

INSPECTION REPORT

**GEORGE STEPHENSON COMMUNITY
HIGH SCHOOL**

Southgate, Killingworth, Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE12 6SA

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108639

Headteacher: Mrs. A.L. Welsh

Reporting inspector: Mr. P. Livsey
1544

Dates of inspection: 4th to 8th November 2002

Inspection number: 249614

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 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Southgate,
Killingworth,
Newcastle upon Tyne.

Postcode: NE12 6SA

Telephone number: 0191 2008347

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. W.F. Temple

Date of previous inspection: 20th March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1544	Mr. P. Livsey	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and achievements
				How well are pupils and students taught?
				What should the school do to improve further?
11358	Mrs. V. Lamb	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
				How well does the school care for its pupils and students?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1622	Mrs. L. Aers	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
31550	Mrs. S. Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics	
22083	Mrs. K. Hinton	Team inspector	Science	
			Biology	
32333	Mr. R. Lilley	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
8751	Mr. J. Chidgey	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
19806	Mr. P. Carvin	Team inspector	History	
1576	Mr. G.W. Stephenson	Team inspector	Geography	
			Citizenship	
18955	Mrs. C. Earlam	Team inspector	Art	
32087	Mr. J. Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education	
16359	Mr. J. Farrow	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
			English as an additional language	
17765	Mr. J. McElwee	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
			French	
16890	Mrs. M. Potter	Team inspector	Religious education	

8009	Mr. J. Forsythe	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Main School

George Stephenson Community High School is a large 11-18 mixed comprehensive school with 1110 pupils and students. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (28%) is above the national average. There are pockets of significant deprivation in the catchment area. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is very low. Very few are from ethnic minorities. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN) is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of SEN is above the national average. The most recent intake was of at least average attainment on the basis of the Key Stage 2 results. This was not previously the case. The school has undergone a major reorganisation over the last three years. Staff movement over the last two years resulted in extensive use of supply teachers in certain subjects. In September 2000 the school opened on a split site with 600 new Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils. 70% of staff are new since September 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective and improving school. Standards are above those for similar schools both at GCSE and at Key Stage 3. There is a substantial proportion of good and very good teaching. However, there is a significant minority of lessons in the main school where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Generally pupils' achievement is satisfactory and often good. There is underachievement in science and in information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4. Pupils with SEN make good progress. The school is well led and managed by the governors and leadership team. The sixth form effectively meets the needs of the students and is cost-effective. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Much of the teaching and learning is good or very good, with a core of good teaching in every subject, particularly in English, art, history, geography, the performing arts, physical education (PE) and religious education (RE).
- Good provision for social and moral development.
- Good support systems for pupils.
- Good leadership and management.

What could be improved

- There is unsatisfactory teaching and learning in a significant minority of lessons in the main school, especially in Key Stage 4.
- In particular, too much of the teaching of science in the main school is unsatisfactory.
- The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment is inconsistent in the foundation subjects at Key Stage 3.

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 1995 since when it has undergone a major reorganisation. There has been improvement on all the key issues identified last time. Results are at least as high as in 1995 after a period of disruption and with a higher proportion of pupils on free school meals. Management structures are more clearly defined. Attendance has improved.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

2002 Key Stage 3 results for both boys and girls were below the national average in all 3 subjects assessed, but above those of similar schools in English and science and well above in mathematics. The upward trend over the last five years has been above the national. At Key Stage 4 results are below the national average, but higher than those for similar schools. The upward trend since 1997 has been above the national. Generally pupils' achievement is satisfactory and often good. It is unsatisfactory in science and in ICT at Key Stage 4. Pupils with SEN make good progress. Results in the sixth form are close to national average, with boys outperforming girls. Students generally achieve what is expected of them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are generally satisfactory and often good or very good in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour overall is satisfactory and often good. However, in a small proportion of lessons, teaching and learning are affected by the behaviour of some pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships and pupils' personal development are satisfactory and often good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and improving.

After a period of disruption, behaviour and pupils' attitudes to school are improving. In the sixth form they are good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	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 high proportion of good and very good lessons there is good planning, an interesting mix of activities, and good management of pupils. Teachers know the pupils well and use positive feedback and rewards to motivate them. They are willing to try new strategies and ideas. This is particularly true in English, art, history, geography, the performing arts, PE and RE. In a minority of lessons in the main school the material is not motivating or basic classroom control is not fully established and learning is unsatisfactory. This particularly affects achievement in science and ICT. At Key Stage 4 this proportion is too high, although a high proportion of the other teaching and learning is good or very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	On balance the curriculum is broad and meets the needs of the pupils and students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory with good features, particularly the quality of specialist teaching and support, and the good relationships that have been established between staff and pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision for social and moral development and satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has implemented good systems to support all pupils and particular groups of pupils, particularly in its arrangements for transition from primary school and for inclusion through the Learning Support Centre.

The school has some innovative aspects to its curriculum, particularly with performing arts and an element of choice at Key Stage 3, but arrangements for ICT at Key Stage 4 mean some aspects are not fully covered. The requirement for collective worship is not fully met. Most parents are silent partners, but the school has good information systems and is beginning to communicate its successes.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher, senior staff and the great majority of middle managers carry out their responsibilities well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors carry out their responsibilities well and have good knowledge of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has effective systems in place to evaluate both outcomes and provision. It is aware of both strengths and weaknesses and has taken appropriate action.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are generally efficiently deployed.

The good leadership and management of the head teacher and key staff have brought the school successfully through a difficult period of transition. New appointments have begun to have an impact on provision. Resources, accommodation and staffing are sufficient for the school's needs. The principles of best value are applied in negotiating contracts or service agreements.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• They can approach the school with a problem.• The good quality of teaching.• Pupils' progress is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents have concerns about other pupils' behaviour.• Some parents do not feel they are well informed enough about their child.• Some parents disagree with the amount of homework given.

The inspection team endorsed the positive views of the parents. Behaviour is an issue in a minority of lessons, but the school has strong systems in place, which need to be applied consistently. Similarly, there is a need for greater consistency in the setting of homework. The school has implemented a good system for reporting to parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 130 students in the sixth form. Very few are from ethnic minorities or speak English as an additional language. The students are mainly from the main school. Some courses are mounted in partnership with other schools. There is a mix of levels and vocational courses are available.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form effectively meets the needs of the students. It is cost-effective. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good or very good. Retention is good and students generally achieve their potential and attain at or close to national averages.

Strengths

- Good and very good teaching in most subjects.
- Good and very good attitudes of the students to their work.
- Well led and managed.

What could be improved

- There is no taught programme of careers education and guidance.
- The curriculum enrichment of some students has been eroded by timetable arrangements this year.

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	Satisfactory. Results are average. Good teaching in a well managed department enables students to achieve in line with prior attainment.
Biology	Satisfactory. Results have been low, but standards are now average. Good teaching on a well organised course enables students to achieve in line with prior attainment.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Standards are average. Teaching and co-ordination of the course are satisfactory and students achieve in line with prior attainment.
ICT vocational	Satisfactory. Standards are below average, but students' achievement is in line with prior attainment as a result of satisfactory teaching and management.
Health and social care vocational	Good. Standards are below average, but students' achievement is good as a result of good teaching on a well managed course.
Art and design	Satisfactory. Standards are below average, but students' achievement is in line with prior attainment. There is good quality one-to-one

	guidance.
Geography	Good. Results are good and students achieve well as a result of very good teaching based on good subject knowledge and high expectations.
English	Good. Standards are average and students achieve well as a result of good management and teaching which emphasises students' own contributions.
French	Good. Standards are above average and students' achieve well as a result of very good teaching as part of a successful arrangement with another school.

Teaching and learning in the other subjects sampled in the sixth form was also often good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Guidance and support is generally satisfactory and students are well known to staff. Although there are opportunities to look to the next stage of their careers there is no comprehensive taught programme.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The new senior management team has successfully established a clear identity for the sixth form and put key systems in place to support it.

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 good quality of teaching. • The accessibility of their teachers. • That they are treated as young adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers advice. • Assessment and information about their progress. • Extra-curricular activities.

The inspection team endorses the students' positive views. A taught programme to supplement individual advice is an area for improvement. Assessment is generally thorough and has recently improved. Extra-curricular opportunities are extensive but the enrichment programme has been eroded this year.

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

1. 2002 Key Stage 3 results for both boys and girls were below the national average in all 3 subjects assessed, but above those of similar schools in English and science and well above in mathematics. The upward trend over the last five years has been above the national. At Key Stage 4 results are below the national average but higher than those for similar schools. The upward trend since 1997 has been above the national. Generally pupils' achievement is satisfactory and often good. It is unsatisfactory in science and in ICT at Key Stage 4. Pupils with SEN make good progress. Results in the sixth form are close to national average, with boys outperforming girls. Students generally achieve what is expected of them. The school analyses data carefully and has set challenging but realistic targets for next year.
2. At Key Stage 3 the trend over the last five years has been above the national. In 2001 results for both boys and girls were below the national average in all 3 subjects assessed and below those of similar schools, particularly in the higher grades. This year, although still below the national average, they are above or well above those for similar schools. Currently, standards are below the national average in English, mathematics, science, DT, ICT, art and French. In geography, history, music, PE and RE, they are at least in line with national expectations. Pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory, except in science, and is good in English, mathematics, music, history, geography, PE and RE.
3. At the end of Year 9 higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of sentence structure and can write for a variety of audiences. They can express their views clearly. A significant number of pupils still struggle with the skills of writing, but can sometimes make very relevant points orally. In mathematics, higher attaining pupils can apply theorems and use trial and improvement methods. In science higher attaining pupils have a satisfactory understanding of scientific concepts but other pupils' understanding is often unsatisfactory. Experimental skills are more generally unsatisfactory. Pupils achieve well in art and have well-developed painting and drawing skills; are beginning to represent people in action; and have a sound understanding of the process of developing a design. Pupils can use correct geographical terminology and have a good understanding of the work. They have a good historical knowledge and an understanding of concepts, such as change, and of chronology. Pupils' achievement in ICT is generally satisfactory, and good for those with SEN, although the needs of the gifted and talented are less well met. Higher attaining pupils can produce complex sentences in French, but presentation skills are weaker. They have a good grasp of religious language and a sound understanding of key concepts in RE, and are knowledgeable and reflective about the topics they have covered.

4. At Key Stage 4 the 2001 results for boys were below and for girls well below the average for all schools and for similar schools on the basis of free school meals. The trend since 1997 has been broadly in line with the national. GCSE results in 2002 have risen by more than the national average. They are higher than those for similar schools at 5 A-C and on average points score and well above at 5 A*-G. Currently, standards are below the national average in English, science, DT, ICT and music. They are at least in line with national averages in mathematics, art, French, history, geography, PE and RE. Pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory, except in science and ICT, and is good in mathematics, art, history, geography, PE and RE.
5. At the end of Year 11 higher attaining pupils can use language skilfully for specific effects. Average pupils are developing a wide vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils show understanding in their reading, but still have problems with writing. They continue to make relevant points orally. Pupils of all levels of attainment produce good quality mathematics coursework; average pupils can apply theorems; and lower-attainers can solve simple equations. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of scientific principles and abstract ideas. Average and lower attaining pupils have a limited grasp of ideas and only a minority of pupils is confident in organising and carrying out practical activities. Pupils from across the range of attainment produce good work in art, with interesting and highly personal responses from higher attainers. Pupils produce good annotated diagrams in geography and often use ICT well. In history, pupils can use historical sources and demonstrate their understanding of ideas by comparisons with the present day. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to write at length in French in their coursework. In games pupils can work well together and apply principles of play. In RE pupils show a wide knowledge and understanding of various forms of worships and their oral work is good, although some pupils' writing skills are not well developed.
6. Pupils on the SEN register make good progress at both key stages. At the start of Key Stage 3 many of these pupils enter the school with well below average levels of literacy skills. They receive additional literacy support that routinely results in significant improvement in their reading and comprehension skills that in turn enhances more independent learning across the curriculum. The school often modifies the workload faced by pupils with SEN in Key Stage 4 by reducing their option subjects and using the time released to help them fulfil their course work requirements more successfully in other areas. This leads to many students on the register achieving success in their final examinations and has led to increasing numbers of lower attaining pupils opting to remain at school to study in the sixth form.

Sixth form

7. Results on advanced courses overall in 2001 were close to national average, with boys on the A/AS courses performing above the national average. The results for students on the vocational courses were below the national average. The results in DT and geography were well above national averages. Results in biology were on average significantly lower than in students' other subjects. They were above in English Literature, DT and geography. Although English results in 2002 were lower, results were in line with expectations in most other subjects.
8. The school has set challenging targets and is on course to reach them. The retention rate of students on courses is good. In 2002 the proportion of students going on to higher education fell and that going into employment rose. The proportion doing neither fell sharply.

9. Students' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is at least satisfactory. Achievement is good on the health and social care course. It is good in geography and in Year 12 very good. Currently, predictions in biology and in ICT vocational are better for Year 12 and in English and French progress is good.
10. Students generally have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the content of the courses they follow. In biology they have good recall of previous work and apply it in new situations. Students on the health and social care course develop a broad knowledge of appropriate services. Students' knowledge of contemporary practice in art is sometimes limited. They demonstrate a good knowledge of geographical factors and features. In English they are able to draw on a range of texts for their answers. They have a secure grasp of grammar and syntax in French and are creative and accurate in its use.
11. The quality of pupils' oral skills is high in mathematics, presenting arguments well and with a good use of specialist vocabulary. In biology they carry out practical work with care, confidence and accuracy. Some students in DT work well freehand and all follow the criteria for the course, but some students' range of techniques is narrow. They show pride and care in their written and course work in ICT. In health and social care students deliver presentations with confidence and authority. They are confident in using a range of media and processes in art, but less confident in expressing their opinions. Students in geography organise their notes well and provide good quality diagrams. They construct an argument well in English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Main school

12. Overall pupils have satisfactory attitudes to school. Behaviour during the inspection was satisfactory overall and mostly good in lessons. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Good quality relationships are established between staff and pupils. The attendance rate is satisfactory.
13. Most pupils like school and display positive attitudes towards lessons and school activities. They show a good level of involvement in the range of activities that the school provides. Pupils of all ages are willing to take responsibility, for instance to represent their form and year group at the school council or to contribute their views to their representatives. Most pupils respond well to the rewards and sanctions system, in particular to praise from teachers. Pupils take care of materials and equipment. They are willing to talk about their work and school life when asked to do so. Although many students are courteous towards visitors, for instance by holding doors and offering directions, there is sometimes a marked lack of consideration by others when they congregate in the corridors and move between areas without offering assistance or making way, even when asked.

14. Behaviour around school is satisfactory overall. On the whole students move in an orderly way along corridors, although they do not keep to the correct side of the corridor or stairs, as an agreed school rule requires. Students generally respond quickly, although casually, to staff who intervene. Students make good use of breaks to enjoy time with their friends and they move back into lessons in a purposeful way. Behaviour in the dining room is particularly good as pupils keep to established routines and take advantage of the opportunities to socialise without rowdiness. Behaviour in assemblies is good. Here, students are attentive and interested in the activities. Students are well behaved when they use the learning resource centre either for study or for quiet recreation during breaks. Although most students respond well to the school's behaviour management strategies, for instance by showing pleasure in receiving praise and rewards or by heeding warnings, a minority of students persistently display unsatisfactory behaviour. The ultimate sanction that students can expect for very poor behaviour is exclusion from school. The periods of temporary exclusion and the numbers of pupils involved were high but are reducing. The vast majority of exclusions occur as a result of staff concern for the safety and wellbeing of other students in relation to the behaviour of the excluded student.
15. Behaviour in lessons is good overall and often very good. This helps students make the most of their opportunities to learn. The best examples of good behaviour and attitudes in lessons are where students pay full attention and listen and concentrate well. In these lessons, students show a good degree of motivation and are keen to participate, including in group work and discussions. They make valid observations, follow instructions and respect each other's contributions. Particularly positive behaviour and attitudes are demonstrated in RE lessons when students show eagerness, enthusiasm and excitement. In the minority of lessons where unsatisfactory behaviour occurs there is a tendency for students to chatter and not listen, take little heed of instructions and do little work. Sometimes students are too passive and do not ask for help when it is needed.
16. Students' personal development is satisfactory overall and is well promoted through good student and teacher rapport that increases students' confidence and helps them to know how to conduct themselves. Students generally get along together well and demonstrate a regard for the views and feelings of others. Students with specific responsibilities, such as school councillors, take their duties seriously. The school council is valued by students as a means to express their views. Students take pride in their achievements and particularly appreciate praise from teachers. They are willing to consider others' attitudes, values and beliefs when opportunities arise. The wearing of uniform is expected by the school and students generally comply with expectations, although a significant number are incorrectly dressed in PE lessons. In the majority of lessons, students and staff get along together well and this encourages mature attitudes and raises self-esteem.
17. Attendance is satisfactory and has been improving steadily. The rate of unauthorised absence is broadly similar to other schools nationally. The vast majority of students arrive at school on time and lessons begin promptly throughout the school day.

