a variety of software packages to carry out set tasks and to present the results of their work. Able students can analyse and annotate their work using more advanced ICT skills. Less able students lack basic skills and have difficulty working independently. Teachers monitor pupils' progress during lessons and provide helpful guidance and encouragement. Homework is set regularly and pupils' work is marked according to school policy and practice. Helpful comments are provided to support learning.
194. Most pupils can use the Internet with confidence to search for information appropriate to a task. They are able to incorporate and present their findings using suitable software. Pupils in Year 7 were observed developing understanding of the use of formulae in a spreadsheet. In Year 8 pupils have used spreadsheets to import data from sensors in the environment, organise them into a format for another user and present the data using graphs. In Year 9 pupils are beginning to develop an awareness of an identified target audience and use this in the presentation of their work. In Years 10 and 11, there is evidence of pupils using more advanced techniques such as text wrapping and screen dumps to improve the presentation of their work. Full GCSE students in Year 11 are able to prepare and present related data that form parts of a system

195. It is not appropriate to make a judgement about improvement since the last report, because the school has changed so much since then. The department is well led and teachers in the department benefit from the support they are given. The management of learning areas and computer resources is good. Documentation to support the work of the department is in place and this enables teachers to prepare effective lessons. Procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the development of learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Effective leadership that is raising attainment.
- Well qualified and committed staff.
- Analysis of information about pupils' performance.

Areas for improvement

- Motivation of pupils, particularly boys, many of whom underachieve significantly.
- The confidence of all pupils in using French or German.
- The use of the information about performance to help individual pupils to improve their work.

French and German

196. The department has had many challenges over the past few years. Difficulties in attracting staff, compounded by a change in the motivation of pupils who entered the school after the age of 11, many of whom had negative attitudes towards foreign languages, have affected the performance of the department. The staffing difficulties have now been resolved and the department has a full complement of well-qualified teachers, some of whom are highly experienced. The leadership of the head of department, supported by the hard work and commitment of the staff, is raising standards in French and German.
197. By the end of Year 9, attainment in 2002 in French and German was below average, although girls attained similarly to girls across the country. The inspection found a similar picture. Overall attainment is below average, because boys underachieve significantly. Girls' achievement is satisfactory. However, the current Year 9 group had poorer verbal skills on entry than other years so had further to go in developing their skills in French and German. Many pupils listen well and average and higher attaining pupils follow speech at normal speed. Lower attaining pupils need much repetition and support, but understand simple conversations. Many pupils read with understanding, although lower attaining pupils anglicise pronunciation. Weaker areas are in speaking, where pupils lack confidence, and in writing, where pupils make many grammatical errors. However, many pupils have good accents because of the models set by the teachers and the foreign language assistants. There is also work of high quality, such as brochures about their school, attractively presented and accurately written, sometimes using ICT. The attainment and motivation of pupils in Years 7 and 8 are better than in Year 9. These pupils have experienced stability in staffing. Curriculum time in Year 9 has been increased this year for French: insufficient time last year contributed to the low attainment.
198. At the end of Year 11, attainment in French in 2002 was slightly above average because of the work that the department had put in to raise standards. Attainment has risen over the past three years from 30 per cent A* to C grades in 2000, to 53 per cent in 2002. Again, girls perform better than boys, but in 2002, boys' performance was also slightly above average. The inspection found that overall achievement is satisfactory, although some boys underachieve because of poor motivation.
199. In German, attainment in 2002 was below average, but similarly, had improved from previous years. In 2000, 28 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades, in 2002 the percentage was 44. Progress overall is unsatisfactory, although girls achieve better than boys. The inspection indicates a similar picture, although, at the moment, many pupils are underachieving.
200. The pattern in their attainment in both languages is similar to that of younger pupils. Attainment in listening and reading is better than in speaking and writing. Many pupils are skilled in listening to tapes and responding, using the information given to them beforehand about the topic to help them to interpret what is being said. Higher attaining pupils and some average pupils use the

context to help them to understand what they are reading. Many have good accents but some anglicise, either because they have difficulties, are embarrassed to try, or lack motivation. Many pupils are diffident in using French and German, despite the encouragement from staff, so speaking is a weaker area. Higher attaining pupils write extensively, writing, for example, about the attractions of Welwyn Garden City and their visit to the Europa Centre. In both languages, many have difficulty with grammar, such as verb agreements, plurals and masculine and feminine constructions.

201. Pupils with special educational needs are supported satisfactorily, and receive good support from the Compass unit. Teachers understand their needs and usually adapt their education plan well although this is inconsistent across the department. Higher attaining pupils often do not make the progress they should because work is not always made challenging enough. Sometimes they finish work early and not all teachers ensure that work extends them. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as their peers. None are at early stages of learning English. Pupils who are gifted and talented are identified and some attend master classes in languages. In lessons, however, they are not always extended as they should be.
202. Behaviour in most classes in French and German is good. Pupils generally listen well, are co-operative and sustain their work. There is a small but significant number of pupils in Years 9 and 10 whose attitudes and behaviour challenge the most experienced and skilful teachers. In these classes, the majority of pupils fail to learn as the teacher is constantly diverted from teaching. Attitudes, although overall satisfactory, are sometimes negative. Many pupils dislike learning a language, failing to appreciate the opportunities it might offer. Teachers are well aware of this and are trying to motivate them, for example, by visits to Europe and by encouraging pupils to write to pen friends in Germany. The take up of these offers is disappointing. This passivity and sometimes negativity, is affecting the learning of many pupils, and is also the reason for the low numbers who opt to take languages in the sixth form. The attitudes of pupils in Years 7 and 8 are better, although there is some passivity and reluctance to speak. In a good lesson with a Year 11 class, most of whom will be taking Foundation level French, many pupils, particularly boys, were very keen to know how they could improve their work to gain good grades in GCSE. Several boys asked questions to ensure they understood. Their motivation was high.
203. Teaching in both French and German is satisfactory and almost half of all lessons observed were good. Learning is often not as good as the teaching because of the lack of motivation and passivity of many of the pupils. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and use this well to improve work, particularly accuracy and accents. Most teachers use French and German to explain and give instructions, supporting pupils' understanding of key phrases. Sometimes, the foreign language could be used more. Some teachers are better than others at encouraging pupils to use French and German in the classroom. There is a range of activities in each lesson, so that pupils' attention is maintained. Games, quizzes and surveys are used to give variety, although these were not observed during the inspection. The lessons observed were very well planned to include a range of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. In a Year 11 German lesson, the brisk and purposeful start, the clarity of the explanation of the purpose of the lesson and very good relationships, ensured that all pupils worked and learned well. During the inspection week, many lessons had a brisk pace, but lacked variety and some were too reliant on the textbook, which did not motivate pupils. Resources are used well; a new textbook has been purchased that is bright and attractive. Pupils enjoy using these, although there are not enough for all the year groups. Information and communication technology is used by both teachers and pupils, but the suite has to be booked in advance, which causes some difficulties. Many pupils use their own computers: those who do not have access to them are therefore disadvantaged.
204. Another strength in teaching is the use of French and German foreign language assistants. These bring a new dimension, as pupils are reminded that there are countries where English is not the norm. The assistants work very well alongside teachers and they relate well to the pupils. In one Year 8 German lesson, pupils were enthused by a game run by both teachers, in which they had to work out where to put words on a chart to help them to state an opinion. Relationships throughout the department between pupils and teachers are good. A Year 10 class of higher attaining pupils is achieving well because of the excellent relationships and enthusiasm of the teacher, sparking a love of the language in many pupils. Even in the classes with challenging pupils, teachers remain courteous, polite and act as excellent role models. Teachers use assessment well in the classroom to improve pupils' work. A Year 9 French class improved their accents because the teacher spotted confusion about pronunciation when discussing parts of the body, and worked with pupils to improve this. Work is regularly marked

