

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **PRUDHOE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**

Moor Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland. NE42  
5LJ

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122351

Headteacher: Mr. R. Casson

Reporting inspector: Mr. P. Livsey  
1544

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003

Inspection number: 249615

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: 13 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Moor Road,  
Prudhoe,  
Northumberland.

Postcode: NE42 5LJ

Telephone number: 01661 832486

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. E. Burt

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1544	Mr. P. Livsey	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	Summary of the report How high are standards?
12503	Mr. M. Cundick	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils?
1622	Mrs. L. Aers	Team inspector	English	How well are pupils taught?
31550	Mrs. S. Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics	
22083	Mrs. K. Hinton	Team inspection	Science	
			Biology	
			Chemistry	
32333	Mr. R. Lilley	Team inspector	Information technology	
8751	Mr. J. Chidgey	Team inspector	Design and technology	
1609	Mr. R.B. Higgs	Team inspector	History Citizenship	
1576	Mr. G.W. Stephenson	Team inspector	Geography	
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	
1549	Mr. T. Robshaw	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
8009	Mr. J. Forsyth	Team inspector	Music Performing arts	
16890	Mrs. M. Potter	Team inspector	Religious education	
17765	Mr. J. McElwee	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French	
8248	Mr. C. Riches	Team inspector	Business education	
20825	Mr. B. Ogden	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism	
16431	Mrs. E. Graham	Team inspector	Health education	

The inspection contractor was:

Durham Local Education Authority

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London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Prudhoe Community High School is a large 13-18 mixed comprehensive school with 1039 pupils and students. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. At the time of the inspection it was 9.2%. The intake is of above average attainment, but there are areas of multiple deprivation in the catchment area, especially in the former industrial core. 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) and the percentage of pupils with statements of SEN are below the national average. The school is a Technology College and a Beacon School. It is the centre for an extensive community education programme, including a Community Arts Centre.

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

This is a good and successful school with a number of very good features. It obtains good results through good and often very good teaching. It promotes very good attitudes and behaviour. It cares very well for its pupils and students and successfully includes them in the life and work of the school. It serves its community well and has continued to improve since its last inspection. It provides good value for money.

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

- Teaching and learning are good and often very good.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils and students are very good.
- There are good systems in place to support and guide pupils and students.
- There is good provision for pupils with SEN.
- There is good curricular and extra-curricular provision.
- Links with parents and the community are very good.
- The school is very well led and is well managed.

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

- The planning and monitoring of the taught programme of careers education.
- The consistency of the cross-curricular delivery and monitoring of information and communication technology (ICT) and of aspects of pupils' social and multicultural development.

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

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

The school was last inspected in 1997. There has been improvement in the two key issues identified in the last report. In addition, results and attendance have improved. The good quality of teaching has been maintained. The sixth form has expanded because more of the school's pupils are staying on post-16. A range of community partnerships and national projects has been undertaken. Facilities and resources have been 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 point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

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

In 2002 at Key Stage 3 results for both boys and girls were above the national average in all three subjects assessed and well above in mathematics with a high proportion of the higher grades. They were well above those of similar schools. The trend over the last five years has been in line with the national. At Key Stage 4 results are above the national average and above those of similar schools. The upward trend over the last five years has been below the national trend, but results were already above average. The proportions of pupils gaining 5 A\*-G grades and at least one A\*-G grade are very high compared with the national average and that for similar schools. The school has set itself challenging targets for 5 A\*-C particularly. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and often good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils with SEN make good and sometimes very good progress at both key stages

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and work are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good, both in and outside the classroom.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships and pupils' personal development are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average.

There is a calm, friendly, respectful atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are willing to contribute ideas and they respect those of others. They welcome the opportunity to take responsibility

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school, with seven out of ten lessons being good or better, three out of ten very good or better, and very little unsatisfactory teaching and learning.



Teaching is generally characterised by good planning, high expectations, good relationships and a variety of activities. The development of thinking skills is a strong feature.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curricular provision is good and meets the needs of the pupils well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with SEN are very well included through a combination of well-focused support and effective management of their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although multicultural development could be more systematically addressed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very well-structured welfare and guidance arrangements that enable it to promote high standards in pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance.

There are good links with the careers service and well-organised work experience, but there is no detailed, planned taught programme of careers education. Pupils' experiences in ICT, citizenship and personal and social education across the curriculum are not sufficiently consistent. There is good extra-curricular provision. Drama and the vocational courses contribute to good pathways into the sixth form. Links with parents and the wider community are very good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher and senior staff provide very good leadership. They promote an inclusive and engaging spirit in the school. They encourage staff in believing that they can affect the direction of the school. The school is aspirational for its pupils. The management of the school in implementing these principles is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors carry out their responsibilities very well and have a very good knowledge of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has very good systems in place to evaluate both outcomes and provision, focusing particularly on the quality of teaching. The school analyses data very well.
The strategic use of resources	Available resources are deployed well to have maximum impact on the quality of education.