Sixth form

18. Sixth form students have mature attitudes towards their work and are satisfied that they are treated as responsible adults and are challenged to do their best. The vast majority agree that they enjoy life in the sixth form and value the experiences offered to them. Attendance is satisfactory and the vast majority of students stay for the full two years.

19. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and this makes a very good contribution to students' personal development through creating a positive climate for mature discussion that students readily respond to. Relationships between sixth formers and younger students are constructive with some good projects undertaken jointly. For instance, students on performing arts courses audition volunteers from the rest of the school as part of their management of the annual school production and present themselves as good role models.
20. Students are able to work independently and use their study areas appropriately. In lessons, students are well motivated and keen to participate. They are well prepared for their lessons and are willing to contribute their views and opinions. They behave in a calm and interested manner and many are able to present confidently in groups. They respect others' work and views and are proud of their own achievements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. After a period of disruption and with many staff new to the school teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection. Over the school as a whole nearly two-thirds of teaching is good or better, with one in five very good. Fewer than one in ten lessons is unsatisfactory. In the main school 60% of teaching and learning is good or better and one in five lessons is very good. However, over one in ten is unsatisfactory. In the high proportion of good and very good lessons there is good planning, an interesting mix of activities and good management of pupils. Teachers know the pupils well and use positive feedback and rewards to motivate them. They are willing to try new strategies and ideas. This is particularly true in English, art, history, geography, the performing arts, PE and RE. In a minority of lessons in the main school the material is not motivating or basic classroom control is not fully established and learning is unsatisfactory. This particularly affects achievement in science and ICT. At Key Stage 4 this proportion is too high for teaching overall to be satisfactory, although a high proportion of the other teaching and learning is good or very good.
22. In the majority of lessons there are examples of good and very good practice to draw on. Teachers use their good knowledge of their subject well in their planning. For example, they plan thoroughly to provide clear objectives lesson by lesson in English. They plan good sequences of learning in mathematics. Planning in French ensures progression for the pupils over a series of lessons. In PE also there are well-planned progressions of skills and practices. Projects are carefully planned to build on prior experience in art. In DT good planning enables resources to be prepared effectively in advance. In RE, the sharing of good planning with high expectations with the long-term supply teacher provides a good basis for consistent teaching. In these examples the clear lesson objectives arrived at are then shared with the pupils, so that they know what is expected of them. In ICT, for example, this contributes to their being well engaged with the learning activities and working at a good pace.
23. Specialist knowledge is also used well, for example in DT, to give good advice and guidance and a variety of help sheets or booklets. It is also used well to advise pupils on how to succeed in examinations and to help them to improve quality of answers to examination questions, for example in French and geography. Good knowledge is also the basis of skilful questioning in these good lessons. For example, in English it is used where there are alternative answers and pupils have to justify what they say. In mathematics it is used to extend understanding. In history open-ended questions pose real challenges to the pupils, to which they respond well.
24. Pupils are well motivated in the majority of lessons. In English, for example, there is an

intelligent mix of activities. Group work is well managed. Short, relevant tasks are provided for lower attaining pupils who have a short attention span. In mathematics a good pace of learning is encouraged, by setting short-term deadlines. Behaviour strategies are generally used well to overcome chatter and inattentiveness. In science pupils know what the lesson is about and activities are well chosen to be challenging but within the pupils' grasp. Topics are relevant and relationships warm and lively. Encouragement and praise are used to help pupils feel positive about their work. In art, very good relationships and a positive working atmosphere help all pupils to achieve well. In citizenship, stimulating resources are used to encourage discussion. In DT, good demonstrations and hands-on experience are provided. In geography, there is a variety of teaching styles to interest pupils. In history well-organised resources are used to support a wide range of teaching styles and activities. Very good use is made of reinforcement and praise to motivate pupils. In French high expectations of pronunciation and intonation are combined with praise for the pupils' efforts. Teachers anticipate and prevent incipient bad behaviour. In music also, pupils are motivated by the varied activities, stimulated by a variety of styles and imaginative use of technology to support pupils' compositions. In drama, good demonstrations set the tone. Good relationships and an insistence on mutual respect enable pupils to take risks and perform without embarrassment. In PE there are good demonstrations of particular actions or drills. Good relationships enable poor behaviour to be challenged immediately. In RE interesting and fun tasks help pupils move towards an understanding of difficult ideas.

25. In the unsatisfactory lessons there are sometimes inappropriate levels of expectations. In some science lessons activities are either too hard or too easy so that part of the class lose interest or are unsure what to do. A lack of clear instructions or explanations means that after low-level activities pupils are still unclear about the main point of the lesson. There is little attempt to motivate pupils by putting science in context or link it with everyday life. In ICT also objectives are sometimes vague and pupils are not sure what is expected of them. Challenging activities are not provided for the highest attainers. In science, insufficient control over behaviour results in pupils not being quiet and not listening. In some ICT lessons behaviour is also not well managed. In some French and PE lessons relationships have not been established where behaviour can be successfully challenged.
26. Literacy is generally well promoted across the subjects. There is a consistent policy of displaying key words. Some staff refer specifically to the display when the words arise in a lesson. Teachers explain new terminology clearly and carefully, for instance "placebo" in a lesson on health education. Some departments take particular care to create opportunities to develop literacy, for example when pupils wrote poems based on mathematics. Writing frames are used in history to help pupils construct a text. However, no examples were observed of modelling writing as a whole-class activity. Texts are often used as a stimulus in drama. In history, shared reading is used as a strategy. Oral work is particularly well developed in RE where pupils discuss religious, moral and social issues through diverse cultures and traditions. Pupils themselves feel that drama helps to improve their skills in speaking.

27. Support for the younger pupils with SEN is good when small groups with below average literacy skills and with low self-esteem are withdrawn from lessons for additional support. This work is well planned and effective and is characterised by good interpersonal relationships within the groups and a sense of fun and expectation. It is generally well complemented by support within classrooms by learning support assistants (LSAs) who usually work well with subject teachers. In one geography lesson for example the teacher and LSA had devised an appropriate range of recording activities, well matched and in line with the pupils' previous achievements, which enabled them to consolidate their literacy skills while also effectively developing geographical enquiry skills. In a small minority of lessons at both key stages LSAs can spend too much time sitting passively while the teacher is talking so that opportunities for small groups working with an adult are missed. The school maintains satisfactory individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with statements of SEN and subject teachers reflect their targets well in their planning for pupils' individual needs. IEP's are not yet in place for all pupils at the school action plus stage as recommended by the revised SEN code of practice.

Sixth Form

28. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is never less than satisfactory. In three-quarters of lessons it is good or better and in over a quarter is very good or excellent.
29. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled in putting it across. Teachers consistently plan well. In mathematics they set high expectations and challenging questioning. They also provide good quality notes to support the students. In biology also they have good knowledge and plan well. Their explanations are clear. In ICT the objectives of lessons are clear and shared with the students. On the health and social care vocational course there is well co-ordinated delivery by a team of teachers providing different specialist input. There is good support by a course tutor for each student, a feature they appreciate. There is good preparation for the visits that are integral to the course. In geography, teachers challenge students with their high expectations. They offer good guidance on examination technique and coursework. They deploy a good range of styles to motivate the students, including innovative use of video conferencing. In English, useful materials are provided to support students' learning and a variety of activities. The experience gained on theatre visits is well drawn on. In French, very good relationships encourage students to improve their performance. Excellent resources are provided to support the development of writing. There is not enough access to products for examining and analysing in DT. There are not enough opportunities in art to engage with original and contemporary art and to see art and design in context.
30. There is an emphasis on involving students actively in their learning. In mathematics there is a strong emphasis on students applying reasoning themselves. The teachers present them with choices and they accept and welcome the responsibility. In biology, activities are deliberately planned to provide a good level of student involvement. There is regular use of practical work and paired activities. In geography, the aims of the lesson are shared at the beginning and used with the students at the end to check progress and understanding. In English, students are involved in paired work and individual investigations. They have opportunities to make their own presentations. In whole-class lessons teachers use questioning to involve all students, and as a result they are good at articulating independent views. ICT is well used by students to support their study time, but it is underused on the art and health and social care courses and limited facilities restricts independent research in geography and DT.

31. Teachers are generally good at ensuring that students know how well they are doing. In mathematics, marking is detailed and helpful, identifying intermediate steps to improvement. In science, notes are regularly checked and marking and assessment well used. Good one-to-one in-depth discussions are a feature of DT and art. Marking of ICT coursework is thorough and gives adequate guidance for improvement. There is good oral feedback in health and social care although not enough written assessment. In French, too, there is good individual feedback.

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

Main School

32. The school is working successfully to maintain its broad and balanced curriculum and to satisfy that element of their mission statement to make the curriculum more flexible by meeting the needs of all learners in the school. The curriculum contains the full range of National Curriculum subjects and RE.
33. By the end of Year 7, Key Stage 3 pupils are given the opportunity to study an additional subject of their choosing for two years, either out of a particular interest of the pupil or as a means to early preparation for their examination years in school. The school is monitoring this early initiative and trying hard to meet pupils' requests, particularly for extra lessons in ICT. The practical subjects also have some difficulty with producing quality outcomes within the 50-minute single periods. This time allowance for single periods is further restricted when pupils move between lessons when there is no break.
34. Almost all subjects have well structured and progressive schemes of work in place at Key Stage 3 that meet statutory requirements, but few subjects have opportunities to enhance pupils' learning through the use of ICT.
35. At Key Stage 4 all pupils are expected to study a range of subjects including English, mathematics and double science and are given 3 option blocks from which to choose further subjects to study. A majority of pupils who do not study a modern foreign language (MFL) can choose to do a work-related course, either leading to a GNVQ or the new vocational GCSE qualification. The deputy head teacher is currently meeting with the local further education colleges and cluster schools to strengthen links and opportunities for pupils on vocational courses, to broaden their experiences in their chosen subjects.
36. ICT is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4 and does not meet statutory curriculum requirements. For the majority of pupils ICT is not sufficiently integrated within their examination subjects reducing their opportunity to enhance their capabilities. Schemes of work are in place, or being finalised, in all subject areas, which allow for progression in learning and take account of pupils with differing needs. Units of work within the subjects are generally well matched to pupils' abilities.

37. The school is seeking to improve its study support programme and is determined to reward the achievements of the pupils more effectively by building on recent initiatives to raise the profile of achievement at GCSE with pupils and parents. Revision classes are operating effectively in some subjects, although the school recognises the need to establish strategies for examination preparation in all departments and for all year groups. Opportunities for pupils to attend extra-curricular lessons and clubs are generally good. Year 11 pupils recently took part in an awareness raising day called "The Learning Game" whose aim was to raise expectations and discuss strategies for preparing pupils for their examinations. Study residential weekends for carefully targeted pupils in Year 11 have been held for the last three years. One was also introduced for Year 9 last year. Some of the teachers and appointed learning mentors give good support to individual pupils with their learning and revision programmes.
38. There is good awareness of literacy across the curriculum and good practice in several departments. The transition work between the local primary schools and the mathematics department is good. However, there are as yet only limited opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills other than in mathematics. A whole-school in-service day on literacy was held in 2001. Each department then produced its own action plan. Reading is developed in a number of subjects as well as English, when pupils are invited to read out questions or to read aloud from textbooks. The school also enlists the help of older pupils to work with younger ones in paired reading. All Year 7 pupils are given a reading test to help identify their needs. Some subjects give pupils particularly good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening, for example RE, history and English. Tutorial sessions are also used to develop literacy. Spelling tests on key words are held and, occasionally, time is set aside for independent reading. Lessons using the library are built into the English curriculum at Key Stage 3. A new co-ordinator for literacy across the curriculum has just been appointed. She sees her task as building on the good practice that already exists and achieving greater consistency across departments.
39. Provision for careers education and guidance (CEG) is satisfactory overall, with some strengths and areas that require development. At the time of the inspection the CEG co-ordinator had been in post for only half a term. There are satisfactory taught programmes for Years 9 to 11 which are supplemented by special events such as careers days and theatre group presentations. The partnership with the new Connexions Service is developing well and personal advisers provide good support. They have a detailed individual careers interview with all Year 11 pupils, from which careers action plans are produced. There is a week's work experience for Year 11 pupils, but this requires further development to link to classroom based activities. A satisfactory CEG library is available for researching careers, but the use of computers for this purpose is unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator has already made some very good links with local employers who are becoming involved in supporting school activities.
40. The curriculum is organised well to meet the needs of all pupils with SEN. Arrangements for their withdrawal from lessons in order to receive extra help for literacy or for help in gaining independence and mobility training or counselling are all time limited and carefully evaluated to minimise the impact of withdrawal upon the curriculum these pupils receive.
41. The school aims to provide an education for life and work in partnership with the community. These aims are reflected in the strength of the moral and social education provided. Spiritual education is sound although the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Cultural development is sound overall but opportunities for students to develop multicultural awareness are less well established.

42. Provision for spiritual education is satisfactory. RE makes a very effective contribution to this aspect, particularly in Key Stage 4, where all students take the subject. Opportunities are provided for pupils to explore issues and feelings through lessons such as drama and English, where younger pupils reflect on and write about their childhood memories. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own means of expression through the visual and performing arts. Their achievement is celebrated through many performances and events throughout the school year and in attractive displays of artwork in the art and design department and around the school. Pupils learn to become reflective and more self-aware, as in Year 7 where circle time discussions help foster self-esteem and help children to recognise the factors affecting how they feel. In school assemblies and tutor time, a 'theme of the week' is explored. During the week of the inspection the sixth form assembly provided a positive and inspiring start to the day relating Remembrance Day and charitable work to the context of students' own lives.
43. Moral development is good. The school has clearly set out expectations for behaviour and an effective rewards system. Students can distinguish right from wrong and are helped to explore moral issues, for example in a Year 7 citizenship lesson pupils began to devise their own behaviour rules. Pupils' views are represented by the work of the school council. Staff value the contributions of individuals and good behaviour and respect for others are modelled through the very good relationships between staff and pupils observed in lessons.
44. Social development is good. The programme of extra-curricular activities provided is extensive and opportunities for students to work together after school and on residential visits are good. They can develop social skills through learning in drama, music and sports and learn to take responsibility for their own learning through the use of their daily planners and in lessons such as mathematics. Sixth form students act as mentors and provide support to younger students through paired reading and some do voluntary work in local primary schools.
45. Cultural development is sound. Students participate in theatre, art gallery and museum visits both locally and to London. There are annual visits abroad such as last year's sixth form trip to the art galleries in Amsterdam. The residential visit for sixth form students to Sunderland University provided good induction to higher education. In English, art and music, students are encouraged to study examples of the arts and literature of other cultures. The performing arts department involves many students in performances such as the whole-school musical, the 'Rocky Monster Show' and performances for local primary schools. Opportunities for students to have first-hand experience of the work of other cultures through visiting speakers, artists and performers, could be further developed.