and some teachers write how work can be improved, which supports learning. Much of the marking does not do this. Teachers have begun to use a method recommended by the government, which involves setting out the aim of the lesson and finishing with a plenary session to round off the lesson. This is working well in many lessons. Pupils are clear about what they have to do and they reflect on what they have learned at the end. This helps their learning. The department contributes well to pupils' skills of numeracy, by regular discussion about the euro and by encouraging graphs when undertaking surveys. Key phrases and words on display support skills of literacy. Homework is given regularly and develops the learning from the lesson.

205. Effective leadership has identified where the department needs to improve from a thorough and critical analysis of performance. Teachers are aware that the next step is to use this information to help individual pupils know how they can reach the targets that have been set for them. As staffing has settled down, management systems are being reviewed and developed. Regular departmental meetings are supporting effective team-work. Teachers have begun to observe each other, so that all can learn from the best practices of each other. The accommodation is enhanced by attractive display in rooms and the corridor, encouraging pupils to answer questions.
206. Comparison with the last inspection report is difficult, as the school is now very different in character. However, staffing is now stable, and there is much greater consistency as a result. The department is improving and is well placed to improve even further.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- There is a good range of instrumental tuition and teaching of the flute is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are well below average; performing, composing and listening skills are underdeveloped.
- Staffing difficulties result in classes being taught by non-specialists.
- Learning is too keyboard based; pupils make insufficient use of their own instruments in classroom work or of information and communication technology.
- Curricular links with primary schools are insufficiently developed.
- Accommodation and resources for music are unsatisfactory and depress standards.

207. Pupils enter the school with variable musical experience related to the quality of their previous musical education, interests and level of home support. Some enter with above average experience but most pupils enter with below average attainment in music. By Year 9, standards are well below average and overall achievement is unsatisfactory. Most pupils are working at about level 3 to 4 but some talented pupils attain higher levels. In recent years, GCSE examination results have been broadly average when compared with all schools with small numbers of pupils entered for the examination.
208. In Years 7 to 9, pupils do not experience or enjoy an appropriate range of repertoire and develop singing technique. Most pupils keep good time when playing instruments, but have insufficient experience of instruments other than keyboards and percussion and too few opportunities to use their own instruments in class. Overall, performing skills and music reading skills are poor. In composing, only the most musically experienced know how to develop pieces confidently and pupils do not improvise. Most pupils listen respectfully to examples played in recordings and to each other when performing, but the technical vocabulary they use in describing and appraising is limited. Their general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structures and well-known pieces of music, is well below average.
209. In GCSE work, standards in Year 10 are just below those expected, but are broadly average in Year 11. There is a wide range of attainment in these small groups. Pupils do not sing enough as a class in GCSE work. Most pupils receive instrumental tuition privately or in school but most pupils disadvantage themselves by not taking part in extra-curricular opportunities. The most musically experienced show good understanding of devices, structures and harmony in composing and create effective compositions but the lack of music technology disadvantages

pupils. Pupils listen well to recorded extracts and to each other and use appropriate musical terminology in appraising; their general musical knowledge is satisfactory. The attitude of pupils is very variable but overall achievement in GCSE work is just satisfactory.

210. It was possible to see only a small amount of teaching because of staffing difficulties. It was not possible to make an overall judgement about teaching, but it was possible to examine pupils' work across all year groups and have extensive discussions with them about it, the way they are taught and the way they learn. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining music staff over a number of years have affected standards and pupils' attitudes, a view shared by older pupils. Pupils enjoy practical work, but dislike writing in music. Weaknesses in schemes of work include the lack of sufficient singing in lessons and the over reliance on keyboard work. As a result, pupils are insufficiently challenged and do not develop basic skills to enable them to make music at the required levels and learn through active music making enough. The lack of rigour affects attitudes and higher attaining pupils are insufficiently stretched at all levels. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make similar progress to the other pupils. Pupils' behaviour is too variable; a small minority behaves poorly and affects the atmosphere. Most pupils are attentive and work productively when they are interested; they are supportive of each other, keen to answer questions and the most enthusiastic involve themselves in opportunities offered by the department and musical opportunities outside school.
211. The acting head of department has only been in post for this term. There is no second teacher and non-specialists take classes; this is unsatisfactory. There is some monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance but this and documentation need strengthening. There are inadequate links with primary schools. There is no technical support for music. There are appropriate spaces for music teaching but the condition of the rooms and approaches are depressing and work is affected by the lack of adequate soundproofing. Chairs are too low for keyboard work. Keyboards are of good quality but there is a need for additional information and communication technology equipment, classroom instruments including bass tuned percussion instruments to enhance creative work, music for singing, playing and the library, piano stools for the practice cells and an OHP.
212. Thirty-nine girls and 40 boys receive instrumental lessons from nine visiting teachers; this is about eight percent of the school's population, an average number. It was only possible to see work in piano tuition and flute tuition (where teaching is good). The progress of pupils is satisfactory in lessons but standards are below average and achievement is lessened by lessons that are too short. The curriculum insufficiently supports instrumental tuition and tuition makes little impact on the quality of pupils' musical experiences in the classroom. Monitoring of pupils' progress and teaching needs strengthening.
213. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is limited by the staffing difficulties and pupils' attendance at these, especially boys', is low. The activities include a small choir, band, flute choir, clarinet ensemble and keyboard club. The Christmas concert involved about 40 pupils. The school is producing its first musical for a number of years, *Bugsy Malone*, in March. Since the last inspection, assessment, the use of information and communication technology and the accommodation have improved but standards and the quality of the curriculum have deteriorated.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good, with knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers setting high expectations of pupils in terms of participation and behaviour
- Leadership and management of the department are very good and all staff share a commitment to raising the status and standards of the subject
- Pupils have a positive and lively attitude towards physical education (PE) and feel valued for both effort and achievement.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and staff show a commitment to their provision for all pupils
- Information on pupil performance is very detailed and informs curriculum and lesson planning

Areas for improvement

- Measures to maintain, and where relevant, to raise the achievement of pupils studying GCSE PE
- The use of more explicit assessment and tracking procedures that measure the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils
- The use of information and communication technology to assist in the teaching of the subject and as a resource to raise standards

214. The department entered 21 pupils for the GCSE examination in 2002, with 62 per cent gaining A* to C grades, which is above the national average of 54 per cent. The majority of current examination pupils are performing at least as well with several very able pupils, particularly in Year 11, performing at the highest levels. In most years, the department has produced examination results that match or exceed the national average. The department should now ensure that measures are in place to maintain and, where relevant, to improve the level of achievement of pupils studying GCSE PE.
215. The majority of pupils in Years 8 and 9 are attaining at or above the level expected nationally. They are able to copy simple skills with control and co-ordination and are beginning to understand how to improve their own performance. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also performing at or above the level that would be expected at this stage. Most perform with precision and fluency and work hard at improving their performance. In all year groups there is a wide spectrum of attainment but teachers accommodate this through individual support and encouragement and differentiated activities and, as a consequence, pupils in all year groups achieve well. Pupils have a lively, positive attitude to physical education and most make clear progress in lessons by listening carefully to the teacher and practising conscientiously as individuals and in groups.
216. Teaching and learning are very good and a major strength of the department. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and teach lessons that are well structured, use a variety of activities and are conducted at a lively pace. Lesson planning is very good and the use of a structured format provides progression from basic to more advanced techniques, which assists pupils in the development of their skills. However, further improvements can be made by ensuring that all lessons have clear, measurable and explicit learning outcomes linked to simple, clearly defined teaching points that are reinforced throughout all the lesson activities. Teachers set high expectations in terms of performance, behaviour and dress and as a consequence pupils are very well behaved in lessons and respond to the firm, but friendly, control exercised by teachers. Instances of unruly behaviour are very few and are dealt with efficiently and with a minimum of fuss. Teachers provide an environment in lessons in which all pupils, regardless of ability, gender or background, feel valued for both effort and achievement.
217. There were no instances of unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection, with the majority of lessons judged to be good or very good. In a very good Year 8 hockey lesson, in very wet conditions, the very enthusiastic teacher kept all pupils active using a range of stimulating practices which enabled all pupils to improve their dribbling and passing skills. The teacher in a very good boys' gymnastics lesson used pupils' demonstrations to very good effect to demonstrate form, extension and mirroring in pairs balance work. Pupils made significant progress in another very good lesson, a Year 9 football class, where the teacher's carefully planned lesson, clear explanations and excellent group demonstrations ensured that all pupils improved their individual ball skills and support play in attacking situations. In a Year 11 girls' basketball lesson the very knowledgeable teacher's use of group work ensured that pupils' dribbling and passing skills improved throughout the lesson, although the use of these in game situations was not as proficient. In all practical lessons, teachers make supportive interventions, for example in badminton, basketball and trampoline lessons where teachers are able to explain and demonstrate to pupils how to improve. Pupils in a Year 11 GCSE theory class responded very well to a stimulating lesson on skills-related fitness and were able to define and illustrate the key terms associated with the topic.
218. The timetabled curriculum of one hour and forty minutes per week is below the recommended amount of two hours but the department uses this time efficiently to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all year groups. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities, clubs and school teams provide additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy sport and improve their skills and to extend the more able. For those studying for the GCSE examination, the additional three periods per week is generous and ensures that the more difficult theory aspects of the course can be adequately covered. Accommodation and resources for sport at the school, and the use of the local sports centre, ensure that a full range of sports can be offered to pupils particularly as

options for those in Years 10 and 11. However, the use of information and communication technology to assist in the teaching of the subject and as a resource to raise standards is underdeveloped.

219. The committed head of department, and the senior manager responsible for strategic planning, continue to raise the status and standards of physical education at the school. They have developed excellent procedures for recording and tracking pupils' attainment and these are used very effectively to inform curriculum and lesson planning. These should now be extended to enable more explicit analysis and evaluation of the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils, starting with Year 7 attainment, not least as a measure of how successful the many very good qualities of the department are having on standards in PE. In line with whole-school development, the department also needs to have in place and implement explicit policies which contribute to pupils' literacy and numeracy development as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
220. In terms of the last report, the department has continued to make good progress, although it should be recognised that the school has undergone many significant changes that make direct comparisons invalid.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The very good range of courses on offer
- The quality of staffing
- The teaching is good overall
- The pupils have a positive attitude to religious education

Areas for improvement

- Statutory requirements are not being met in the Sixth form
- More teaching and learning about the basic beliefs systems that underlie religious practice, including Christianity
- More emphasis on learning from religions as well as learning about them

221. At the end of Year 11, the standard of attainment in the GCSE short course is broadly in line with the national average. Of the 154 pupils entered for the examination in 2002, 51 per cent gained the higher grades of A* to C. Of the five pupils entered for the full course GCSE in 2002, four gained A* grades and the other an A. These five pupils were taught outside normal school hours.
222. The standard of work seen during the inspection of the pupils on the short course is in line with what would be expected at this stage. Their work in the lessons and in their books shows that they have a sound grasp of the main elements of the two main units of work. The pupils can, for example, talk and write meaningfully about such issues as moral authority, moral action, and some of the central concepts of Islam. The pupils also have a good range of skills, which include extended writing. The pupils are particularly good at expressing themselves orally and in this respect they can argue their point of view with confidence.
223. At the end of Year 9, the standard of attainment is at least in line with the standards indicated in the Agreed Syllabus. The pupils have a sound grasp of many aspects of world religions. They know and understand how many religious traditions have an effect on the lives of many individuals and communities such as in festivals and rites of passage. The pupils also understand many religious concepts and they can use a good deal of religious language in a meaningful way. Their knowledge and understanding of the practices of world religions are stronger than their understanding of the central belief systems that underlie these practices. The pupils have a good range of skills. They can use their texts books with ease and they can engage in extended writing. Their oral skills are also good and they can respond to questions in a confident way.