Sixth form

46. The sixth form curriculum is generally broad and balanced, provides students with opportunities to continue their studies from the main school, in new subject areas if required and meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. There are up to 22 Level 3 courses available for students to study, including approximately 17 A2 and AS and 5 vocational courses at GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Levels. The broad range of subjects can be chosen from five separate columns in Year 12 and a column for students to pursue a range of activities and studies to further broaden their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, including key skills. This 'entitlement' column, however, is not accessible to all students in Year 12 and is the result of the sixth form curriculum being compiled in collaboration with two other schools in the locality. The new head of sixth form is working hard to resolve this issue and improve on the quality and experiences for all students.
47. Although there are no specific plans for work experience for all students in the sixth form many students either have good experiences as part of their courses, such as health and social care, or get involved in the local community in other ways. Some students, for example, spend half a day a week working in the local primary schools, others are organising a Christmas party for local old age pensioners. A Chinese student works with the Chinese community during the week and plays in their band and some students have started a pop music band in school.
48. Revision programmes for examinations are organised within many subject areas. The school recently organised a day event on independent study skills for all students that they intend to follow up in the near future, following its success. There are also residentials, theatre trips and a variety of visits arranged to broaden the students' education, including a proposed visit to an art gallery in Paris next year. Fieldwork in geography, enrichment within the biology, and DT courses are limited and should be extended.
49. Sports, studies, French, psychology, travel and tourism and business studies are examples of shared courses with the two local schools. French, for example, is taught in each of the three schools on a rotational basis, is working well and has improved since the last inspection.
50. Schemes of work are well planned in many of the subject areas and students are given or produce schedules and time plans to assist them in managing their time and meeting deadlines with coursework. These are used well and appreciated by students. The lack of ICT facilities and opportunities is a general concern for enhancing the capabilities for all students in the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Main School

51. Pupils and students are well cared for and supported by staff through the strong pastoral system. Guidance managers oversee the system effectively and are skilled and conscientious in promoting high standards amongst staff and students. Staff provide continuity of care by moving through the school with their tutor group. Staff who are subject to changes within this system take care to get to know new groups of pupils as a priority. The tutorial system is well used to promote desirable personal and academic skills; for instance when time is devoted to learning key spellings from student planners. The work of the learning support centre is central to the pastoral system and provides a high quality and wide range of support for pupils and staff with specific needs. Overall, relationships between staff and students are good and make a significant contribution to students' welfare and personal development.
52. Arrangements to smooth the transition of pupils from primary school to secondary school are extremely good and a very strong feature of the school. Liaison with primary schools is extensive and pupils are given many opportunities to get to know the school and staff before the move up. Staff share a wide range of information that is helping them to meet pupils' academic and personal needs. Pupils are very happy with the induction arrangements and parents of new pupils generally feel that the school is living up to their expectations.
53. Overall, the school satisfactorily promotes pupils' personal development. There are a few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. Representatives from each year group work as school councillors to raise and consider pupils' views on a range of issues designed to enhance the quality of pupils' and students' experiences in school. Pupils and students support charitable events and good causes. Parents believe that the school promotes good attitudes and values and helps their child to become mature and responsible.
54. The school has established appropriate policies that are helping to promote good behaviour within school as a normal expectation. In their dealings with pupils and other staff, the staff demonstrates the kind of respectful behaviour they expect of pupils. The vast majority of teachers remind pupils about how to behave well when they observe unsatisfactory conduct and take appropriate opportunities to highlight the consequences of continuing poor behaviour. The vast majority of teachers successfully minimise any disruption of learning caused by poor behaviour through skilful handling of pupils in lessons and through the consistent application of established whole-school behaviour management strategies. The school has well established disciplinary procedures designed to meet more challenging instances of poor behaviour, managed by senior members of staff.
55. Arrangements for promoting and monitoring attendance are good. Tutors make appropriate use of registration periods to check absence, including receiving formal notification from parents. Registration procedures meet statutory requirements and it is a good feature of this school that registration is completed at the beginning of each lesson as well at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Late arrivals must enter through the main reception area and are carefully recorded. Information about attendance, absence and punctuality are carefully monitored by staff and the education welfare service, to provide support for those who develop erratic or infrequent attendance. Pupils who achieve full attendance are rewarded, for example with a day trip to a theme park.

56. The school has adopted local authority procedures for managing health and safety but these are not always implemented sufficiently rigorously to ensure that all risks are identified and reduced or eliminated. The school has taken action to reduce the opportunities for smoking in the students' toilets but this means that some toilets are locked, requiring some students to spend time seeking a member of staff to open them or to walk to distant blocks. Locally agreed procedures are established for child protection and staff are aware of who to notify about concerns. Staff with designated responsibilities are trained accordingly but training, other than updates on procedures, has not yet extended to the rest of the staff. Guidance in the otherwise very useful handbook for staff is very limited in information about signs and symptoms to be aware of how to respond appropriately to the full range of situations.
57. The school has developed an extensive and informative tracking system for recording individual pupil progress, from their respective primary school Key Stage 2 level results, through to Year 11. The system includes setting individual pupils challenging targets, to spur them to achieve their next level of progress, based on accrued information from test and examination results, and teachers' comments. A target setting day is organised for pupils and parents to meet with their teachers so that they can negotiate and obtain early agreement on future learning targets. The core subjects of English and mathematics are utilising this system effectively and have developed assessment practices for supporting and informing pupils and students on what needs to be learned to achieve the targets. Science and the foundation subjects are at different stages of transition within the school's marking and assessment policy, and need to continue developing strategies for supporting individual pupils' and students' needs.
58. The school has established clear identification and assessment arrangements that determine which pupils should be placed and then subsequently maintained on the SEN register. In addition the recent establishment of an in-school learning support centre has created a high quality learning environment from which the school is now able to provide a wide range of intervention strategies for students of all abilities, especially those with SEN. This means the school is now implementing a common set of referral procedures for all forms of intervention and support under clear and effective line management of the various strands of intervention, including the work of the learning mentors and the school nurse. For pupils with statements of SEN, the school fully implements the provision specified in their statements.
59. The school successfully implements an inclusive approach to learning. Most subject teachers know all the pupils with SEN well and employ effective approaches to teaching that use clear learning objectives within carefully planned and well-structured lessons; this helps these pupils to learn and mature successfully. Such staff routinely model the kind of respectful and considerate behaviour they themselves expect of pupils and normally, through their skilful management of pupils' behaviour and the consistent application of the schools behaviour policy, well-established teachers minimise any disruption of learning caused by poor behaviour. However, some of the less well-established teachers do experience difficulties achieving the standards of pupil behaviour necessary to sustain and promote good learning. This can sometimes result in the toleration of unsatisfactory behaviour and learning or the unpredictable application of the range of disciplinary sanctions employed within the school.

Sixth Form

Assessment

60. The school's tracking system for recording is extended for those staying on into the sixth form. The system continues to set individual students challenging targets to achieve their next level of progress, which is based on accrued information from test and examination results, and teachers' comments. A target setting day is organised for students and parents to meet with their teachers so that they can negotiate and obtain early agreement on future learning targets. A progress record is maintained by the students and kept under half-termly review by tutors and subject teachers. Feedback to students on their progress is satisfactory and is good in French, mathematics and English. Many students also receive additional and effective advice from carefully chosen mentors when experiencing challenges with coursework, preparing for examinations or facing personal issues.

Advice, support and guidance

61. The quality of the educational and personal support and guidance given to students is good overall although there is a lack of taught careers education and guidance. Students who shared their views with inspectors were glad that they had joined the sixth form and indicated that they would recommend other pupils to do the same. They are satisfied that they are treated as responsible adults.
62. The sixth form provides an extension of the strong pastoral support available in the main school. There is a high level of daily contact possible between sixth form students and key staff and this, combined with the very good relationships based on mutual respect that students and staff enjoy, means that a range of information, support and guidance is readily available as needed. Each student is allocated a tutor who provides general support and guidance and students have easy access to support from the assistant head teacher with a responsibility for managing the sixth form. Students receive good quality guidance on how to improve their work and are encouraged to prepare carefully for lessons. During lessons students are encouraged to share their research findings and teachers, who serve as good role models, motivate students to discuss issues and express their views in a mature way. Students are provided with a study area and a base where they can meet each other informally during leisure periods. These areas are well used and cared for by students. Behaviour in the sixth form is very good. Good attendance in the sixth form is actively encouraged and very well monitored.
63. There is no taught programme of CEG for sixth form students and no work experience, except for some studying vocational subjects. In a students' questionnaire completed before the inspection, almost half of the students thought that they were not well advised by the school and careers advisers on what to do after leaving. The recently appointed head of sixth form and the new CEG co-ordinator are aware of the weaknesses in provision and intend to address them. The personal advisers from the new Connexions Service are providing more support and guidance for students on opportunities after their courses. The school has some good links with higher education institutions and students are well supported in applying to universities. Links with employers are very limited. The CEG library provides some careers information and university prospectuses, but research opportunities using ICT are poor, as there are no CEG computer programmes.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Main school

64. The school works well in partnership with parents. Information provided for parents is of a very good quality and the school has recently sought parents' views on various aspects of its work.
65. The vast majority of parents are satisfied that their child likes school, that the school is approachable with questions or a problem and that their child makes good progress. They believe that teaching is of good quality. A significant minority of parents completing questionnaires disagrees that behaviour is good, that the school works closely with parents and that they are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. The general view of parents attending the meeting with inspectors is that behaviour in school is improving. Parents also feel that the amount of homework given is not right and some parents who met inspectors expressed concerns about the quality of homework set. The vast majority of parents who responded to a school survey of their views indicated that they are satisfied with the school's performance overall and that the school has improved over the last year.
66. The school prospectus is a thorough and clearly presented document. It gives a good range of information on school life, including routines, the curriculum and the results of public examinations for the previous year. It includes all of the information that parents are entitled to receive. The prospectus is supplemented by brochures giving a high level of detailed information for students entering Key Stage 4 and the sixth form which are very useful to parents also. Consultation sessions are held at key points in the school year so that parents and staff can discuss students' progress. A particularly good feature of this school is the target setting session when parents and students meet staff to discuss progress and set targets to work towards in the future. Annual written reports are detailed and personal to individuals. However, a significant minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the information that they receive about their child's progress and the working partnership in general. Parents who met with inspectors generally feel that the school is open to their views, that consultation sessions are useful and that they are given good opportunities to talk to tutors. They are confident that the school would contact them if problems arose.
67. Parents are satisfactorily involved in the life of the school. In particular, the school welcomes parents to discuss any concerns and emphasises the importance it places on maintaining a good working partnership. About half of parents attend consultations with staff on their child's progress and the vast majority meets with teachers to discuss their child's future targets. Parents respond well to opportunities to attend discussions and workshops on specific issues. In particular, parents are very well involved when their child is transferring from primary to secondary education, directly through visiting the school and meeting the staff and indirectly through their child's involvement in a wide range of activities with the high school during the latter part of their primary school life. The school works well with parents whose children are experiencing difficulties in school by providing timely information and opportunities to discuss remedies with staff. There is a small group of parents and teachers who organise social and fundraising events that are well attended by parents and students. The school has provided parents with the opportunity to be further involved by seeking their views on pastoral and academic aspects of its work and twenty-two per cent of parents responded to this questionnaire giving the school statistically reliable data to inform its future work.

68. In recent years the school has made determined and successful efforts to improve links with the parents of pupils' with SEN. This has led to parents now being able to talk more informally with their children's teachers. The school is now also incorporating the views of such parents into their children's annual review reports, for example showing when forms of joint action have been agreed to help individual pupils' progress.

Sixth Form

69. The majority of parents who have expressed a view are satisfied with what is provided. A few issues were raised by parents in the questionnaire but there was no indication from discussions that these features were specific to the sixth form.
70. Students value the sixth form provision and the vast majority says that they would advise other students to join. They believe that they are well taught and that their teachers are accessible for information and support. They are satisfied that they are treated as responsible adults. These views predominate in student responses by questionnaire. However, a minority of students is dissatisfied with careers advice, the assessment of their work and information that they receive about their progress. Several students are dissatisfied with the range of extra-curricular activities available to them.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Main School

71. The good leadership and management of the head teacher and key staff have brought the school successfully through a difficult period of transition - amalgamation, extensive new building and major staff turnover - with an improvement in the main indicators of success. They are giving the new school a distinct ethos focused on inclusivity, with the Learning Support Centre at the heart, an increased proportion of pupils with statements of SEN and accessibility for disabled pupils throughout the site.
72. The governing body is fully involved in the school's priorities. Their meetings are well attended. Governors recognise the problems the new school has had to overcome. They are realistic but ambitious for their school. They have worked hard to balance the budget while recruiting the key staff the school needed. They value the regular reports by the head teacher and the involvement of the deputies with their committees. Governors are linked with subject areas.
73. The school's priorities are clearly identified, realistic in scope and well set out in its plans. The school has prioritised raising attainment across all key stages and identified the activities for 2002-3 - to develop teaching and learning styles and to develop assessment. This sits within a three year rolling plan which also identifies as activities: the enhancement of ICT skills; the development of study support; the learning mentor and gifted and talented strands; effective use of data; mentoring and target setting; support for SEN; self-assessment. The other priority is to develop the ethos and image of the new 11-18 school. The plans clearly identify the range of analysis and consultation on which they are based.
74. The staff handbook clearly sets out responsibilities and procedures. It is a thorough and informative document, including, for example, outline responsibilities of key members of staff and of the behaviour management system.
75. The head teacher has been in post five years. 5 out of 7 members of the leadership

team are new since September 2000 and these new appointments have begun to have an impact on provision. The members of the team share the same inclusive vision. As individuals they are not only on top of their responsibilities, but good role models for other staff in the way they carry out their duties. They work flexibly and team up to drive key aspects of the school's priorities, for example teaching and learning and assessment.

76. The leadership and management of co-ordinators of subjects, welfare and guidance and other aspects of the school are generally at least satisfactory, except in science and DT. It is good in mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, performing arts and RE. It is very good in English, history and geography. Documentation, including plans and schemes of work, is generally good. The school is currently seeking to appoint a teacher to co-ordinate SEN provision to work as a manager within the school's learning support arrangements. The assistant head teacher with line management responsibility for learning support is undertaking this role at present and has provided particularly effective leadership to the staff working with pupils with SEN during a period of rapid transition and development and has laid a secure basis for further sustained development.
77. The school has an effective system of self-review. The members of the senior management team are attached to curriculum areas and attend their meetings. There are half-termly review meetings with curriculum managers. These have clear agendas. The meeting in the first half of the autumn term is a review of the results and has been attended by the head teacher. The meetings for curriculum managers, and for guidance managers as a group, are chaired by the deputies in rotation to assist the sharing of ideas. The curriculum managers observe teaching and sample pupils' work. They report to the senior management team, who also carry out sample observations of teaching and learning. There are also regular checks on pupils' planners by the guidance managers. The referral arrangements under the school's behaviour management system enable monitoring not only of which pupils are being referred, but also by whom. Management and governors are also regularly evaluating areas of the school's provision. Performance management is well embedded. The school has sought reviews by external consultants on behaviour and on parental perceptions and these have been used in its planning. It makes full use of the LEA's external monitoring arrangements. Curriculum managers are sometimes paired and observe teaching in other departments.
78. The head teacher and senior management team are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have taken appropriate action to strengthen the school's behaviour management systems. More recently they have put in place support for the management of the science department and are addressing the whole-school issue of ICT provision.
79. Resources, accommodation and staffing are sufficient for the school's needs. The principles of best value are applied in negotiating contracts and service agreements. Income and expenditure per pupil are relatively high with low costs for teaching staff and high on support staff. Levels and match of staffing is generally satisfactory and often good, although the number of qualified mathematics teachers available does not meet curriculum needs and some non-specialist teaching affects the delivery of PE.

80. The re-organisation of the school two years ago created a new staff. There have been further changes since then, and some departments are now creating new teams, for example English, science, ICT and music. The improvement of teaching and learning is the current priority for the school. When the school was re-organised, there were training needs for staff from both the Key Stages 2-3 phase and Key Stages 3-4. These have now been met, or the teachers involved have left altogether. The senior management team is keen to use expertise and good practice that exist within school, so they are planning more training in-house. It is already the case that groups, for example a whole department, identify their needs and organise a training session in school as a team.
81. Monitoring is used to identify issues that can then be addressed through training. There is also the use of peer review so that observations can take place for learning purposes, not only for monitoring. The structure of performance management has now reached the conclusion of its first cycle. Identification of training needs arises from this, and staff can also request training in specific aspects. Teaching and non-teaching staff, for example learning mentors and classroom assistants, request training. There is an effective and supportive system for newly qualified teachers. Observations provide useful advice and areas for improvement. The school is now aiming to achieve 'Investors in People'.
82. Accommodation is generally good. The hall, offices, learning resource centre and learning support centre are good central facilities. Accommodation is good in English, mathematics, science, geography and history and for SEN. Some of the accommodation for resistant materials is out of date. Learning resources are good in English and generally sufficient in other subjects, except for some shortages in art.
83. Resources are generally used efficiently, but ICT is not well enough used across the subjects and problems with the network are not dealt with quickly enough. Resistant materials accommodation is not well managed in terms of tidiness and health and safety.

Sixth form

84. The sixth form is well led and managed. The head of the sixth form joined the school in January 2002. She has set about making improvements. Her first priority was to renovate the sixth form area. She has also reviewed the guidance given to prospective sixth formers. All pupils in Year 11 are now interviewed, in conjunction with Connexions advisers. Pupil preferences are taken into account in order to drop courses that are not viable and to introduce new ones.
85. The guidance given to students is well focused. Students who want to change courses early in Year 12 are given good advice and support. 'Progress sheets' are now being introduced to ensure improved tracking of students' progress towards their targets throughout their time in the sixth form. This process was agreed between all three high schools where there are link courses. There is additional provision in the form of master-classes and a study skills day was organised for all sixth formers.
86. Lessons are monitored within departments to ensure effective teaching and learning. The head of sixth form intends to have an overview.
87. Leadership and management of the subjects inspected in detail are generally at least satisfactory. They are good in mathematics, biology, French and health and social care, and very good in English, history and geography.