224. Overall, the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory. For the pupils who do the full course GCSE their achievement is very good. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs is also satisfactory, because work is planned for them that enables them to progress according to their ability. A more consistent policy on this, however, would help them further, as would a more consistent provision of extension work for the more able and the gifted and talented pupils. Sometimes the girls achieve better than boys, but not consistently
225. The response of the pupils is good and often very good. The pupils are well behaved and they show an interest in their work. They concentrate well, and in the main, they are able to sustain this concentration. Occasionally some concentration is lost when they are uncertain what work is to be finished by the end of the lesson. Otherwise they have a very positive attitude to the subject and are willing to participate in the activities presented to them. They are respectful of each other and of the teachers and they also respect other people's point of view.
226. Overall, the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11 is good. Often it is very good; occasionally satisfactory. A particularly good characteristic of all the teaching is its strong religious content. Where the teaching is satisfactory, the lessons reflect this good religious content, but the learning is more restricted to learning about religions, with insufficient emphasis being put on learning from them. Also in these lessons, the aims and objectives are not always made sufficiently clear to the pupils themselves and this leaves some uncertainty as to what is to be learnt by the end of the lesson. Where the teaching is very good, the pupils are clear as to what these objectives are and the factual content is used to make them reflect and to see in what way their learning might have relevance to their own lives and experiences. More monitoring of the teaching and learning would ensure a greater consistency in this overall. In general the management of the pupils is very good and lessons are well prepared and a good range of activities and methods are used to put across the subject matter. Some information and communication technology is used by the pupils, but its use is still in its early stages. Homework is set and there is an ongoing active assessment policy. The teaching and learning makes a good contribution to the moral and cultural provision in its study of moral issues in world religions. The teaching and learning also make a good contribution to literacy in the school with its emphasis on reading out loud and the use of texts as well as in extended writing.
227. The department is well led. The staffing is very good, with three specialist teachers. Statutory requirements are being met in Years 7 to 11 but they are not fully met in the Sixth Form. An audit of the schemes of work against the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus in all Years would ensure that its many aspects are being covered in an equal way. Progress since the last inspection has been good as there is now sufficient time to cover the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. No other particular issues were raised at the last inspection. The resources are good and accommodation is very good.

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 point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & Design	8	100%	-	25%	-	2.88	-
Biology	12	83%	53	33%	3	2.33	0.75
Business Studies	5	80%	-	20%	-	2.60	-
Business (VCE)	8	88%	-	0%	-	2.25	-
Chemistry	11	100%	-	55%	-	3.64	-
Computing	4	25%	-	0%	-	0.25	-
Design & Technology	12	92%	-	8%	-	1.58	-
Economics	5	100%	-	80%	-	4.20	-
English Language	2	100%	-	0%	-	1.50	-
English Literature	10	100%	-	60%	-	3.50	-
English Lang & Lit	10	90%	-	70%	-	3.80	-
Fine Art	1	100%	-	100%	-	4.00	-
French	1	100%	77	0%	13	2.00	1.25
Geography	13	92%	-	23%	-	2.85	-
Government & Politics	9	100%	-	56%	-	3.56	-
History	17	100%	-	59%	-	3.59	-
Information Technology	7	14%	-	0%	-	0.14	-
Law	6	66%	-	0%	-	1.17	-
Mathematics	17	88%	62	59%	15	3.18	1.25
Media Studies	3	100%	-	33%	-	3.67	-
Persian	1	100%	-	100%	-	5.00	-
Philosophy	3	100%	-	67%	-	3.33	-
Photography	4	100%	-	25%	-	2.25	-
Physical Education	4	100%	-	75%	-	2.46	-
Physics	14	71%	-	36%	-	8.00	-
Psychology	14	57%	-	7%	-	1.21	-
Religious Studies	9	100%	-	22%	-	2.44	-
Sociology	1	100%	63	0%	7	3.00	1.00
Textiles	5	100%	-	20%	-	2.60	-
Theatre Studies	2	100%	-	0%	-	2.50	-

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & Design	12	100%	96	58%	46	7.33	6.57
Biology	12	100%	88	33%	34	7.00	5.25
Business Studies	13	77%	92	62%	32	6.15	5.50
Chemistry	6	100%	90	33%	43	5.67	5.90
Computing	4	100%	86	25%	23	4.50	4.62
Design & Technology	6	83%	91	33%	30	5.33	5.00
Economics	3	100%	89	0%	36	4.00	5.52
English Lang. & Lit.	6	100%	92	50%	30	7.33	5.28
English Literature	14	100%	95	36%	37	5.86	5.91
French	11	91%	89	18%	38	4.36	5.59
Further Mathematics	4	75%	-	50%	-	6.50	-
General Studies	35	100%	85	37%	30	6.23	4.91
Geography	20	95%	92	55%	38	6.20	5.74
German	2	100%	91	50%	40	7.00	5.81
Government & Politics	5	100%	-	20%	-	5.60	-
History	10	100%	88	90%	35	9.60	5.45
Information Technology	3	33%	-	0%	-	2.00	-
Law	3	100%	-	0%	-	4.00	-
Mathematics	13	100%	87	69%	43	8.00	5.80
Media Studies	3	100%	-	0%	-	5.33	-
Music Technology	1	100%	93	100%	35	8.00	5.74
Photography	3	100%	-	0%	-	4.66	-
Physical Education	5	80%	92	60%	25	6.40	5.09
Physics	7	100%	88	57%	40	6.00	5.67
Psychology	11	91%	-	91%	-	5.45	-
Religious Studies	6	100%	92	33%	38	6.00	5.84
Sport Studies	4	100%	92	75%	25	8.00	5.09
Theatre Studies	1	100%	-	0%	-	2.00	-

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus in the inspection was on GCE A level mathematics and biology. Lessons were also sampled in GCE A level physics, where the teaching and provision were judged to be good. Results at A level in recent years have been above the national average.

Mathematics

The overall provision for mathematics in the sixth form is **very good**.