Resources

88. The sixth form is cost-effective. Expenditure matches income and good use made of courses shared with other schools. Teachers' expertise is well matched to the requirements of the courses offered. The sixth form social area and study area are good central facilities. Other accommodation is well matched to the courses offered.
89. Learning resources are sufficient in art, biology and in DT. However, they are limited for independent research and for ICT in biology, and the computer aided design/computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) aspect of DT is limited by inadequate ICT resources. Resources are good except for access to ICT, in mathematics, health and social care, ICT, English, French and geography.
90. Use of the available resources is satisfactory in mathematics and in DT. It is good in biology, art, English, ICT, geography, and French. It is very good in health and social care.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to improve teaching and learning the governors and management of the school should:

- strengthen the monitoring of teaching and learning and share existing good practice;
- make every effort to ensure that teaching and subject expertise matches the demands of the curriculum;
- ensure that lessons engage and motivate pupils;
- ensure consistent expectations of pupil behaviour and application of the school's behaviour management procedures.
(Paragraphs 21-24, 25, 59, 114, 180, 196)

92. In order to improve teaching and learning in science they should:

- choose activities that motivate and engage all the pupils, especially for middle attainers at Key Stage 4;
- improve the management of the subject, particularly in monitoring the quality of teaching.
(Paragraphs 116, 124, 125, 127)

93. In order to improve ICT they should:

- strengthen the cross-curricular provision for ICT;
- ensure the full breadth of the ICT curriculum, particularly the sensing and control aspects;
- improve the teaching of ICT;
- provide further focused professional development in ICT for teachers across the school.
(Paragraphs 83, 165, 166, 168, 173, 174)

94. In order to improve the consistency of assessment they should:

- clarify a timescale for fully implementing the school's assessment system;
- focus on the effective implementation already under way in English and mathematics.
(Paragraphs 57, 104, 114, 131, 152, 199)

Sixth form

95. In order to improve the good quality of provision in the sixth form, the governors and management of the school should:

- Implement a coherent programme of careers education and guidance throughout the sixth form.
(Paragraph 63)
- Restore a common entitlement to curriculum enrichment.
(Paragraph 46)

96. **Other weaknesses not included in the issues for action, which should be considered by the school:**

- The overall arrangements for the management of design and technology.
(Paragraph 145)
- The health and safety issues brought to the attention of the school.
(Paragraphs 56, 146)
- Consistent enforcement of the rules for movement on corridors and stairs.
(Paragraph 14)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	178
	Sixth form	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	1	33	71	52	18	3	0
Percentage	1	19	40	29	10	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	12	27	13	0	0	0
Percentage	5	22	49	24	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	980	130
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	247	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	173	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

81

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.2
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	115	96	211

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54 (52)	56 (62)	62 (58)
	Girls	75 (64)	76 (48)	60 (43)
	Total	129 (116)	132 (110)	122 (101)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (65)	63 (61)	58 (58)
	National	66 (64)	66 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (13)	36 (32)	17 (16)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41 (53)	71 (67)	64 (41)
	Girls	63 (58)	83 (59)	60 (35)
	Total	104 (111)	154 (126)	124 (76)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	49 (62)	73 (70)	59 (42)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (25)	33 (33)	21 (20)
	National	32 (31)	45 (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	93 (93)	84 (72)	177 (165)

GCSE results and equivalents (PH GNVQs)		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	33 (34)	83 (80)	87 (86)
	Girls	34 (23)	81 (61)	80 (68)
	Total	38 (57)	164 (141)	167 (154)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (35)	93 (85)	94 (93)
	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	39.8 (31.9)
	National	39 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	77	48.1
	National		N/a

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

		2001 (2000)		
		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	21	32	53
	Average point score per candidate	12	12.3	12.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	14	25	39	7	7	14
	Average point score per candidate	15.2	14.1	14.5	7.7	4.3	5.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

International Bacculaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Bacculaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0 (0)	N/a
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1105	87	10
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y12

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2:1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y12

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	609.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y12

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y12

Key Stage 3	22.2
Key Stage 4	20.9

Financial year	2002
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	£
Total income	3,401,935.00
Total expenditure	3,308,584.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,127.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	93,352.00

Post-16	N/a
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	31
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	47

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4.33
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.33
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	1110
Number of questionnaires returned	151

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35.1	57.6	6.6	0.7	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	54	6.7	0	3.3
Behaviour in the school is good.	25.9	47.6	12.9	5.4	8.2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21.3	56	15.3	6.7	0.7
The teaching is good.	22.8	61.7	8.7	0.7	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28.2	45	19.5	3.4	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41.3	50.7	3.3	3.3	1.3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51.7	43	5.4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	26.2	46.3	15.4	6.7	5.4
The school is well led and managed.	27	49.3	9.5	6.1	8.1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31.1	52.7	9.5	1.4	5.4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28.9	46.3	12.8	3.4	8.7

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, and teachers use a good range of activities.
- The achievement of pupils at Key Stage 3 is good and at Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory.
- Pupils' work is well assessed, with targets for improvement.
- The department is very well managed.

Areas for improvement

- In schemes of work, identify further opportunities to use ICT.

98. Results in English are below national averages overall. At Key Stage 3 in 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or more was just above the national average, but the percentage gaining Level 6 was below. In 2002, the number of pupils gaining Level 5 fell below the national figure. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 6 is higher than 2001, but is still below the national average. Nevertheless, when results are compared with similar schools they are above average. Also, pupils in 2002 have done better than expected on the basis of their results at Key Stage 2. Consequently, achievement at Key Stage 3 is good.

99. At GCSE in 2001, 45% of pupils entered gained A*-C grades in English, compared with 56% nationally. The percentage entered is in line with national figures. In English Literature, 55% gained A*-C grades compared with 61% nationally. In 2002, 40% gained A*-C grades in English and 50% in English Literature, while national figures rose slightly. In spite of this, GCSE results are average when compared with similar schools, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

100. Pupils' work observed shows that there is a wide range of attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils have a good command of sentence structure, use an extended vocabulary and can write for a variety of audiences and purposes. However, there are still a significant number of pupils who struggle with the skills of writing. At Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils use language skilfully for specific effects, for example, building up tension in narrative. They comment well on literary texts, using quotation to back up their points, and can give a very clear analysis of media texts, explaining the impact of visual images. Middle attaining pupils are developing a wide vocabulary, but sometimes write over-long sentences and do not always have a grasp of paragraphing. They can comment on plot and character in literature, but do not focus so well on the effect of a writer's language. Lower attaining pupils show understanding in their reading, but have problems with writing, particularly spelling. In speaking and listening, higher attaining pupils at both key stages express views clearly. Lower attaining pupils make some very relevant points, although their contributions are brief.

101. Teaching in English is good or very good in three-quarters of lessons. This is a high level of consistency. Other lessons are mainly satisfactory and where weaknesses occur, these generally arise from lack of pace.

102. Staff in the department are consistent in having clear objectives for their lessons. Planning is thorough and materials are very well prepared. In the large majority of lessons where pace is good, teachers use an intelligent mix of activities to engage pupils and maximise their participation. Staff use a range of strategies to achieve this, such as the use of overhead projector, individual white boards, short, sharp starter activities and card sorting activities for pupils to carry out in pairs. Pupils are given photocopies of shorter texts, so that they can highlight specific features and acquire the habit of paying close attention to language. Group work is well managed, as in a mixed ability class where the teacher set up smaller groups that were themselves mixed ability. Pupils collaborated well together and learned from each other's views. The department is particularly good at encouraging pupils to express their own opinions. Questioning is used skilfully where there are alternative answers and pupils have to justify what they say, as in a Year 7 lesson on the differences between autobiographical and biographical writing and diaries. Visual images, for example photos of homeless people and of anti-apartheid campaigners, are used to promote discussion. Teachers have good strategies to help pupils plan their own writing, such as mind-maps, writing frames and, especially for pupils who find writing difficult, sentence frames. Independent reading is promoted and pupils at Key Stage 3 keep reading records that are signed by parents. Pupils also appreciate the opportunity to fill in their 'personal review' when they finish a unit of work.
103. At Key Stage 4, teachers prepare pupils carefully for GCSE and ensure that they are familiar with assessment criteria. They look at exemplar material, often produced in school, to pick out features that enable the candidate to reach a higher grade. A very good strategy of peer review is also used, for example in a lesson where pupils delivered the opening of a speech, which was assessed by other members of the class in relation to its use of persuasive language.
104. Teachers mark written work thoroughly and are now developing a target setting approach, picking out specific aspects to improve pupils' work. At Key Stage 3, pupils have the level descriptions in their exercise books in 'pupil-friendly' language. At Key Stage 4, teachers mark work with close reference to assessment criteria.
105. Pupils respond well to their English lessons. They are generally attentive and follow instructions carefully. They are keen to contribute to discussion. Occasionally, there are examples of restless behaviour. Some lower attaining pupils have a limited attention span, but staff manage this well by planning a series of short, relevant tasks. Pupils with SEN receive good support and make good progress.
106. The department is very well managed. Most staff in the department are new to the school within the last two years and the head of department joined this term. She has already built a team successfully. The two newly qualified teachers are well supported. There is a monitoring programme in place. The department has an appropriate development plan. New schemes of work have been produced for Key Stage 3, and are being revised for Key Stage 4 in line with the new syllabus. There is a good structure in place for the progress units, which are part of the national strategy for Key Stage 3. The schemes of work cover a wide range of activities, but there are not enough planned opportunities for the use of ICT.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, use effective questioning techniques and make good use of lesson time.
- Relationships are generally good.
- Pupils participate well in lessons encouraged by teachers' good use of praise.
- Analysis of pupil performance leads to detailed target setting for improvement.
- Liaison activities support the transition of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.
- The department is well led, with good delegation of responsibilities and secure monitoring systems.

Areas for improvement

- The number of qualified mathematics teachers available does not match the demands of the timetable.
- Access to ICT facilities to support mathematics teaching is limited.
- In a small number of classes instances of inattention, off-task chatter or passive involvement in learning reduces the quality of learning possible for the individuals concerned.

108. Standards attained in national tests at Key Stage 3 in 2002 are below those found nationally but when compared to those of similar schools are well above average. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils achieving a qualification exceeds the national figure whilst that of pupils achieving grades A*-C has increased to be broadly in line with the national average for all schools. Achievement is good at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

109. Standards achieved by all pupils in lessons and as seen in the sample of work are in line with their prior attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils can find linear rules for sequences and can apply Pythagoras' theorem to solve right-angled triangles. They can use trial and improvement methods to find the solution of quadratic equations but do not use the calculator memory and other functions, thus reducing the efficiency of their working. Younger, less able pupils explore the equivalence of fractions, decimals and percentages and investigate fractions of an equilateral triangle by paper folding. Teachers' informal assessment allows lessons to progress at a good pace. The Key Stage 3 strategy is being embedded into lesson planning with lessons beginning with mental warm-up activities such as in the Year 9 lesson when pupils explored the row and column totals of a number cross as numbers were entered in different positions of the cross. This session was supported by the use of good software. The plenary is the least well-developed part of the three-part lesson but in the best instances it is used to extend the learning of the main part of the lesson. Teachers make good use of praise that encourages pupils to participate in lessons. For example, a Year 8 pupil demonstrated to the class how to turn a diagrammatic representation of an equation into its symbolic form and then how to solve it.

110. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is broadly in line with the national average and achievement is satisfactory. A strength of Key Stage 4 is the quality of coursework that pupils of all abilities produce for GCSE, both investigative and statistical. In lessons, higher attaining Year 11 pupils are aware of their target grades and of their individual targets for improvement. They accept responsibility for their own learning and select work to meet those targets as they prepare to sit GCSE mathematics early. Pupils of average ability use Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve problems involving right-angled triangles whilst lower attaining pupils can solve simple equations and use statistical measures of average.
111. The teaching of mathematics is sound and has a number of strengths that support pupils' learning and achievement in lessons. These strengths outweigh the weaknesses identified. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics is good and most teachers are able to use this to plan sequences of activities to progress pupils' learning. For example, one teacher started a lesson on standard form notation by presenting pupils with a number of possibilities for numbers expressed in standard form. Year 10 pupils debated which they thought were correct and voted for their selections, explaining their reasoning. These pupils were encouraged to make notes as part of their homework to check their understanding of the topic after some time had passed. A high proportion of teachers use skilful questioning to extend pupils' understanding of mathematics and time is generally used well in lessons. One way in which this is achieved is to set short-term deadlines for the completion of sections of work and in this way a number of aspects are covered in a lesson. There are, however, some inconsistencies in teaching within the department that weakens the progress that some pupils make. These include the level of expectations of one teacher and the variable quality of marking of pupils' work across the department.
112. Relationships are good and the achievements of all pupils are celebrated using the school system for rewarding success. The achievements of lower attaining pupils are recognised by their more able peers with spontaneous applause. Pupils usually work with concentration and present their work well following the examples set by teachers. In a small number of lessons some pupils are inattentive with off-task chatter or have only passive involvement, which reduces the quality of learning for the individuals concerned. Most teachers use behaviour management strategies to minimise such occurrences. In the lessons where good relationships have been established pupils respond by volunteering to give out and collect in equipment and textbooks and, in Key Stage 4, by actively taking responsibility for their own learning.
113. All pupils are provided with the breadth of the National Curriculum for mathematics and a variety of learning opportunities. Higher attaining pupils are given the opportunity to follow a statistics course to GCSE. Information technology is used to support the teaching of mathematics although access is limited by the small number of computers available in the department and the restricted access to the school's ICT suites. Provision for mathematics is enhanced by a range of mathematical clubs held at lunch times and after school; involvement in Euro-maths and events such as the visit by the RAF who ran a mathematics problem-solving session with Year 10 pupils.

114. The department benefits from strong and supportive leadership from a committed and enthusiastic head of department. This has brought about changes to the curriculum and the development of teaching to improve standards. A strength of the department is the overall analysis of pupil performance and trends that leads to the identification of target grades. In a pilot, this is extended further to identify targets of how individual pupils need to improve particular aspects of mathematics. Links with primary schools support smooth transition between Key Stages 2 and 3. The department has a shared commitment to improve and benefits from good monitoring systems. At the time of the inspection the number of qualified mathematics teachers available did not match the demands of the timetable, making it difficult for the department to ensure equal and best provision for all pupils.
115. Accommodation in the mathematics department is good, mainly in a set of adjoining rooms. Displays of key words in classrooms support literacy across the curriculum, as do opportunities for pupils to read aloud in class. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in standards of attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4.

SCIENCE

116. Overall provision for science is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Some good and very good teaching at both key stages and across the range of attainment.
- Staffing is improved and provides an appropriate structure for the department.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards of attainment at both key stages and especially amongst girls at Key Stage 4.
- Improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching and reduce the amount of unsatisfactory lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, especially in relation to the quality of teaching in the department.
- Improve pupil motivation and engagement with the subject, especially at Key Stage 4 and for middle attaining pupils.

117. Standards in science are below national averages at both key stages. Over the last few years, results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been below national averages and below those in similar schools. They were above those of similar schools in 2002, but below the other core subjects. Relatively few reach the higher levels and girls do slightly less well than boys.

118. At Key Stage 4 almost all pupils take a double award science at GCSE and gain an award. The percentage of A-C grades is below national averages and pupils do less well in science than other subjects. Girls do significantly less well than boys.

119. Standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books largely reflect this, often showing a wide range of attainment but with many pupils failing to really understand the subject. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils have satisfactory understanding of scientific concepts such as melting and boiling points, and can use scientific vocabulary accurately to describe such phenomena. Middle and lower attaining pupils have unsatisfactory understanding of concepts, such as dissolving or particles, are not sure of the meaning of basic scientific vocabulary and recall little of their earlier work. The development of skills in experimental and investigative science is below expectation for all pupils. Pupils' books show that many pupils make an effort with the quality of their work but that much of it is at too low a level of scientific detail and understanding. Books from low attaining pupils are often poorly presented and work incomplete.

120. During Key Stage 4 some higher attaining pupils develop good understanding of scientific principles and abstract ideas. For example, some Year 10 pupils are able to use the particle model and the structure of atoms to explain chemical change. A Year 11 group are able to describe features of waves and observe how they behave. Standards reached by the majority of middle attaining pupils are below national expectation. Few are able to explain fundamental ideas, such as elements and compounds and their practical skills, such as measuring angles of reflection, are underdeveloped. Lowest attaining pupils have limited knowledge and find it difficult to transfer concepts, such as freezing, to unfamiliar situations. However, when teaching is very good their attainment is satisfactory in skills such as interpreting graphs. Experimental science is driven to some extent by the GCSE coursework, which shows a range of quality from very good to poor. In lessons, only a minority is confident in organising and carrying out practical activities and there is no consistent spirit of scientific enquiry within the department.
121. Standards in lessons and at the end of key stages show that achievement for some pupils is good but for the majority too little progress is made. This is particularly marked for girls at Key Stage 4. For all pupils, their level of achievement is closely linked to their motivation and the quality of teaching and learning. Pupil motivation varies widely especially from Year 9 onwards. A minority of pupils are interested in science and always work well. Many pupils, given the right encouragement and appropriate activities work reasonably well, though often with little enthusiasm and in a superficial way. However, a significant minority of pupils is disinterested in the subject and in lessons, do little or no work and their behaviour can spoil lessons for other pupils.
122. About half the teaching is good or better and some is very good. However, one-third of teaching is unsatisfactory. Both good and unsatisfactory teaching occurs in both key stages and across the attainment range, but is more frequent with middle attaining groups. At Key Stage 4 lowest attaining groups are helped by the use of 'science plus' accreditation.
123. Where teaching is very good, the teacher has good control of pupil behaviour and ensures that pupils listen and follow instructions. Pupils know what the lesson is about and what they are supposed to learn. The teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and pupils are given enough help to be able to do the work without being too dependent on the teacher. Pupils are interested in the lessons either because the work has been made relevant or because the teacher interacts with them in a warm and lively way. Activities are well chosen to be challenging but within the grasp of pupils. Encouragement and praise are used frequently so pupils feel positive about their work. A lesson with low attaining Year 10 pupils about change of state from liquid to solid had all these features and pupils made very good progress, both in understanding change of state and in interpreting graphs. In another Year 10 lesson a sequence of relatively undemanding but interesting practical tasks about metals involved all pupils in making observations and the teacher's insistence that they listen ensured that they all recognised the common features. A Year 8 class made good progress learning about weathering of rocks because of very clear, pictorial explanations by the teacher, a good sequence of activities and high expectations.

124. Where teaching is unsatisfactory the teachers have insufficient control over pupil behaviour which results in pupils not being quiet and not listening. In several lessons it meant that the teacher was not able to teach the class as a whole but taught pupils individually or in groups, usually leaving other pupils without attention for a long time. Sometimes instructions for practical activities were very brief and pupils did not know how to carry out the activities. The practical work about solutions, with a Year 9 class, had to be abandoned for this reason. In a Year 11 lesson about light there were no detailed instructions for some of the activities and so pupils were unable or very slow to carry them out. In lessons like these teachers and pupils settled for a low level of effort and learning. In some lessons the activities are not well matched to the pupils' capabilities, being either too hard or too easy. In a lesson with lower attaining Year 11 pupils, a series of activities about waves was too difficult for most of the class, so about half the class were unsure what to do, wasted time and learned very little. A Year 9 class studying reproduction spent a second lesson on flower structure, colouring in prepared cut-outs. This demanded very little thought and pupils were left still unclear about the function of flower parts.
125. In almost all the unsatisfactory lessons there is little or no attempt to put the lesson in context. Pupils are unable to see how each lesson fits in to the topic as a whole and cannot make links between science at school and everyday life. This is a major contributory factor to the often low levels of motivation and subsequent learning.
126. Pupils' written work is regularly marked and teachers provide helpful comments about the quality of the work and advice for improvement. End of unit tests also provide pupils with feedback about their progress. These enable interested pupils to know how well they are doing but there is very little analysis, especially at Key Stage 3, of what pupils need to do to progress to the next level.
127. Leadership and management have not been sufficiently focussed on the current needs of the department, making it overall unsatisfactory, despite a number of strengths. Recent staffing inadequacies and changes have focussed attention, rightly, on establishing a learning atmosphere in the department and supporting staff in managing pupil behaviour. The department now has a full complement of qualified staff and an appropriate staffing structure; the head of department is no longer an assistant head teacher with considerable other duties. It is now urgent to address the causes of low standards, which are, essentially, the quality of teaching and pupil motivation.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The majority of teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- Pupils across the ability range, both boys and girls, achieve well.
- The quality of provision in Key Stage 4 is good.

Areas for improvement

- National Curriculum assessment procedures in Key Stage 3 are not fully established.
- Opportunities for students to talk about their own and others' work should be built into the planning.
- Opportunities for the use of ICT in art and design are limited.
- The time allocation for the subject for the majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 is too low.

129. GCSE art and design results in the past three years have shown consistent improvement and in 2002 achievement was good, although attainment was still below the national average. Boys' attainment has improved considerably as a result of deliberate changes in teaching methods. In Key Stage 4 there are examples of good work from pupils across the ability range and the more able students have produced interesting annotated sketchbooks, with studies developed into a high quality personal response. Students have the opportunity to develop their design ideas into lengths of screen-printed fabric that show a sustained involvement and technical ability. They produce large, individual ceramic heads that are decorated with incised and applied designs relating to a non-western culture. Progress across the key stage is good and pupils respond well to the broad range of techniques and processes that they are taught.

130. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is slightly below the expected standard. However, attainment on entry is low and pupils lack experience in drawing, but during this key stage their drawing skills improve considerably as a result of good teaching. As a result the majority of students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. By Year 9, pupils' drawing and painting skills are well developed; they work from direct observation of still life and natural forms, with charcoal, pencils and pastels on different scales. They are able to use line and tone well and accurately represent the figure in proportion. They are starting to represent people in action, with reference to works of art such as the 'Three Dancers' by Picasso. Pupils develop sound skills in using and applying colour, for example in developing a motif which they block print in a repeat pattern and in decorating their papier mache masks with multicultural designs. Pupils have a sound understanding of the process of developing a design through research, using a sketchbook to collect images and to explore the use of texture, tone and pattern and other visual elements. They make satisfactory and often good progress throughout the key stage and receive a good grounding in the essential elements of art and design. However, the short lessons and low amount of curriculum time in this key stage have an adverse affect on the amount of work covered and contribute to the lower than expected standards by the end of the key stage.

131. The majority of teaching in the department is good, with some very good features. The very good relationships and positive working atmosphere help all students achieve well. Projects are carefully planned to develop technical skills and understanding and the work builds on prior experience. There is appropriate reference to the context of other artists' work, although the range should be extended to include more contemporary art craft and design and the resources for this aspect are inadequate. Students are not confident in discussing their own and others' work and they need to be taught critical skills. Access to computers is limited and pupils have few opportunities to develop the use of ICT as an art and design tool. In Key Stage 4 the useful assessment procedures provide students with a good understanding of the course requirements and their own progress and achievement. In Key Stage 3 pupils are given supportive one-to-one guidance on how to improve their practical work, but procedures for assessment according to the National Curriculum levels are not fully integrated into practice.
132. The department is well managed and teachers are committed and enthusiastic. There are good features that enrich the curriculum such as life drawing, residential weekends and after school classes. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory and standards have risen. However, the shortage of resources, ICT provision and embedding Key Stage 3 assessment into practice remain to be addressed.

CITIZENSHIP

133. Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of some teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure National Curriculum requirements are met.
- Check all subjects to clarify where citizenship is taught.
- Establish regular team meetings and produce a plan to further develop the citizenship programmes.
- Provide training for teachers.

134. The school had taught citizenship for a number of years before National Curriculum citizenship was introduced at the beginning of this term. A satisfactory start has been made, but additional units of work will have to be added because current plans do not yet meet National Curriculum requirements. The programme of what pupils will study in Key Stage 4 is particularly brief. There has been no audit of other subjects to clarify where citizenship is taught or which topics could contribute to citizenship programmes. This is also important to avoid any duplication of work covered elsewhere.
135. There are no examinations in citizenship, but in lessons observed standards are satisfactory and most pupils are achieving as expected. SEN pupils make satisfactory progress. Year 7 pupils learn about personal development topics that affect them in their new school and issues relevant to them such as bullying. In Year 9, towards the end of Key Stage 3, pupils spend time on decision-making and discuss issues related to decisions they will have to make in later life, including moral dilemmas. In Key Stage 4 pupils learn about modern day personal finance and how to manage their money.

137. Some teaching is good, and overall it is satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well and share the aims with pupils so that they know what work they will be covering and what is expected of them. With good use of stimulating resources, teachers lead some good pupil discussions. An example of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson on discrimination, where all groups discussed the issues and produced some good ideas. However, many pupils, particularly younger ones, lack the necessary skills to participate in good discussion.
138. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and use praise well to encourage them. Pupils respond positively; their attitudes and behaviour are good.
139. Leadership of the subject at this early stage of implementation is satisfactory. However, there are no regular team meetings to support teachers and no plan for further developing citizenship. There has been no training for teachers. Resources are adequate, but new materials will be required as additional units are added to the programmes.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

140. The quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards attained at Key Stage 4 across the grades from A* to G.
- Management of time and classroom management during practical sessions.
- Overall standards attained in resistant materials and higher grades attained in food technology.
- Lesson planning and preparation.

Areas for Development

- The overall leadership and management of DT.
- Pupil statutory entitlement to National Curriculum programmes of study.
- Use of ICT.
- Health and safety in the DT block.

141. At Key Stage 3 standards are sometimes in line, but overall below national averages. Pupils enjoy their practical work, however, and generally achievement is satisfactory.
142. At Key Stage 4 the overall standards are below national averages in the higher grades of A*-C, although they are above when the full range of grades between A* and G are taken into account. Notable strengths in the Key Stage 4 suite of courses are standards reached in both resistant materials and food technology. Pupils continue to enjoy their practical work in Years 10 and 11. Progress is mainly satisfactory and in some material areas pupils continue to make good progress, particularly in resistant materials and food technology.
143. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall at both key stages. One very good lesson occurred when Year 7 pupils were preparing softwood for a jigsaw project. In this practical lesson the quality of the teacher's demonstrations, combined with the preparation of materials for assembly and the enthusiasm of the pupils resulted in an enjoyable and highly productive outcome where all pupils experienced success. The two unsatisfactory lessons both occurred when teachers were unable to control the behaviour of disruptive and uninterested pupils in the vocational engineering groups.

144. In a systems and control lesson a good example of teaching an aspect of design was observed where pupils were physically examining a range of mobile phones and completing a product analysis matrix. This strategy gave pupils a good collective insight into the many variables associated with designing contemporary products. In the majority of lessons pupils were set deadlines for design work but were not taught how to develop design skills. Pupils receive good advice and guidance from specialist teacher's which is supported at Key Stage 4 by a variety of help sheets, review sheets, and pupil booklets developed at Key Stage 3 in food technology. Another key strength directly associated with pupils' achievements in practical work, is lesson planning and materials or ingredients preparation before the start of the lesson. Teachers are ably assisted in this by technicians. The skill of the teachers in managing time and pupils within the restrictive time allowance for practical lessons is highly creditable. Health and safety issues are fully embedded into the practice of pupils in many lessons, particularly so in the food technology department. At Key Stage 4 pupils demonstrate considerable skill and insight when they complete working drawings of their projects, make subsequent modifications, develop their ideas, and evaluate their work. There is still, however, a preponderance of elementary graphics, and too few rendering techniques are practised and demonstrated. There is scarce evidence of ICT, beyond word-processing, in pupils' design portfolios and there are limited planned opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual or cultural skills and knowledge, or their literacy and numeracy skills.
145. There is no overall co-ordination, or leadership and management, of DT. The planned courses and schemes of work for pupils are delivered by two separate, and independent departments. This unsatisfactory structural arrangement leads to inconsistencies in the teaching across some of the different material areas, confusion in pupils' learning and understanding, and some gaps in the Key Stage 3 course.
146. The accommodation for the two departments is spacious and largely appropriate for the courses on offer. The food technology department is kept in very good order and functions efficiently. The suite of rooms for resistant materials is much older here and needs upgrading, especially the workshops and the out of date computers. There is no CAD/CAM equipment in the department. Areas of deterioration are evident which, when combined with the general untidiness and clutter in some areas, has resulted in some significant health and safety issues, especially where nationally recognised codes of practice have not been implemented or are not being followed. These areas require urgent attention.

GEOGRAPHY

147. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**. Geography is one of the strongest, high-performing subjects in the school.

Strengths

- Standards achieved by pupils.
- Quality of teaching.
- Teachers' relationships with pupils.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Key Stage 3.
- Presentation of pupils' work in Key Stage 3.

148. In GCSE examinations in recent years, pupils have attained standards at or close to the national average, but geography is an optional subject and results can vary widely from year to year. Boys have performed particularly well over the last two years gaining results higher than girls. In 2001 boys' results were well above the national average and close to it in 2002. The end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments for the last three years show pupils attaining above the national average. Geography is a consistently high performing subject compared to others in the school.
149. Inspection evidence shows current Year 9 pupils' standards are consistent with national expectation. At the beginning of Key Stage 3, when pupils enter the school, their experience of geography is very varied and standards are below average. To attain standards consistent with expectation, pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are close to national expectation and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. SEN pupils make good progress.
150. Year 7 pupils learn basic map-work and improve their skills and knowledge as they move through Key Stage 3. By Year 9 pupils are using correct geographical terminology and have a good understanding of the work they are doing. The department has introduced some interesting curriculum developments linking geography, crime and sport. Interesting lessons in Year 8 look at football and the many ways in which it can be connected with geographical contexts. The presentation of pupils' work in Key Stage 3 varies considerably and much of it requires improvement. In Key Stage 4 pupils produce good annotated diagrams in their work on glaciers and river studies. They construct and interpret graphs of various types. Some good quality coursework is produced by Year 11 that contributes well to their final GCSE grades. The use of ICT in geography is developing well. Pupils use their skills in data-handling, use the Internet to research topics and especially their word-processing skills in the presentation of work. An example of this is in Year 11, where pupils produce 'newspaper' articles on earthquakes.
151. Pupils' attitudes to the subject and behaviour are good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Very often the positive attitudes, motivation and good behaviour are a direct consequence of good teaching. Teachers demonstrate good skills in controlling their pupils and in managing their classes. They have good relationships with their pupils, value them, are polite, courteous and treat them with respect. Their use of positive reinforcement, praise and rewards is very good.
152. Teaching is good with many strengths. Teachers plan their lessons very well and are always well prepared. They use a variety of teaching styles to interest pupils. They have high expectations and many lessons present good challenge for pupils. Teachers know their subject well and they effectively use their knowledge of examinations to help pupils improve the quality of their answers to examination questions and therefore their grades. The literacy initiative has been well integrated into the department and aspects feature in many lessons. Lists of key words are displayed and pupils reading aloud from text books encourages them to develop their literacy skills. The assessment of pupils' work and setting targets for improvement is in a transitional stage at Key Stage 3 and requires further work. Assessment at Key Stage 4 is more established with consistent focus on GCSE grades.
153. Accommodation is of good quality and teachers create an interesting learning environment with good displays of maps, diagrams, photographs and pupils' work. Overall learning resources are satisfactory. Teachers' own home-produced worksheets and reference materials are very good. ICT facilities within the department are limited.

154. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The curriculum manager is well organised and leads her team very well. There is good quality subject documentation with structures and procedures well established. Department policies give sound guidance to all staff and development priorities are clearly identified.
155. There is shared commitment to continued improvement and the department can build on its many strengths.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently good with some very good features.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- There is a stimulating learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to enhance the learning process.
- The links between the department's own assessment and recording system and that of the school as a whole.

157. Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations are in line with national averages and in 2002 were slightly above. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 also put pupils' attainment in line with national averages or slightly above this. Results for the last three years also show similar levels of attainment. There is very little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Virtually all pupils who take history at GCSE gain at least a Grade G, last year only one pupil failed to do so. Many pupils achieve their highest GCSE grade in history. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection.
158. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work show that pupils are making good progress in history at both key stages and as a result their level of achievement is good. This is largely the result of good quality teaching. This good achievement is evident in individual lessons, between a number of consecutive lessons and across a half term. Pupils also make good progress across both key stages. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, make equally good progress. Similarly, both boys and girls make good progress.
159. There are many strengths evident in pupils' work in Key Stage 3. Pupils have a good historical knowledge that improves with time spent in the school. Pupils in all years have a good appreciation of historical concepts and readily exhibit a clear understanding of chronology. For example, in Year 7 pupils had a good understanding of the methods used by William the Conqueror to subdue England after the invasion of 1066. They also understood the consequences of his actions. In Year 8, pupils could sub-divide the causes of Henry VIII's break with Rome into groups and could relate them to short and long-term consequences. Pupils in Year 9 showed a good understanding of historical change through their work on life in Killingworth in the 19th century. Furthermore, all pupils showed that they could present work in different ways for different audiences; including a leaflet about the break with Rome for Year 5 pupils at a local primary school and a storyboard about the Battle of Hastings.

160. Pupils' work is equally impressive at Key Stage 4 in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils show an appropriately greater level of historical knowledge and understanding as well as a more developed grasp of historical concepts and a better and more detailed range of historical skills. Pupils in Year 10 were able to give a detailed and supported account of the events of the Battle of the Somme in World War One. In addition, they could set out the consequences of the battle according to a number of categories. They made very effective use of a range of written and visual sources to investigate the new weapons developed in World War One as well as giving a reasoned classification of their advantages and disadvantages. In Year 11, pupils also made very good use of historical sources to investigate the methods used by Hitler to become Chancellor of Germany. They were able to make comparisons and links to modern day leaders thereby exhibiting a clear understanding of the concepts of democracy and dictatorship.
161. The quality of teaching is consistently good and has many very good features in all year groups. All the teachers in the department have good subject knowledge that they use passionately to plan and deliver good lessons. The classrooms are managed well making very good use of positive reinforcement and praise to motivate and even inspire pupils. The teachers make very effective use of the wide range of effectively organised resources available to them. Lessons always begin with a clear set of learning objectives, clearly linked to previous learning and then delivered using a range of teaching styles and activities. These activities include the effective use of card sorting and other practical thinking skills type exercises. The teachers all make very good use of a range of questioning techniques, often putting real challenge on pupils through excellent open-ended questions. There is a clear and well-promoted emphasis on literacy skills in the lessons; the teachers readily acknowledge the value that this has to delivering good pupil behaviour.
162. Homework is a strength of the teaching. It is regularly set and marked to the consistently high standards of the department. The teachers are skilled and motivated in the use of ICT to enhance learning, but have only limited access to appropriate hardware that is often unreliable even when access is gained. There is very effective support for pupils with SEN due to the teachers' appreciation of needs, the differentiation of work and the very good use available to pupils, frequently from their peers, due to the teacher-led seating pattern which places pupils in mixed gender pairings throughout Key Stage 3.
163. The quality of learning is also of a consistently good standard. Pupils are well motivated towards their work. They concentrate hard and are co-operative to each other and the teachers. Much of their success stems from the strong emphasis that the teachers place upon course outlines and unit plans for the pupils. The pupils also organise their work really well thanks to the guidance from the teachers. Consequently, the pupils become increasingly independent learners as they progress through the school. The pupils' learning is also well supported by the department's thorough and effective assessment system. This includes the pupils in self-evaluation and the setting of curricular targets for every pupil giving them a clear indication of what they now need to do to improve further.

164. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear vision for the future that is consistently shared between all the teachers. The department is committed to improvement and has a clear understanding of how this can be achieved. Furthermore, the department has the capacity to improve further, especially if greater and more reliable access to ICT could be achieved. The department has a good suite of rooms that are well planned and developed in order to produce a very effective learning environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Some good and very good teaching and learning at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Good provision for pupils with SEN.
- Some good behaviour management of difficult pupils.
- Pupils' interest and motivation in ICT is good.

Areas for improvement

- A significant minority of unsatisfactory ICT lessons needs to be improved.
- Cross-curricular use of ICT is weak.
- The aspects of sensing and control require attention.
- Access could be better despite good numbers of computers.
- Learning activities in ICT for the more able and talented pupils need improvement.

166. There is much good practice within the ICT department and the overall judgement relates in large part to the whole-school issue of weak cross-curricular use of ICT to support work in the other subjects. There is also a lack of breadth to the ICT curriculum provided, with the sensing and control aspects of the subject being weak. Added to this there is a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching in the specialist ICT lessons and this leads to the overall unsatisfactory judgement. Most of the members of the ICT department are very new to the school, however, and there are already improvements apparent across a broad range of ICT issues.

167. Teacher assessments of the pupils' work at the age of 14 in ICT (60% Level 5+ in 2002) show that levels of attainment are below the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils, however, when compared to pupils' attainment in similar schools and their prior levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. There is no significant difference in attainment by gender. Pupils with SEN achieve well, though learning activities in ICT are not so well matched to the needs of the gifted and talented pupils. In the intermediate GNVQ full course 82% of the 33 pupils entered for the examination in 2002 passed, with 6 of these achieving a merit. In the part one foundation GNVQ course in 2002 56% of the 16 pupils entered passed, with two pupils achieving merit awards. These results are slightly above average for the school when comparing the pupils' progress across all subjects. The cross-curricular delivery of ICT at Key Stage 4 is weak, however, and these pupils' achievement is well below national expectations. There is no discrete ICT teaching time for pupils outside of the ICT examination groups. This increases the significance of the weak cross-curricular delivery of the subject.

168. Much of the teaching and learning in ICT is satisfactory or better with a significant amount of good and very good teaching. There is a significant minority of unsatisfactory lessons however, and therefore the teaching overall was unsatisfactory. In the satisfactory and better lessons teachers display good subject knowledge, thorough planning with learning outcomes that are shared with the pupils and pupils who are well engaged with the learning activities and working productively at a good pace. Learning activities are usually interesting and motivating for the pupils. Classroom organisation and management are sound and teachers use the school's behaviour management systems well. In the unsatisfactory lessons learning objectives are sometimes vague with pupils unsure about what is being asked of them. In all the unsatisfactory lessons poor behaviour management is an important element and progress is limited by the standards of behaviour displayed by the pupils. This is not a general breakdown of discipline, however, as the same pupils work well in lessons taught by other teachers. Pupils with SEN are well supported with their work in ICT. The more able and talented pupils are less well catered for, however, and are not sufficiently challenged and extended in many of the lessons. Teachers' planning is weak on providing challenging activities for the more able and talented pupils and where extension activities are planned they often do not get used effectively.
169. The majority of pupils have very positive attitudes when working with computers and behave well in class. They apply themselves well to the tasks set, are keen to learn and are interested and enthusiastic about the subject. Generally they give good attention to their teachers' explanations and instructions and respect the equipment and resources provided for their use. They have good relationships with each other and their teachers. In a minority of lessons, where behaviour management strategies are weak and learning activities are vaguely planned, misbehaviour has a significantly negative impact on pupils' progress in ICT.
170. Assessment of ICT at Key Stage 3 is a strength. The department has instigated a system of assessment based on the 'goal' online method. This gives good performance data to National Curriculum levels. The department also carefully moderates this data by scrutiny of work in ICT by the pupils. Marking of GNVQ course work at Key Stage 4 is also often very good and at its best precisely informs pupils what they need to do to achieve pass, merit and distinction awards. In some cases marking is weak, however, with work simply 'ticked' and no feedback provided to enable pupils to improve and make progress with their work in ICT.
171. Community access to the school's ICT resources is good. Parents and pupils are encouraged to use the computers after school hours. There are also specialist ICT courses being offered at the school, such as CLAIT, for groups in the community.
172. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The newly appointed curriculum manager for ICT has a dynamic and enthusiastic style of leadership. Since her recent appointment she has established good links with some of the other subject curriculum managers and this has enabled her to make a start on improving the cross-curricular use of ICT. In particular there are limited examples of good spreadsheet modelling activities taking place in the GCSE mathematics group and good use of the Internet and presentation software for geography. A cross-curricular audit of ICT provision has taken place and this will form the foundations for improvement in this area. Little use has yet been made of the new units of work that have been provided by the ICT strand of the national Key Stage 3 strategy.

173. ICT resources are generally good with a ratio of computers to pupils of 1:5. This already meets the DfES targets for 2004. The deployment of these resources is not always effective in enabling access to ICT by subject departments. Subject department access is nearly all through the booking of central ICT teaching areas, as few computers exist in subject departments and to some extent accommodation limits this. Improvements need to be made to the existing deployment of resources for ICT, as access for the number of machines available is not very good. There is no written policy for renewal and replacement of existing stock though budget has been allocated to continue to buy new machines. Technical issues with the network led to problems in several of the lessons observed. These issues are not dealt with effectively within an appropriate time-scale and as the school has both an ICT technician and a network manager this area should be better.
174. Professional development for teachers in the use of ICT, particularly cross-curricular use in subject areas, is a weakness. The NOF funded ICT training programme is behind schedule with few teachers having yet completed the training. The majority are not predicted to finish until the absolute deadline of March 2003.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Preparation for GCSE.
- Planning.
- Recording pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Management of behaviour in some classes.
- Quality of experience for the most and least able.
- Use of ICT for teaching and improving learning.
- Schemes of work, though good, should incorporate strategies to help pupils use the language creatively.

176. Standards of attainment in Key Stage 3 have shown a steady improvement since the last inspection but attainment in the current Years 8 and 9 is below the national average. Slow progress last year was due to the effect of non-specialist supply teachers and this has had an effect on attitude and behaviour in some classes. The wide range of prior attainment in teaching groups also makes it difficult to cater to the needs of all pupils. Where groups are more homogeneous, teaching is more effective and pupils make better progress. Pupils in Year 7 are making good progress in speaking and listening. More able pupils can produce longer, complex sentences and are becoming more confident about manipulating verbs, but there is little independent writing. The standard of writing is often low and poor presentation skills hamper the progress of many pupils.

177. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2001 and 2002 have been close to the national average and boys' results at GCSE have been at the national average. This is a creditable achievement, given the low attainment in literacy of many pupils when they enter the school. The teachers' predictions match the results and this year pupils are expected to do even better. More able pupils are beginning to write at length in their course work and to recycle auxiliary verbs and agreements of past participles. Listening skills are deficient, however. Progress in Year 11 is good right across the ability range. This is because teachers help pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.
178. Teaching has many strengths. Subject knowledge is very good. Planning is good and consistent across the department and anticipates progression over a sequence of lessons. Teachers offer the pupils strategies to help them remember spellings and anticipate errors and they provide them with good advice to help them succeed in examinations. They insist on good pronunciation and intonation and encourage pupils to try hard, praising their efforts. In lessons where these features are present, response is positive and pupils make better progress. There is effective use of new technology such as digital tape recorders, although some of the overhead projectors, widely used, are in need of replacement.
179. Teachers are committed to the welfare and progress of their pupils and give up their time to provide extra revision classes and a successful residential course for pupils in Years 11 and 12. They are knowledgeable about current trends in language teaching and work closely together to maintain high standards. Their handbook is an effective guide and schemes of work are well planned although they lack strategies for helping pupils to re-use language in different contexts.
180. When classes are well managed, teachers anticipate and prevent incipient bad behaviour. However, in some classes there is a minority of pupils whose poor attitude has a negative impact on the progress of the class as a whole. Opportunities for using ICT are limited and there is insufficient appropriate software. ICT is not yet used for whole-class teaching, for example, to improve reading and writing skills.
181. Since the last inspection the school has withdrawn a second MFL but there is now more time available for the teaching of French and there are no shared classes. However, pupils still find themselves in groups with a very wide spread of ability and this has an impact on progress of many, particularly in Key Stage 3. This is likely to affect take-up in Key Stage 4.

MUSIC

182. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good behaviour and attitudes, well motivated pupils.
- Strong leadership.
- Good documentation.
- Good teaching and well-planned lessons.

Areas for Improvement

- The progression of core skills.
- Too few boys involved in examination or extended musical activities.
- A more realistic perception of attainment levels within the department.

183. During the past two years, the music department has been established within a performing arts faculty and is emerging as a department with many good features and strong leadership.
184. At Key Stage 3 attainment is generally in line with national expectations. However, there were examples of low attainment. This resulted from pupils' skills, particularly in the understanding and use of notation, being too limited to fulfil the tasks required in the modules being studied. Ways must be sought to strengthen the quality and progression of this aspect throughout Key Stage 3 if standards are to improve. Where standards of attainment were good, pupils remained focused on the task, listened and responded to music effectively, sang tunefully and demonstrated good use and understanding of the keyboard. Although attainment is only satisfactory, achievement in lessons is often good. Pupils are well motivated and try hard to succeed at, what for many, are often challenging tasks. The standards of attainment at GCSE are satisfactory. During the recent 2002 examinations, nearly 50% of those entered achieved an A–C grade and all but one candidate gained a pass. The results show that, after a relatively short period, standards are coming close to national averages. At present, although many of the GCSE candidates are limited in their musical skills, the quality of teaching ensures that the majority of candidates maximise their potential and achievement is satisfactory.
185. The teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and pupil motivation results from the varied activities that occur within lessons. For instance, pupils sing, perform or compose, write about and discuss their response to a range of differing musical styles or learn new concepts and techniques. Pupils concentrate well in whole-class activities or in group, individual or paired activities. In the Year 9 option groups, there is clear evidence of pupils beginning to become more independent in their learning. The teachers use technology very imaginatively, often creating interesting backing tracks for accompaniments to songs. At one point, the teacher created a backing track for a group of girls who had composed their own song. The track was immediately recorded so that the girls could use it to rehearse and improve their work. The teacher was then able to give his undivided attention to other pupils. Expectations are high and work is regularly assessed, although there is a need to establish a baseline profile for new Year 7 pupils in music. This will give the department more clear information of the skills and experiences required by the pupils at Key Stage 3, if they are to attain higher levels of attainment.
186. Attitudes to learning are good, although boys are not as involved in musical activities as they might be. The department is considering ways to improve this aspect. In sixth form musical activities, attitudes are very good. Indeed, the sixth form students are strongly involved in organising school performances. Pupils are polite and relationships with the teachers are good. Pupils with SEN are given ample opportunity to learn at a pace suitable for them and there are strong links with learning support, in which music makes a valuable contribution. The curriculum, if anything, favours pupils of average or below average ability and the department is aware that aspects of the curriculum will have to be more challenging for the more able pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. However, more imaginative planning could ensure a more relevant approach to exploring the cultural and spiritual aspects of the music curriculum. The modular structure of the curriculum is very effective and is one of the reasons that pupil attitudes are very positive. Care must be taken to build progression of learning, particularly in the acquisition of skills.
187. The accommodation is good but the large, fixed benches in music room 1 reduce the capacity for more flexible styles of teaching to occur. There is a very serious problem

of noise spillage between the two classrooms, because of inadequate soundproofing. Teaching and learning are made more difficult as a result. Resources are generally satisfactory but more should be made of the use of tuned and un-tuned percussion, especially in composition. The recording studio has produced examples of very good compositions, mainly in the 'pop' idiom. One or two recordings have an almost professional quality to the performance, backing and recording. ICT in the department is inadequate. This is a particular deficiency because technology is so important to the development of music and is an important component of the National Curriculum. The teachers have a great expertise in this area. There is a small range of extra-curricular activities. Those that exist are successful and the department is looking at ways of extending opportunity. There are, however, few opportunities for pupils with the interest and potential, to learn to play a wider range of more specialist instruments. The school might look to ways of supporting the performing arts faculty in increasing this level of opportunity.

188. This is a new department, with a new team of teachers promoting different departmental policies and delivering an entirely different curriculum from that which was observed during the last inspection. The department has been successful in establishing an ethos within the school and an atmosphere where pupils are taking their music education more seriously and enjoying the process.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

189. Overall the quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning is often good and sometimes very good.
- Pupils make noticeable progress in most lessons and meet the standards expected by the end of each key stage.
- Standards in GCSE PE are high when compared to other subjects in the school and other schools nationally.
- Pupils generally display positive attitudes and work hard in PE lessons.
- The leadership and management of the PE department is good.
- Good use is made of the local leisure centre to increase curriculum opportunities.

Areas for development:

- Further use of ICT to promote learning in PE.
- Closer monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning carried out to support new staff and non-specialist PE teachers working in the department.
- Marking of GCSE and A Level course work standardised so pupils know what they are achieving in comparison to examination grades and what they need to do to get better.
- Revised procedures for assessing pupil progress fully implemented.

190. At Key Stage 3 standards are average and achievement is good. At Key Stage 4 they are above average and represent good achievement by the pupils. Recent examination results for GCSE PE show that pupils achieve well above the national average. In 2001 and 2002 over 60% of pupils achieved A–C grades, and almost all pupils obtained a pass grade.

191. In Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils display relatively low levels of basic skill on entry in Year 7, particularly in games where sending and receiving skills are inconsistent, movement skills are underdeveloped and decision-making skills in small games and practices are weak. However, during Years 7 and 8 teachers provide pupils with ample opportunities to acquire and develop new skills in a range of activities. They are given sufficient time in lessons to practice and refine actions, learn new skills, and they benefit from regular praise and feedback from teachers which helps them improve their performance. Consequently they make good progress in lessons throughout the key stage and attain the standards expected by the end of Year 9. PE department staff have delivered a programme of basketball to Year 6 pupils in its local primary schools, in an attempt to raise standards in games on entry in Year 7. An options programme offered in Years 8 and 9 provides many pupils with an additional PE lesson; whilst it is too early to assess the full impact of this programme this should help to reinforce learning and improve standards in Key Stage 3.
192. In Key Stage 4 pupils build on their previous achievements, developing a wider range of experiences through a planned programme of activities delivered both at school and at the local leisure centre, including badminton and trampolining which pupils enjoy, work hard in and make good progress. For example, in badminton pupils work well together to rally co-operatively using a range of different strokes and can apply principles of play including attack and defence in a competitive game of doubles. They can, with guidance, identify the strengths and weaknesses of other players and suggest ways of improving to them. Some staff use different ways of teaching to help to maintain pupil interest, motivate them and ensure pupils work hard in lessons to reach the required standard.
193. Results in recent years show most pupils on the GCSE course achieve a pass grade but few achieve higher grades. Fewer girls in comparison to boys opt for the course. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows a good volume of course notes for future revision purposes and evidence of independent research in assignments, however, marking doesn't always inform pupils of the standard of their work in relation to examination grades and provides insufficient advice on how to improve their work. This, and further opportunities for pupils to use ICT resources in their learning, would help to improve the overall standards achieved.
194. In general, pupils enjoy PE lessons. They are eager to learn, willing to co-operate, contribute to group discussions and respond to questions. Key Stage 4 pupils are sensible and well mannered when arriving for lessons in the local leisure centre. A significant minority of pupils who chew gum and wear jewellery in lessons spoils the positive pupil attitudes shown in the subject, and a few pupils wear inappropriate PE kit. This undermines the standards achieved in lessons and these peripheral but important points need to be addressed by all staff teaching PE.
195. Effective lessons have clear introductions, well-planned progressions of skills and practices and teachers make it clear to pupils what they are expected to achieve and how they should behave. Demonstration of particular actions and drills, coupled with pupil questioning is often used to explain and clarify specific teaching points. Opportunities for pupils to learn by themselves, in pairs and in small sided teams allows the teacher to move around the class and intervene to offer praise, support and advice on how to improve. Teachers work hard to establish sound working relationships with pupils and occasional poor behaviour is challenged immediately by reminding pupils of the standards expected.