Strengths

- The very good results achieved by students in GCSE Advanced level examinations over a number of years
- The very good relationship between teachers and pupils that establishes a positive working atmosphere
- The very good planning and delivery of lessons that continues to support the determination of students

What could be improved

- The use of computers to further enrich the very good teaching

228. The standards achieved in the GCE A level mathematics examinations in 2002 were very good, with a majority of students gaining grades A or B. Results at this level have been consistent over recent years. When related to prior attainment and predictions for students based upon their GCSE results, these achievements are very good.

229. The finding of the inspection is that attainment is well above the national average and students achieve very well. Standards in lessons reflect the high GCE A level results. Students realise that the course is demanding, but show good determination in their efforts to succeed. Some students start the course with a grade C at GCSE and work very hard during the early part of the course to ensure that they are at a similar standard to the rest of the group. Initial take-up levels are good and there are very few students who do not complete the full two-year course.

230. Students in Year 12 develop their previous knowledge of algebra much further so that they can use the techniques of calculus to solve graphical questions involving areas and volumes. They also build upon their knowledge of statistics and use modelling techniques to represent different situations. This work continues in Year 13 and the calculus is extended to include trigonometric functions. Students also study the elements of decision making using critical path analysis in the Discrete Mathematics module. The highest attaining students also study Further Mathematics.

231. These high standards are a direct result of very good, well-planned teaching, using modules that are best suited to students and their needs for the future. There is some excellent use of resources that help students to learn well. Imaginative teaching methods using a data projector enhance teaching and presentation. This enables accurate diagrams to be prepared and the students are given a set of diagrams that they annotate as the lesson progresses. The good relationships between teachers and students are very good in sustaining the positive working atmosphere and the occasional use of humour is well used to help students' understanding of complex concepts.

232. Sixth form mathematics is well managed and teachers' personal strengths are recognised when matching teachers to the modules taught. Teachers discuss their work informally and are mutually supportive in planning progress and analysing results to point the way forward. Resources are adequate for the curriculum, but there is a lack of computers to use in lessons. More computer use would help students develop and extend their own graphical interpretation skills by providing another way of analysing data. There is a room in the sixth form area that is used for mathematics as well as the main teaching rooms. The common drawback of these rooms is that the board space is too small to accommodate a full solution to an Advanced level examination question. Students find this a drawback when the whole class is working on the answer to one problem.

233. This is a well-respected subject at A level, with a sustained record of success. The course is successful in building on GCSE performance and the very good provision enables the students to gain very good results.

Biology

Overall, the provision for Biology is **very good**. Well-motivated students are taught by good teachers to achieve well above national average results.

Strengths

- Enables students to gain high levels of achievement.
- Very good pupil-teacher relationships.
- Good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Develop a better balance between theory and practical work.
- Ensure learning objectives to be attained from activities are clear.
- Ensure work is clearly consolidated.
- Further develop the independent learning skills of students.

234. The biology department has a record of only one failure at GCE Advanced level over the last five years. The average point score has always been above the national average. In 2001, boys' results were well above the national figure and girls gained very high results. The unvalidated 2002 AS results are good; the average point score of students was high compared to the 2001 national average. The improvement that students make from the GCSE levels is very good and they achieve very well in the subject.
235. Attainment is well above the national average. Students in Year 13 show very high quality of work in their files. The work is well organised, very neatly presented and contains scientific knowledge of a high standard. Some A level students were observed carrying out a genetic fingerprinting practical activity, which required considerable intellectual skill, manual dexterity and patience - the outcome was largely successful. Students could explain the scientific principles behind this practical work. In another lesson, pupils quickly interpreted data involving epistatic genetic effects - an area that requires considerable intellect and understanding. All members of the group were on target to attain their expected grades, mainly A or B.
236. Students in Year 12 show a very high level of commitment to their work and, as in Year 13, have produced outstanding folders of work, of a very good AS level standard. In a lesson about AIDS, students were totally involved in the lesson, they listened intently and freely questioned the teacher to clarify understanding - they even spontaneously helped each other to explain how they understood how the aids virus enters host cells. The group is on track to attain their target grades, between A and D.
237. Overall, teaching is good, with some very good teaching observed. Where teaching showed strengths, the teaching materials were challenging, well presented and the teacher was confident in its use - showing very good subject knowledge. Lesson pace was appropriate and consideration was shown for students' needs. Information and communication technology was used well as a resource for teaching. One aspect of teaching that could sometimes have been improved was when work was discussed in class. It should have been consolidated in notes for those who may not have fully grasped, or remembered, the ideas. The quality of coursework produced by students in Years 12 and 13 is indicative of effective teaching and guidance in this area, complemented by good student effort and application.
238. Students are set work very regularly and teachers mark it well, with extensive comments and feedback. The comments made are supportive and helpful and help students to improve. Students' progress is tracked against their targets and they are kept fully aware of the progress they are making. Good use is made of past examination questions for examination practice. Effective management of coursework enables students to gain high marks in this area. Students make very good progress from GCSE to AS to A2 standards.
239. Students are helped to be independent learners through homework and coursework investigations and are also encouraged independently to access the internet to research data - for example to discover the incidence of TB. The result of this research is then fed back to the

group. The work of students from both years shows greater opportunity could be given to encourage independent thinking and working without detracting from the importance of effective group work.

240. The biology department is managed by the head of science. This aspect of management is effective and has helped produce the good results. There is a need to consider the balance between theory and practical work and to broaden the range of activities students are offered to help them learn. However, students were happy with their course and felt their teachers were helpful in solving any problems they had in their understanding. They felt the school and department had been very helpful in the way they had been shown how to manage university and college application procedures.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focus was on design and technology and economics at GCE A level. A business GNVQ lesson was sampled. The teaching was good. The good quality of provision and the positive attitudes of students are producing above average results in business and attainment and achievement were both judged to be good.

Design and Technology

Overall, the quality of provision in Design and Technology is **good**.

Strengths

- The standard of craftsmanship achieved in some project work.
- The relationships between students and staff.

Areas for improvement

- Some basic skills in the subject.
- Some processes used when designing.
- Insufficient use of information and communication technology in designing and making.