196. In a few lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. This is because teachers do not establish working relationships with pupils and some poor behaviour is left unchallenged. This restricts learning opportunities which results in limited progress being made, particularly in some Key Stage 3 lessons where large numbers of pupils are grouped together for PE at the same time. A real strength in teaching is the inclusion of pupils with SEN through additional support provided by support staff with specific knowledge of individual pupils' needs, working alongside class teachers in lessons.
197. GCSE PE is particularly successful due to the high quality teaching on the course. Teachers use different ways to accommodate all learners and they make best use of the facilities available to offer pupils appropriate and challenging learning experiences. In the best lessons direct links are made between the practical and theoretical aspects of the course. Knowledge and understanding of sporting concepts are reinforced during practical activities and knowledge learned in previous practical activities is recalled and reinforced during theory lessons. For example, in a Year 10 practical lesson focusing on the design of personal fitness programmes, the teacher made very effective use of a spider diagram to introduce the theme and recall prior learning on muscles, bones and the respiratory system. This helped pupils to make rapid progress during the lesson.
198. Learning is, in general, satisfactory. It is good or very good in more than half the lessons observed. Learning is most effective when teachers use resource cards, visual aids and practical demonstrations to illustrate new skills and to develop pupils' evaluating and improving techniques through the use of observational tasks with key coaching points to look for. Learning is unsatisfactory in a small minority of lessons when some pupils are allowed to disrupt the lessons. Learning is also unsatisfactory when teachers do not accommodate non-participants in lessons. This lack of involvement means some pupils make very limited progress, and are likely to underachieve at GCSE level because vital knowledge has been missed.
199. The department is well led. The curriculum manager co-ordinates a large department of 4 specialist and 5 non-specialist staff, and makes optimum use of the school's facilities and the local leisure centre to provide a broad-based curriculum that meets National Curriculum requirements. New assessment and target setting procedures are being developed to inform teachers of what pupils know, understand and can do and to help pupils identify their own strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do to improve. Current time-tabling arrangements mean large groups of pupils from different year groups arrive for PE lessons at the same time. This places considerable demands on changing rooms and indoor facilities and requires additional non-specialist teachers to teach PE. Further strategies are required to monitor the effects of these arrangements and ensure that less effective teaching does not compromise standards achieved in PE.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The very good teaching by the head of department.
- Effective management that promotes clear, well structured planning and provision.
- Strong leadership reflected in the head of department's vision to set goals for future improvement.
- Well-balanced curriculum combining knowledge, understanding and reflection.
- A climate of mutual trust and respect.
- Well planned opportunities that effectively promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Writing skills to enable the pupils to write with increasing depth and complexity as a further means to raise standards.
- Use of attainment levels to both raise expectations and standardise grading of pupils' assessment assignments.
- Use and interpretation of performance data to apply more rigour in target setting and pupil tracking.
- Use of ICT as a tool for learning.

201. Standards are rising. The pupils achieve well and they make good progress. The explanation lies in the head of department's very good teaching that effectively engages the pupils' interest and creates an energetic climate for learning.
202. Standards of 14 year olds meet expectation of the local North Tyneside Agreed Syllabus. The pupils have a good grasp of religious language and a sound understanding of key concepts in religion, for example, deity. They are knowledgeable on the details of the Creation narrative in Genesis and can reflect soundly on what can be learned from the story of Adam and Eve on the nature of God and humanity.
203. Standards in GCSE short course RE have improved markedly in 2002 with a well over 10% rise in the number of pupils attaining within grades A*-C from the previous year. Boys attain equally as well as girls at this level, in contrast to the overall national performance of boys in RE.
204. There has been a similar rise in pupils gaining within grades A*-G. Almost one-third of the large number of pupils entered achieved the higher grades in 2002, broadly in line with the school's overall GCSE performance.
205. In lessons, pupils in the present Year 11 show a wide knowledge and understanding of various forms of worship. They can talk fluently about, for example, the functions of worship such as to build relationships with God in the Christian tradition. The pupils' oral work is very good. In contrast, pupils' writing skills are not well developed. Their attainment and progress are capped through lack of opportunity to write with increasing depth and complexity such as might be expected of pupils preparing for GCSE work. Nevertheless, results in next year's GCSE are likely to show a further improvement.

206. Teaching overall is very good and is never less than satisfactory. The head of department is knowledgeable, communicates effectively with pupils, prepares and plans well, has high expectations and moves lessons along at a good pace. He engages the pupils in interesting tasks that are searching and thought-provoking and systematically builds awareness of what the pupils routinely refer to as 'big ideas' in religion. Essentially, this explains the good progress pupils across the ability range, including those with SEN, make throughout the school. Their grasp of key religious concepts, for example, is good and is progressively deepened. Pupils in Year 7 made rapid progress in comprehending the concept of belief. They were quickly able, for example, through fun activities on illusions, to generate numerous well-chosen illustrations that a belief is about more than can be seen. The head of department made unfamiliar and quite difficult ideas on evil and suffering accessible to a small group of low achieving pupils in Year 10 who were then able to make good progress in distinguishing between natural and man-made evil and suffering. Similarly, more able pupils in Year 10 rose well to the challenge when asked to evaluate evil and suffering and questions both raise about God. A non-specialist supply teacher was effectively supported by the head of department's excellent lesson planning. She was able to prepare well and this, combined with her own good communication skills, enabled pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 to maintain a good rate of progress from their prior learning.
207. Lessons end with a short plenary that effectively helps pupils to take stock of their achievement. This is invariably followed up with a constructive homework task, well designed to promote pupils' thinking as well as to reinforce their learning. Homework tasks, however, are not systematically recorded, an opportunity, therefore, is missed that might encourage the pupils to value personal study as an important part of their learning.
208. The head of department creates a supportive climate of trust and mutual respect. The quality of relationships in lessons contributes significantly to the pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and eagerness to learn. They gain confidence from good opportunities to discuss, form opinions and reflect on a range of social, moral and religious issues across diverse cultures. This underpins their good personal, as well as spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Frequently pupils in all year groups comment that they enjoy RE. They give reasons such as "the teacher listens", "he makes the work interesting and builds up suspense".
209. The department is efficiently led and managed. The head of department sets goals for improvement with a clear sense of direction. Areas highlighted from this inspection have been well anticipated in the department development plan. Action is planned to introduce use of attainment levels, make better use of performance data for target setting and tracking pupils' performance, to further develop ICT as a tool for learning and strengthen writing opportunities. Monitoring and review procedures are firmly in place and outcomes are used well to improve and develop. Comparison with the previous inspection report on RE would not be useful given the major changes in the school. Currently, however, the pupils are being provided with a very good RE experience. The head of department can be commended on the efficient and effective use of the minimum of curriculum time to achieve this position with further improvement likely in the future.

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

210. In the inspection, 9 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.

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	75	87	25	43	4.5	5.8
Chemistry	3	100	90	0	43	4	5.9
Biology	6	50	88	0	34	2.3	5.2
Physics	6	84	88	33	40	4.7	5.7
Design and technology	10	100	91	40	30	6.6	5.4
Economics	3	100	89	33	36	6	5.5
ICT VCE	7	100	N/a	29	N/a	7.7	9.9
Leisure and tourism	2	100	N/a	100	N/a	12	10
Health and social care	5	25	N/a	0	N/a	4	10.7
Physical education	3	100	92	0	25	4.7	5
Art and design	3	100	96	0	46	5.3	6.6
Geography	9	100	92	66	38	7.3	5.7
History	23	74	88	17	35	3.7	5.45
Religious education	3	100	92	0	38	4	5.8
English	23	96	95	39	37	5.8	5.9
French	4	100	89	25	38	4.5	5.6
General studies	12	75	85	25	30	4	4.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The teaching of mathematics is good or better; it is characterised by high expectations and challenging questioning.
- Relationships are very good.
- Students show positive attitudes to work and participate well in lessons.
- Marking of students' work for AS and A2 Levels helps them make progress.
- The presentation of students' mathematical argument is good following the examples set by teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The marking of students' work on the re-sit GCSE course is limited.
- Achievement of those students who take the certificate at AS Level is poor.

213. The inspection covered the advanced level courses in mathematics – AS mathematics and A Level mathematics. In addition, the re-sit GCSE course for those students who did not gain grade C in Year 11 was also inspected.

214. Over the past five years there has been an overall pass rate of 80%. In 2002 achievement was in line with prior attainment. Results of those students who have taken AS Level certification over the last five years have been low with female students achieving better than male students. Results at AS Level mathematics in 2002 followed the disappointing national trend with the effect that only two students are continuing to A Level.

215. The standards of work seen in lessons, and in students' books, is good. Mathematical arguments are well presented although Year 12 students do not always support their arguments with appropriate diagrams. For example, in mechanics some male students preferred to mentally visualise a situation rather than draw a diagram showing the forces acting. The overall quality of students' oral work is very good and both Year 12 and 13 students participate fully in the lessons. Year 12 students discussed statistical measures in groups whilst trying to select and then justify an argument about potential over-fishing off the coast of Alaska. Another Year 12 lesson began with two students taking the rest of the group through the solution to a problem. This was well presented, both orally and in writing with all the intermediate steps shown and very good use of specialist vocabulary.

216. Students re-sitting their GCSE course in the sixth form achieve a good pass rate. As with those following advanced courses, these students also are actively involved in the lessons. In one lesson a student demonstrated a solution on the whiteboard which was then further refined with the help of others in the class.

217. Teaching is always good and is sometimes exceptional. Students learn well on the AS and A Level courses because of the quality of teaching. Lessons are carefully planned with high expectations and challenging questioning. Teachers have very good knowledge of mathematics and how it can be taught. They support students by giving good quality notes. Teaching also includes a strong emphasis on students applying reasoning rather than being told what to do. This was the case in a Year 13 lesson where students identified improper algebraic fractions and went on to express them as partial fractions by applying techniques that they had met previously in other circumstances. Students show willingness to take responsibility for their own learning and are often presented with choices. Students show positive attitudes to learning and make good efforts to understand the work that they are doing. They work well co-operatively in pairs and in small groups. The marking of students' work for AS and A Level is detailed with helpful comments to correct misconceptions, to display intermediate steps or to make points about clarity or communication.
218. The teaching of the GCSE group is good, and provides good guidance on tackling examination questions. The marking of work for students on the GCSE re-sit course is limited.
219. The mathematics department is well led and organised. The teachers are enthusiastic, committed to improvement and work well together. Recent changes made in teaching and learning are beginning to improve standards. Departmental monitoring and collaborative working ensure coherence between the various aspects of the advanced course. There are effective arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress leading to the identification of target grades and skills to be developed.

SCIENCES

220. The focus was on biology. The science department also offers AS and A Level courses in chemistry and physics and both these subjects were sampled. Numbers are generally small, usually between three and six, though numbers are up to eight in the current Year 12 for both biology and chemistry. Most students continue from the AS course to the A2 course. Results vary from year to year and when numbers are very small national comparisons cannot be made. Generally students do less well in chemistry and physics than in other subjects and in comparison with students nationally.
221. Lessons sampled in chemistry and physics show that teaching is good or very good and that the current students are making good progress in relation to their attainment level at GCSE. The physics courses are being taught collaboratively with two neighbouring schools using video-conferencing. This is working satisfactorily but is not saving as much teacher time as was expected in the original planning and rationale. Its success as a teaching method has yet to be evaluated.

BIOLOGY

222. Overall the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and uses an appropriate balance of theoretical and practical activities.
- Leadership provides good co-ordination and support for the team of teachers.
- Students are well informed about the structure and demands of the course.
- Students get good feedback about how well they are doing and how to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Provide a greater range of reading material to broaden the course and improve facilities for student research.
- Provide access to computers in the department for practical applications as well as research purposes.

223. Over the past few years numbers have been small, typically around six. Results have been low, with none of the students reaching the higher grades of A or B. Students generally do less well than in other subjects they take and in that respect results in biology are less good than in chemistry and physics. Predicted grades for the current Year 13 students range from B to un-graded. The expected standards for the present Year 12 students are higher with predicted grades between A and D.

224. In lessons the majority of students have satisfactory or good understanding of the lesson content. In a Year 12 lesson about cell membranes, students recalled recent work about membranes and how chemicals pass through them. They were then able to apply this understanding to predict results of their experiment. A Year 13 group understood what factors would effect the rate of photosynthesis but were more hesitant in explaining how rates of photosynthesis and respiration interact to effect gas exchange. Students in both year groups are confident in organising and carrying out practical work that they do with care and appropriate levels of accuracy. In theory lessons students are often not very confident in giving oral explanations. In a Year 12 lesson about the heart, students were subdued and hesitant to answer questions and in a Year 13 lesson, student skills in making a brief presentation were below national expectation.

225. All teaching is satisfactory and most of it is good. As a result students learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan well and make the purpose of lessons clear to students. Explanations and instructions are almost always clear so students have a good sense of what they doing and learning. Teaching and learning activities are deliberately planned to provide variety and a good level of student involvement. There is regular use of practical work as well as individual and paired activities to help recall earlier work and consolidation of current learning. Relationships are good with friendly yet rigorous interaction between teachers and students. Students feel well supported by their teachers and know they are keen for them to do well.

226. Students' files are generally well kept and of a good standard with thorough, accurate notes taken from lessons and textbooks. They are regularly checked by teachers. Other written work takes the form of answers to questions, some from past exam questions and others of a range of styles. These give students plenty of practice at exam-style questions and are marked according to mark schemes shared with the students. Teachers also provide comments and advice for improvement, including the resubmission of poor answers. Experimental reports and coursework are treated in the same way. Students have individual half-termly review sessions, where progress is reviewed and learning targets set. Overall marking and assessment are well used to support learning.
227. Students are well motivated. They are attentive and work well in lessons, both in groups and individually. The majority complete the independent work set, as well as spending time in compiling their notes. However, the scope for independent research is restricted because there is a narrow range of books beyond the textbook and no journals available to the students. There is not enough access to ICT within the science department.
228. Leadership and management of the subject is good. Schemes of work and other guidance are supportive of teachers; regular meetings ensure careful lesson planning and co-ordination of the course. There are good plans to monitor and further develop teaching. Some resources have been selected and purchased to extend the range of teaching and learning activities, but these need further additions. The current approach to assessment and target setting has been strengthened by the new course leader. The course in Year 12 is also benefiting from better school advice to students about courses appropriate to their levels of prior attainment.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (PRODUCT DESIGN)

229. The quality of the provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Lesson planning.
- Good advice and guidance to the students.
- Teachers' knowledge of manufacturing processes.
- Teacher-student relationships.

Areas for development

- Clarity of the purpose of the course and monitoring its outcomes.
- ICT.
- Computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacture.
- Teaching of some aspects of design.
- Health and safety in some workshop areas.

230. Standards have fluctuated in recent years, with a dip in last summer's results. They remain below national averages, particularly in the higher grades. Students who have continued with their studies in DT from Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress during the course. All students successfully follow the assessment criteria of the new specification and their progress is recorded and monitored by a progress booklet. Students demonstrate progression in their ability to develop design briefs and specifications and show improvements in their presentation techniques, including more detailed orthographic drawings and accompanying work plan schedules. The freehand work of a few students, produced in developing their ideas, also shows improvements, but is a weakness for some who still cling to elementary methods in drawing and highlighting their ideas. Many students approach their design work in a highly systematic manner but are sometimes more intent on achieving deadlines than on clarifying and understanding the nature of the design problems which they confront. Many of the students need to extend their range of graphics techniques.
231. In all lessons observed teaching and learning was satisfactory. Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable about manufacturing processes but need to improve their strategies for teaching aspects of designing. Not enough teaching, for example, involves students having access to, or physically examining and analysing products, or using exemplar materials and resources to aid their knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned with teachers making good explicit references to everyday products that students are familiar with and can discuss knowledgeably. Students' progress is well supported through the use of individual progress and review sheets that provide information about performance within the separate units of work.
232. Teacher-student relationships are good and teachers give good guidance and advice on an individual basis. Students are receptive and have positive attitudes to learning. They appreciate the opportunity for a one-to-one in-depth discussion and analysis of their work, although clear and specific individual targets are not always forthcoming.
233. The accommodation is spacious and appropriate for the needs of the product design specification but the ICT resources are inadequate, limiting students' opportunities to improve their capabilities and the final examination grades they can achieve. There are no facilities for CAD/CAM, for example, which is an essential component in the processes and manufacturing specification. The course does not attract many students. Although support is offered to students outside the normal school day, links with local sources for supporting pupils are still underdeveloped. Opportunities for students to display their work or refer to exemplar examples of previous design work, either from past students or from professional designers, are limited. The relevant legal requirements for health and safety need to be incorporated into some areas in the workshops. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but not enough thought has been given to the rationale or direction that has been established for this course and formal procedures are not yet in place for monitoring developments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- All teaching is satisfactory or better with good planning and subject knowledge.
- Pupils enjoy their work in ICT and relationships between students and with teachers are good.
- Pupils in the sixth form have good access to ICT resources.