241. As the school is part of a consortium offering post-16 courses, only the courses offered at this school were considered. All the courses are reported here under the title of 'Design and Technology'.
242. The faculty has a long history of offering this subject at Sixth Form level and there have been significant developments in recent years. The faculty currently offers courses at GCE AS level in Year 12 and the full GCE A Level (A2) in Year 13. For the most recent year of reporting, 2002, the results achieved were atypical of the progression and were close to the national average. In recent years, the faculty has achieved results that are always slightly better than the average when compared with results nationally.
243. Students enter the Sixth Form with good grades at GCSE, but the students may come from more than one course background, or alternatively, from another school in the consortium. Whilst the courses in Years 10 and 11 provide a very useful preparation for the Sixth Form courses, it causes the staff some difficulty in ensuring that all have the basic skills for the subject at this level.
244. All students achieve well and attainment is above average overall. The strength of the student work lies in the completion of very good quality project work. It was evident by speaking to students and reviewing their work that most had an innate or developed sense of craftsmanship. The quality of the created artefacts was of very good standard, the best being made from timber.
245. The observed teaching was very good overall - of a consistently good or very good standard. The inter-personal relationships between students and staff are very good and, with the small group sizes, students get much individual tuition. The faculty ensures that most members of staff have the opportunity to work with these students and this brings richness and diversity to the course. The teachers possess individual skills that help the students to progress. Teachers are confident in their work and they understand their subjects well. Students frequently work individually in the rooms best suited to the task involved and they move around

accordingly. The teacher is sought by the student when his or her help is required. This system works well, develops independence and shows that all students are trusted. They often set their own pace of working and become responsible for their own decision-making.

246. Students learn effectively within the Sixth Form principally through a mixture of project work and taught (theory) sessions and the balance of this is appropriate. The absence of the use of computer aided design and manufacture hinders development of project work. Design work as seen in folders is of average standard but there was little seen that demonstrated a high level of creativity. Much time beyond the classroom teaching time is spent completing project work, design folders or general research and this time is well generally well spent. Students generally learn quickly and make good progress. Taught and practical lessons are planned effectively and the time allocations within the subject are good.
247. The leadership and management are good overall. The head of faculty is very influential in instilling high levels of craftsmanship and he monitors the performance of the students closely. When it was revealed that one AS course was not proving to be suitable for the students in 2002, it was quickly decided that another should be sought and followed to the benefit of the students, demonstrating decisive leadership.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Two lessons were sampled in GCE A level information and communication technology. In both, teaching was good. Students come from a wide range of schools and generally have low prior attainment at GCSE. Attainment at AS and A level is below the national average, but students achieve well because of the good teaching and their own commitment to the course.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Well motivated and enthusiastic students.

Areas for improvement

- The active participation of some of the quieter students

248. In July 2000 the school began offering its Sixth Form students the opportunity to take GCE A level examinations in physical education. This opportunity has been taken up by a growing number of enthusiastic and able students who have gained examination grades that are in line with those achieved nationally. In the most recent examination the proportion of students gaining the higher pass grades in the AS level examination was just above the national average, and for those taking the A2 examination it was in line with the national average. A number of these students have gone on to university to study sports science.
249. Inspection evidence indicates that the students currently in Year 13, who will be taking the A2 examination, are achieving well and attaining above average standards. Those who are in Year 12, who have just begun their second term of the AS level course, are also attaining above average standards, completing work that is at least in line with the national average, and many exceeding it. Students are able to engage in productive debates about a range of subject related topics, including the commercialism of sport, and factors affecting sporting performance, and are able to come to informed and perceptive conclusions. Their practical programmes show a range of skills in a variety of activities. Most students can analyse practical performance confidently and they can use their evaluation to refine their work. They show real rapport with their teachers and relationships when working in groups are very good. However, in some lessons some

students do not participate in the class discussions as readily as they should. Many have a good command of the technical language of the subject, and use it accurately and effectively. Students often use the Internet to broaden their knowledge and to research individual topics.

250. The teaching of the AS and A2 level courses is very good. Teachers are aware of the different ways in which students learn and they work hard to use methods and provide tasks with resources that meet their needs. A particularly impressive feature is the importance that teachers place on a continuity of approach from Year 11 to Year 12. They are aware that the change to Sixth Form study can be difficult for some students, and therefore attempt to ease their students into research and further reading. The expectation of what students can do is high, and students respond with high levels of industry and a mature approach to their studies. Teachers pass on their considerable expertise and challenge students to think intellectually. They contribute to students' learning by guiding them and pointing them towards a wealth of background information and resources. Lessons proceed at a good pace. Teachers mark students' work meticulously and give them much advice on how improvements can be made. In addition to having impressive subject knowledge, teachers have good relationships with the students, and treat them as responsible adults, thus developing their independence. The vast majority of students have progressed from taking GCSE in physical education in the school to the GCE A level courses. As a consequence, teachers know them very well, are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are skilled at asking them the right questions in order to help them to learn.
251. Very good leadership and management are reflected in the results and in the obvious enjoyment of both staff and students. The availability of a room dedicated to the subject's work is proving a considerable aid to raising attainment.
252. Students take part in a large variety of recreational activities, including soccer, netball, badminton, golf, squash and fitness training. A number of students are involved in the Community Sports Leaders Award. This is a nationally recognized award for young people who wish to gain skills in leading sporting activities.

HUMANITIES

253. Three of the humanities subjects taught in the Sixth Form, economics, history and geography, were included in the focus subjects. A religious education lesson was observed. Teaching was very good. At the end of Year 13 the standard of attainment in religious education is above national averages. Of the 18 students entered for the examination in year 2002, 14 of them gained the grades A to C. In the same period 6 of the 7 AS level students gained the A to C grades.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well in the subject, equalling or exceeding their target minimum grade
- Teaching which is stimulating and well planned, with teachers setting high expectations of students' performance
- Teacher-student relationships, which are very good and produce a friendly but purposeful working environment in lessons
- Students' attitudes to the subject, which are very positive; they research economics topics to good effect
- Assessment of students' performance, which is thorough and supports students' learning

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that all students in lessons fully understand key points before progressing
- Expanding the use of information and communication technology as a resource to improve standards further
- To continue to effectively market the course to students to maintain the recent rise in numbers

254. The results for the five students taking the A2 units of the full A level course were an impressive A, two Bs and two Cs, which is above the level of national expectations, although comparisons are difficult because of the small entries. Students completing the AS part of the course also

performed very creditably with one A, two Bs, one D and one E. In both cases four of the five students equalled or exceeded their minimum target grade. In most years all pupils gain at least a pass. The department has until this year attracted relatively small numbers of pupils, but now have 17 in Year 12 taking the AS course. The increased numbers, and the fact that five of these are Year 13 pupils studying economics as an additional course, are as a result of the efforts the two teachers in the department have made to raise the status and standards of the department.

255. Students achieve very well in the subject because of the very good teaching and excellent student relationships that produce a friendly, but purposeful, working environment in lessons. Current students are attaining at least in line with national expectations and attainment is above average overall, with several outstanding students exhibiting excellent skills in analysis and evaluation of economic issues. Students have a very good understanding of basic economic terminology, but some need to be more accurate in using it when answering specific questions from the teacher in class. In the good Year 12 class observed, on the international debt crisis, the effectiveness of the teacher's planning, management of the lesson activities and probing questions enabled clear progress to be made in students' understanding of this topic. The students were able to discuss and analyse the complex issues surrounding the background, scope and possible solutions to developing countries' debt problems. This was an excellent example of where the department is able to develop relevant and strong social and moral themes as part of students' general personal development.
256. Students were able to use spreadsheets to chart and analyse economic growth patterns in a very good Year 13 class where the very well prepared teacher combined classroom exposition and computer work very effectively to increase students' understanding of another complex issue. However, the two teachers should ensure that all students in lessons fully understand key points before progressing, particularly when introducing crucial aspects of economic linkages – for example, between economic capacity constraints and inflation - and when explaining key definitions. In lessons and work outside the classroom students clearly demonstrate that they have the necessary economic research skills, for example in accessing appropriate internet sites, to improve their knowledge and understanding of the course content.
257. Support for students is very good, with appropriate resources being available as well as, importantly, access to the two knowledgeable teachers should they require additional help. Students are also supported on the course by going on a number of relevant visits including the Stock Exchange, the Paris educational study weekend and the Bank of England. However, the use of information and communication technology as a resource to improve standards further is underdeveloped. Finally, the department should continue to effectively market the course to students to maintain the recent rise in numbers.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Students' attitudes, which lead to very good learning
- Standards of teaching and learning
- Standards of attainment

Areas for improvement

- None

258. Some 60 students study geography at GCE AS and A level. The subject is offered as part of the local consortium, but there are comparatively few students from other schools in the learning groups. Numbers opting for the subject are high, with two groups at present studying A2 level.
259. Standards are above the national average. In 2001, GCE A level results were above the national average with boys doing better than girls. In 2002, at AS level, 85 per cent of students attained at least their target grades and 36 per cent exceeded them. At A level, 92 per cent attained their target grades and 50 per cent exceeded them. The work of current students suggests that high standards are being sustained this year. Achievement by the end of Year 13 is good, the students making good progress from their GCSE standards. Because of the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and the very interesting way this is conveyed, students learn and achieve very well. Year 13 students showed an excellent understanding of the principles involved in town planning and a Year 12 group was enthralled with the complex background to the formation of a tropical monsoon. Students produce a high standard of notes, diagrams and essays. They can

collect their own data and present it effectively to support geographical hypotheses. The less successful students rely too heavily on photocopied notes and present information in a simplistic fashion that will not serve them well when the time comes for revision.

260. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers always use students' past learning as a basis for the development of new understanding about, for example, the processes of inner-city development, and as far as possible teaching is based on visual resources and practical experience. One excellent lesson simulated the flow of a river through the classroom so that students could devise a method of measuring the volume of water passing through the imaginary channel. No students were seen with special educational needs, but group work supported lower attaining students and ensured that all made equal progress. Gifted and talented students are progressing well, on track to gain the highest grades.
261. The students have very positive views of the subject and the teaching they receive. The course has lived up to the expectations of most of them and they thoroughly enjoy the subject, finding a recent residential field study trip to the Lake District both interesting and worthwhile.
262. The subject is very well managed as part of the geography section of the humanities department. It is well established with comparatively high numbers choosing it every year. Students' progress is carefully assessed and monitored and the requirements of the examinations are made clear to them at every opportunity. There is insufficient information from the previous inspection to make any judgement about improvement. With the present enthusiastic leadership the subject has the capacity to continue as a strong and successful department.

History

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well and results at GCE Advanced level are well above the national average
- The high quality of teaching and the strong individual support lead to effective learning
- The subject is very well led and managed

Areas for Improvement

- Students use a limited amount of information and communication technology because resources are insufficient

263. Attainment in history is well above the national average. Following a pattern of high attainment established over the previous three years, in 2001 GCE A level results were well above the national average and fell within the range of the top five per cent of schools across the country. In terms of relative performance, the results were the best obtained in the school, and the performance of students in history was, on average, significantly better than their performance in other subjects. In 2002, results in history were again positive. Over half the students achieved the higher grades A and B, and all passed the examination. There was no significant discrepancy in the performance of male and female students.
264. All students make good progress in lessons, including the lower attainers and the gifted and talented, and achieve well in terms of prior GCSE qualifications. Much of this progress is a consequence of the structured teaching style adopted by the department. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the requirements of their students. By providing high levels of individual support they enable students to acquire confidence in extended writing, and to develop secure research skills. Supporting the students' development as historians, they encourage them to look critically at evidence in order to challenge the assumptions implied in historical analyses. Laying stress on historical sources and their interpretation, teachers aim to engender a sense of historical enquiry, as exemplified in a lesson with Year 12, which focused on the relative importance of the problems faced by Louis XIV in his quest for absolute power. Teachers encourage students to exercise critical judgement when articulating their views and to think historically. Students' contributions in class show that they are acquiring the communication skills necessary to work effectively as part of a group, and that they are developing a critical focus.
265. Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers demonstrate confidence in the presentation of their knowledge and a firm understanding of the topics under study. They select a range of well-structured learning tasks to challenge students appropriately. Learning objectives are clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and linked to examination standards. Care is taken in the way

that information is imparted. Teaching is tightly planned so that students confront issues surrounding evidence and the significance of historical issues in a progressive manner. Lessons include varied activities to maintain a good pace to learning. Through carefully directed questioning and interventions, teachers stretch the intellectual capacities of their students whilst reinforcing basic skills. Students respond well to this approach, making good increases in the range of their knowledge and the depth of their understanding. Discussion with students indicates that they enjoy the subject, feel secure in the requirements of the course, and are aware of their present levels of achievement.

266. Analysis of written work shows that students are making systematic progress. It is clear that they are using a range of materials and that they are being challenged to develop skills of analysis, interpretation and synthesis. Although standards of written work vary, students work conscientiously and show skill in applying their knowledge both relevantly and effectively. Over the two years, they respond to the high expectations of their teachers, showing increasing independence in their research analysis. Evaluating historical ideas with increasing confidence, they are able to produce interesting and insightful outcomes. Assessment of written assignments is regular and beneficial and marking is constructive, although in some instances students could be given more detailed guidelines on improving their grade.
267. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is very good. Sixth form teachers work together closely and have a coherent style. Departmental learning resources are good. However, there is limited access to ICT in lesson time, owing to pressures on the limited number of computers in the school. When appropriate, teachers encourage students to use the Internet for research purposes. The school library holds a very good stock of books to support A level study. Assessment data are used to track progress and guide curricular planning. The head of department has a clear view of the priorities for the subject and is strongly committed to the further improvement of standards established in recent years.
268. The good quality of teaching, learning and departmental management recorded at the last inspection has been maintained.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects were English literature and French, but two lessons of English language were sampled. In one of these lessons students effectively learned how attitudes and values are created and conveyed using Edmund Spenser's 'The Fairie Queen'. In the other lesson students made very good progress in understanding the features of spoken language in script form.