Areas for improvement

- In some cases marking and feedback to students to inform their development and progress could be improved.

235. There is no A Level option in ICT but sixth form students can choose between double and single award AVCE, Intermediate GNVQ and ICT Key Skills courses.

236. In 2002 5 pupils sat the AVCE double award course. Of these 2 pupils passed with grades C, D and D, D respectively. In the AVCE single award course 7 pupils sat the examination, six gained passes D, D, D, D, D, E and one pupil was unclassified. A small group of 9 students followed an intermediate ICT GNVQ course and of these 5 gained passes with 4 pupils unclassified. Small numbers make value added analysis of these results unreliable but compared with results in other subjects this level of attainment, although lower than national expectations, represents satisfactory achievement for these students. Scrutiny of pupils' ICT work in the sixth form and lesson observations show that current achievement is slightly better now than it was when these students sat their exams in 2002. Again this represents at least satisfactory achievement for the students who have opted to study ICT in the sixth form. There is currently no AS or A2 course offered in ICT. There are also a small number of pupils following an ICT Key Skills course and achievement in this is satisfactory.

237. The teaching and learning in ICT is consistently at least satisfactory and there are some good lessons. Marking of the ICT course work is thorough and gives pupils adequate guidance to develop and improve work as required. As in the main school the planning for ICT lessons is clear and thorough with appropriate learning objectives identified and shared with pupils at the start of lessons. Very small group sizes enable teachers to provide individual help and support when it is needed. Teachers' subject knowledge is good.

238. Pupils are well motivated by interesting learning activities and relationships with each other and with teachers are good. Pupils are conscientious in lessons and work at an appropriate pace showing pride and care in their written work and course work.

239. The leadership and management of teachers working within the sixth form in ICT is sound. Coursework marking is moderated internally and in some lessons the head of department provides pupils with an action plan to inform development and progression with their work in ICT. The ICT curriculum manager teaches much of the sixth form ICT herself but where teachers share groups the co-ordination of the coursework and assignment marking is good.

240. Access to the computer resources is better in the sixth form than in the main school. Sixth form students have a study area where they can work independently on computers to supplement learning in lessons.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

241. The quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Most students achieve well in relation to their GCSE attainment on both the GNVQ intermediate course and the AVCE.
- The teaching is good.
- Work experience is well organised and makes a valuable contribution to students learning.
- There is strong leadership and efficient management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Students and staff have insufficient opportunity to use ICT as a resource in teaching and learning.
- Ensure lessons are planned to provide a sufficient degree of challenge for high attaining students.
- Students have limited written assessments of their progress during the courses.

242. Overall standards are below the national average on both the GNVQ intermediate and the AVCE courses but students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results. The majority of students attain at least a pass grade, although few attain the highest grades in either of the courses. In the most recent results, two-thirds of the students on the intermediate course attained a pass grade and the remaining one-third attained merit grades. There was a very small entry at advanced level and these students attained low pass grades. There has been an encouraging increase in the numbers of students recruited onto both courses in the present year. However, despite its best efforts, the department has rarely attracted male students to these courses.
243. Students presently studying on the GNVQ intermediate course are making good progress in their course work units and are on course to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The portfolios of evidence that they produce are well organised and indicate good levels of knowledge and understanding about health and social care topics. They use the experience of their work placements in early years and care settings particularly effectively to illustrate aspects of the course. Those presently in the first year of the advanced course are a mixture of students who have completed an intermediate course and those who have entered directly from Year 11. They have made a good start to the course and early indications are that some of the higher attaining students have the potential for very high attainment. Second year advanced students have a broad knowledge of health and social care services. They are able to present their work in a variety of ways using both written and verbal forms of communication. Many of them show good levels of maturity, self-confidence and poise when delivering their presentations. A good example was observed when they outlined their findings about the needs of carers to the rest of the group. All students did so clearly, concisely and with considerable authority. Indications are that many of these students will attain average grades that will represent good achievement over the course as a whole. Students have limited access to ICT and in their coursework files

there is very little evidence that students make effective use of ICT to carry out research or to present their work.

244. Overall, the teaching is good and results in good learning for students. Both courses are well planned and are delivered by a team of hardworking teachers who have good levels of knowledge about the units for which they are responsible. Very good support is provided by science specialists in the school to help deliver some of the advanced work in the units on the physical aspects of health. In other units, the department uses visitors, visits to relevant care settings and work placements particularly effectively to help bring the course to life for the students. Students are well prepared by staff before they make such visits. For example, students about to visit an Age Concern Day Centre were helped to plan their day efficiently with the help of very good questioning by the teacher; a clearly structured sheet on which to make notes and an example of a good quality action plan to use as a model. Students are well supported throughout the course by a member of the teaching team who acts as course tutor and oversees their progress over all the units. Students are given regular verbal feedback in lessons and in tutorial sessions about how well they are doing but very little of this is written down. This means that there is no written record of the on-going assessments that are made for students to refer to when they start new work. The department should consider further developing their systems for assessment to include some written comments to which students can refer at a later date. Teachers have limited access to ICT in their teaching.
245. In lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching methods and carefully chosen resources that motivate their students to learn. Relationships are very good which means that students are willing to discuss issues openly and honestly. They appreciate the balance between structured learning, group tasks and individual research that is provided for them and they report that they find the work relevant and interesting. In most cases the work is well matched to the needs of the class. However, in the first year advanced group there are some very able students who are not always involved at a sufficiently challenging level to stretch their capabilities.
246. Leadership is good and there is a happy, supportive atmosphere in the department that is reflected in the positive attitude of the students to the subject. The course co-ordinator has provided clear and structured guidance for both staff and students. She knows all students well and has set up effective support systems to make sure that they are reaching their potential across the various units of the course. Strengths and weaknesses are considered as a result of analysing data from external assessments and regularly observing teaching across the units. There is a willingness to adapt practice to meet the needs of the wide range in the ability of the students who enrol on the courses and every effort is made to continue to ensure that as much of the courses as possible is supported by real experiences in work placements. As a result, students are given an accurate picture of the challenges provided in care settings and have an invaluable resource to use in their work. There is every indication that the department has the capacity to continue to improve as it adapts to the needs of the more able students it is now attracting.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

247. The focus of inspection was on art. Two lessons of the performing arts vocational course were sampled and the quality of teaching in one lesson was good and in another very good. The standards of music on the course are very good, particularly the quality of part-singing.

ART

248. Overall, the provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently at least satisfactory and often good.

Areas for development

- The students' research and sketchbook work needs to be more extensive and rigorous.
- Students' knowledge and confidence in discussing other artists work is limited.

249. In 2001 all students passed the A2 examination but results at both A2 and AS level were below national averages. However, students' achievement in relation to prior attainment was satisfactory.

250. In Year 13 students' attainment is below average. They have not yet produced sufficient work and their sketchbook research lacks depth. Students who attended the life drawing sessions show rapid improvements in their drawing and the more able produce lively and expressive sketches in charcoal and paint. The majority of students use acrylic paint effectively, with strong colour, for example in large-scale figure and still life compositions. Others have produced sensitive watercolour sketches on the field trip to Alwicks. Some pupils are extending their work into screen-printing.

251. Standards in Year 12 are higher, although still below average. There has been some effective development work in the still life project, where a range of media has been used to explore ideas. When they are encouraged to work quickly, as in the sketches and mixed media collages influenced by Cubism, students' work is most successful. Most students in the sixth form are confident in using a range of media and processes, having received a solid grounding in Key Stage 4. Although work is often related to the work of other artists, students' knowledge about art, especially contemporary practice, is limited and they lack confidence in expressing and justifying their opinions.

252. Teaching is positive and supportive and there is good quality one-to-one guidance given to students on how to improve work. There is evidence that teachers are trying to move students on by helping them develop individual action plans, making more demands on their work rate and through increased pace. The curriculum is well planned and units of work well matched to the ability of students. However, there should be more opportunity for students to engage with original and contemporary art and to see art and design in context. Students also need to develop their ability to use the computer as an art and design tool. Links are developing with neighbouring schools that could provide useful stimulus for both staff and students. Enhancement activities such as life drawing classes, residential weekends and visits to galleries have had a positive effect on the standard of work produced.

HUMANITIES

253. The focus was on geography. One history lesson was sampled in which teaching and learning were good, and two sociology lessons, one good and one very good.

GEOGRAPHY

254. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**. Geography is one of the strongest, high-performing subjects in the school.

Strengths

- Good A Level results for the last 2 years.
- The quality of teaching.
- Teachers' good subject and examination knowledge.
- Students' very good attitudes in lessons.
- Very good subject leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Improve ICT facilities within the department to enable more independent research.

255. 2001 A Level examination results were well above national averages. Two-thirds of students gained A-B grades, almost twice the national average. Although no national comparators are available A Level results in 2002 are good again, with almost half of the students gaining A-B grades. Female students consistently perform better than males. The trend over recent years is an improving one, since results before 2001 were below the national average. In the relatively new AS examination students have performed well when taking into account their performance at GCSE. Compared to other subjects in the school, geography performs well at A Level and AS.

256. The observation of lessons and analysis of students' work show standards close to the expected level in Year 13 and in Year 12 standards are sometimes above. Students make good progress and achievement is good overall, but in Year 12 achievement is sometimes very good. Most students have well organised notes from a range of sources, providing useful learning resources. They are able to write examination type essays at a high level and use good quality diagrams as illustration. In their study of population, Year 13 students demonstrate good knowledge of factors affecting change and can give detailed explanations for changes in fertility rates, mortality rates and birth control.

257. Students' attitudes to learning are very good and sometimes excellent, particularly Year 12 students who are especially well motivated. This was evident in a lesson on coastline study where they were working at a high level demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of features of erosion. Students are well focused, concentrate and work diligently. They listen carefully, but some make limited contributions in discussions. The very good relationships teachers share with their students in the classroom ensures that all students are well known to their teachers who provide good support and advice. Students' work is regularly assessed and the department uses information well to set targets for them.

258. The quality of teaching is very good with many strong features. Teachers' good knowledge and high expectations enable them to challenge students and widen their knowledge and understanding. They are always well prepared and plan in great detail for their lessons. The aims of lessons are often shared with students at the beginning, then at the end these are used to check understanding and progress. Lessons are taught at a good pace and time is well used. Teachers give good guidance on examination technique and coursework. A good range of teaching styles is used to motivate and interest students. A recent innovation has been the introduction of video-conferencing through a link with another school. During the inspection, high level, detailed work followed one of these sessions.
259. Leadership and management of the subject by the curriculum manager are very good. Detailed subject documentation provides sound guidance for teachers and appropriate priorities are identified in the development plan. Good, rigorous monitoring of teaching is done regularly by the curriculum manager. There are regular subject team meetings where information and ideas are shared. The team ethos is strong and there is commitment to further improvement. There is good quality accommodation with all geography rooms located together. Teachers enhance the learning environment with good quality displays. Geography is well resourced with text and reference books, but there are limited ICT facilities within the department, restricting opportunities for independent research. In the last two years the geography department has been particularly successful. Very good leadership and staff commitment should ensure that the current high standards are maintained.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

260. Overall, provision for English is **good**.

Strengths

- Good quality of teaching. Staff lead students through the courses and also encourage them to develop their own views.
- Good teacher knowledge of subject and of examination requirements.
- Good management of the courses, effecting a smooth transfer from one syllabus in Year 13 to another in Year 12.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop the recently introduced AS/A2 English Literature course, and if possible establish larger groups.

261. In 2001, A Level results in English Literature were at the national average. 39% of students gained A-B grades. This was a higher result than previous years and demonstrated good achievement. In 2002, eight students took the A2 examination, in a new course in English Literature and Language, and only four passed. This was unsatisfactory and was the result of poor guidance given to these particular students and also of loss of staff within the English department.
262. The current Year 13 is working on literature and language. They have learned to deal with a range of texts, including spoken discourse. In some investigations, they need to pay closer attention to the lexical and grammatical choices of speakers and writers. Higher-attaining work shows originality as well as good analysis. These students are building on their AS grades and demonstrate satisfactory achievement.

263. Year 12 students are following an AS course in English Literature. They are making rapid progress. They have carried out extensive research on First World War poets. They are being well guided through the texts for modules 1 and 2, and are already developing confidence and independence. They discuss literature with enthusiasm and are able to construct an argument. Their achievement is good.
264. The quality of teaching in English courses is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They provide students with useful materials and background information. They reinforce the use of essential terminology, and check that students understand this. The groups are small, but staff vary the activities as much as possible by using paired work and individual investigations. It is a great strength of the department that teachers consistently emphasise the importance of students' own opinions, as long as these are backed up well by evidence. Students are given plenty of opportunity to make their own presentations. For instance, in a lesson on 'Antony and Cleopatra', Year 12 students had prepared detailed notes on different sections of the scene which they presented to the rest of the group. In another lesson, students gave formal presentations on the novel 'Enduring Love' and they made choices on the style of their input, for example, using the whiteboard or distributing hand-outs. In Year 13, students had carried out individual investigations of language features in the programme 'The Office' which they shared. Theatre trips have taken place to recent Royal Shakespeare Company productions and these were very well used in lessons, linking verbal and visual effects. Teachers work very hard to engage all student in discussion and use good questioning, enabling students to expand their points and to explore ambiguous issues. Students, particularly in Year 12, use these opportunities well, which is why their attainment is above average in articulating independent views.
265. The students currently studying English are conscientious. Their files are detailed and well organised. They carry out tasks willingly, often with enjoyment. Most students are keen to contribute to discussion. Staff give positive feedback. Written work is marked carefully, with suggestions for improvements and teachers remind students of assessment criteria for examinations and coursework. Sixth form work, for example reviews of Shakespeare productions, are on display for pupils in the main school to see.
266. Courses are well managed, especially given the difficulty of teaching one course in Year 13 and introducing a different one in Year 12. Students are well informed about the requirements of each module and a useful handbook is provided to give an overview of AS and A2. Two teachers share each group, taking different modules, but they plan well together and are aware of the activities that each is introducing. It is now important to build on the strength of the current AS course into A2 and next year's AS.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Planning.
- Students' good progress.

Areas for improvement

- More formal links between partner schools.
- Use of ICT to improve contact between students and teacher.

268. Standards of achievement vary because of the small numbers of students involved. However, results have been good with all students in 2001 and 2002 achieving a pass at A Level. The achievement of the current cohort in Year 12 is good. The standard of work in Year 13 is in line with expectations given the prior attainment of the cohort.
269. Although the AS group has only completed half a term of the course the students have already built an impressive portfolio of work and are making very good progress as a result of very good teaching which promotes high standards. Students are learning how to discuss, at a sophisticated level, topics such as family life in France, which require them to use their prior knowledge of French at a much higher level of competence. Students correct their own mistakes as they speak and maintain fluency. They have a secure grasp of grammar and syntax and this helps them to be creative and accurate. All learn well. They are positive, attentive and keen to do well.
270. Teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned to allow feedback to individual students. Sound coverage of grammar enables students to achieve a high level of performance in speaking and writing. Resources to develop writing are excellent; these range from slates for quick notes in response to questions, to flow charts and writing frames that enable students effectively to express their thoughts in French. The teacher has a very good relationship with the students, encourages them constantly and knows how to help them improve their performance. This improvement is often remarkable.
271. There is a good range of assessment, from instant feedback to meticulous recording of progress in different skill areas. For example, listening exercises are challenging and show up some deficiencies in prior attainment in listening, but the teacher has responded by planning strategies to improve this.
272. Provision for A level courses has improved since the last inspection and AS and A2 courses are shared by three schools on a rotational basis. Although take-up is generally low, more students have opted for the course. Students build quickly on their prior experience and make good progress. Until recently only girls enrolled on their course, but in the last two years boys have chosen French and their progress is at least as good as that of the girls. Students are appreciative of the teaching they had in Year 11, and the residential course was a significant influence on their choice of French. They look forward to the opportunity to work experience in France in Year 13.
273. The new arrangements are working well. An experiment with video-conferencing was abandoned owing to the poor quality of picture and sound and to the limitations of the system to enable an effective methodology. Teachers have identified gaps in the scheme of work and recognise that more resources for coursework and oral topics are needed. Students are encouraged to e-mail work to their teacher, but are not yet doing so. This would enhance assessment and monitoring of performance, particularly when the teacher cannot easily see the students outside lesson time. More formal links between schools, such as a regular tutorial, would help to keep students on track.