English Literature

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

Strengths

- The management of the course is very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that effectively helps students to build up their own knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching is very good and provides a range of expertise and a variety of teaching and learning styles.
- Assessment is very good. Students are aware of their own learning and know what they need to do in order to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Development of resources, especially the use of information and communication technology to support the courses.
- Development of the students' independent work in order to extend the range of reading around the prescribed texts.
- Develop students' skills of redrafting and critical self commentary.

269. The provision for all English courses caters for 73 students, 28 of whom study English literature. A resit GCSE course and a Key Skills course in Communication are also offered.

270. Standards in AS and A level English literature were well above the national average in 2002. Students make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. Inspection evidence shows standards to be consistent with the examination results. Retention rates and attendance are good. Achievement by the end of Year 13 is very good.
271. Students' understanding of the ways in which authors make changes in form, structure and language in order to shape meanings is developing well, particularly at AS level. Students' folders show a slow initial transition from GCSE to AS level work, but they then make very rapid progress. The present Year 12 group has already achieved their predicted target grades. Higher attaining students have a secure understanding of their texts and are able to analyse how language and structure are manipulated to shape the meanings of a text. Higher attaining students are producing superb work on 'The Whitsun Weddings' by Philip Larkin and formulate well structured and coherent arguments on the way in which language demonstrates the disparity of 'appearance' and 'reality' in the poems. Lower attaining students have a general awareness of writers' techniques and are able to see the impact of these on meaning; however, some are unable to take their ideas further.
272. The students' development of critical responses is very good. There is very good exploration of text by all students; they are able to analyse character and plot. Students generally use terminology well but in some groups they are weaker on personal opinions and show only a little reflection about the text. Good examples of this were seen in the work on 'Snow falling on Cedars' where a secure understanding of critical perspectives led to thoughtful personal responses. Students would also benefit from a further redrafting of their work to incorporate additional critical perspectives and increased access to information and communication technology resources.
273. Students in the second year of the course are able to articulate informed, independent opinions and judgements and share an understanding of different interpretations of literary texts. This was observed in a lesson on 'Volpone' where students used websites to enrich their understanding of the sexual, social and historical perspectives. However, despite this good lesson there is insufficient evidence of independent exploration or of students reading around texts. This is limiting some of the lower attainers in widening their skills of literary criticism.
274. Students are able to talk confidently about their own learning. They work well together and with their teachers. Strong purposeful relationships are a feature of all lessons.
275. Teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. All lessons demonstrated some strikingly good teaching styles. All teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject; they read around their subject and the prescribed texts, and are able to offer their students a range of additional references. They all have high expectations of their students. Planning is of high quality and carefully incorporates the criteria upon which the students are to be assessed. Teachers and students work in tandem and produce seminars of high quality. The very detailed assessment demonstrates the commitment the teachers have to assisting the students' improvement.
276. The leadership of the subject is very good. All teachers are well qualified and experienced. The head of department is enthusiastic about the development of the course and the numbers of students rose considerably last year. There is a strong team commitment to improve standards, demonstrated by an effective tracking of students' progress. Further monitoring of the work of the team will ensure that the excellent good practice is shared across the teaching groups to ensure a cohesive experience for all students.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German are taught at A and AS levels. French was the focus of the inspection and a lesson was sampled in German. Numbers are too small in both subjects to make judgements about attainment. Teaching in German is very good.

French

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching
- Very good relationships
- Good leadership
- Well chosen and challenging topics

Areas for improvement

- Passivity amongst some students and confidence in using the language in class
- The use of data from assessment to improve the learning of individual students
- The numbers taking the subject

277. The numbers taking French over the past few years are too small to make a valid judgement about attainment in comparison with other schools. In 2001, when a larger number studied French, attainment was below average. In other years, individual students have achieved well to gain A and B grades. This year, there are three students, so valid comparisons cannot be made. However, progress is good overall and students achieve well. One student is taking AS level.
278. Students read widely, often drawing on sources from the internet. The more confident students use their reading well when putting forward their views on current topics such as cloning and immigration. Higher attaining students fluently read texts they have not seen before, have a wide range of vocabulary and use complex sentence constructions, though occasionally making grammatical errors. Less confident students are reluctant to join in debate, and when pressed, cannot sustain their views. Sometimes, their pronunciation is anglicised and their reading is hesitant. Higher attaining students write fluently, using a range of complex structures, lower attainers often write inaccurately and briefly.
279. Students work hard and want to do well. However, a few are quite passive and do not join in discussion unless pressed. They listen carefully. A few will use French to ask questions, but most are reluctant.
280. Teaching is very good and students learn very well. Teachers are enthusiastic and have a love of the subject, which inspires their students. Relationships are excellent, and where students are reticent, teachers do their utmost to encourage them to take part. As a result, some students are relaxed and confident. The teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and make their teaching relevant, drawing on their own expertise that they are careful to keep up to date. All have high expectations of their students, seen in the constant pressure to improve work and a demand in lessons to contribute. Students who give brief answers are encouraged to develop their thinking through questions.
281. Resources are used very well to motivate students, through the use, for example, of authentic texts and information from the internet. The foreign language assistants make a valuable contribution to the teaching, bringing their knowledge of current vocabulary and life in France to the classroom. Students are supported very well. One teacher even gives students their own tapes so that they can listen at home and improve their work. Work is regularly marked, but teachers do not always make suggestions as to how students might improve their work, although this happens through discussion in class. The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development, particularly their understanding of world issues.
282. The subject is well led and managed and the team involved in the sixth form support one another well. Access to information and communication technology has to be planned for carefully, but teachers ensure that they visit the suite when they can. Students often use their own computers, as they are more readily accessible. Students are aware of the grades that they are expected to gain, but are not always certain of how they can improve their work.

283. In the last inspection, attainment in French was higher than many other subjects, and teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. Attainment appears to have worsened, although the low numbers taking the subject could account for this. Teaching has improved.