Staffing, resources and accommodation are generally sufficient and there is some good provision. Staff development is good and new staff are well inducted. Governors and senior management are very enterprising in seeking out and integrating new sources of provision. The school effectively applies the principles of best value. The school provides good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school.</li><li>• Their children make good progress.</li><li>• Behaviour is good.</li><li>• Teaching is good.</li><li>• They are kept well informed.</li><li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school.</li><li>• The school expects their child to work hard and achieve their best.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The quantity of homework.</li><li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li></ul>

The inspection team endorsed the positive views of the parents. Homework is generally consistent and appropriate. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 306 students in the sixth form. This is larger than the average and much larger than at the time of the last inspection. This year there has been a significant increase in pupils staying on into the sixth form. As the sixth form has expanded it has drawn students from a wider range of attainment.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides good and often very good experiences for the students. It is cost-effective. A high proportion of the teaching is very good. Retention is good and students achieve well and attain above the national averages.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very good.
- The curriculum and extra-curricular activities have good range and quality.
- There is good support for students' personal and academic progress.
- Students' independence and responsibility are well developed.

### What could be improved

- The programme of careers education.
- Facilities for students' private study.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and a broad curriculum supports students well.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Good teamwork and feedback support students' achievement well.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Good teamwork and very good teaching support above average standards.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and very good leadership enable students to achieve well.
Business Studies	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well.
Physical Education	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching and student attitudes produce very good achievement.
Leisure and Recreation	<b>Very good.</b> Team spirit and some very good teaching produce very good achievement.
Health and social care vocational	<b>Good.</b> Good achievement is supported by good teaching and relationships.
Art and design	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching of a well-managed course supports very good achievement.
Music	<b>Good.</b> Good classroom management and relationships support good

	achievement.
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Performing Arts	<b>Very good.</b> Very good management and outstanding drama teaching in particular, produce very good achievement.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching builds on students' very positive attitudes to produce good achievement.
History	<b>Good.</b> Good and often very good teaching builds on very positive attitudes to produce good achievement.
English	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and guidance support students' good achievement.
French	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching and excellent relationships enable students to achieve very well.

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

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Guidance and support is good and students are well known to staff. Although there is good guidance on university application, and good links with the careers service, there is a lack of coherence in the programme of careers education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Management arrangements for the sixth form are clear and effective. The school leadership team has an inclusive and ambitious approach to the future of the sixth form.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The choice of courses on offer.</li> <li>• The good quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The help they get to research independently.</li> <li>• The support available from the teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers advice.</li> <li>• The range of activities and enrichment courses.</li> </ul>

The inspection team endorses the students' positive views. A more coherent programme of careers education to supplement the good individual careers advice and good guidance on university application, is an area for improvement. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

### OTHER INFORMATION

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' and students' attainment is above average at all key stages. Achievement is satisfactory and often good at Key Stage 3. It is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
2. In 2002 at Key Stage 3 results for both boys and girls were above the national average in all three subjects assessed and well above in mathematics, with a high proportion of the higher grades. They were well above those of similar schools. This represented a particular improvement in English from 2001 when they were average on both indicators. The upward trend over the last five years has been in line with the national. Value was added from Key Stage 2 at a rate in line with the national and with schools in similar circumstances, but below that of schools whose pupils attained the same at Key Stage 2. However, the school's data and inspection evidence indicate satisfactory and often good progress in pupils' first year in the school. Currently, attainment is above average except in ICT, art and physical education (PE). Pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects and is good in design and technology (DT), history, geography, modern foreign languages (MFL), music and religious education (RE).
3. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils can write at length and a significant proportion enjoy using language in written work. Higher attaining pupils can find quadratic formulae and apply Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve right-angled triangles. Average pupils can use trial and improvement methods to find the solution to quadratic equations. Pupils have a very good understanding of scientific processes. Average pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the parts of the human body. Pupils' drawing and painting skills are satisfactory, with some examples of high achievement. They can design and make products successfully and write detailed evaluations. They make good use of ICT. They have secure basic mapping skills and use ICT skills confidently to support their geographical research. Pupils generally have good skills in presenting ICT. Other aspects of ICT are less well developed. Pupils have good skills in interpreting historical sources. Higher attaining pupils can justify their conclusions in convincing detail. Pupils achieve well in their first foreign language and in the second foreign language, which nearly all start in Year 9. There is a significant number of pupils with high quality instrumental skills and they work together and compose well. Their singing is weaker. Pupils' achievement is good in PE because of the progress they make in Year 9 in games skills and in fluency, control and complexity in gymnastics. In RE pupils demonstrate good knowledge, mature reflection and good application of the skills of thinking and reasoning.

4. At Key Stage 4 results in 2002 were above the national average. They have been above the national average over the last three years and well above for the girls. 2002 results were above those of similar schools on the basis of free school meals and in line on the basis of prior attainment. Value was added from Key Stage 3 at a rate in line with the national. The proportions of pupils gaining 5 A\*-G grades and at least one A\*-G grade are very high compared with the national average and that for similar schools. 100% of the pupils obtained at least one A\*-G grade. The upward trend in average points score over the last five years has been below the national trend, but results were already above average. The school has set itself challenging targets in terms of 5 A\*-C grades. Pupils performed less well in English and mathematics than in their other subjects in both 2001 and 2002. They performed better than in their other subjects in business studies and French. Currently, attainment is above average except in ICT, geography, art and music. Pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects and good in science, DT, history, MFL, music and PE. It is very good in RE.
5. By the end of Key Stage 4 average pupils can write for a variety of audiences and purposes. Higher attainers command a wide range of vocabulary and can understand complex imagery. Higher attainers have high levels of skill in algebraic manipulation while average pupils solve problems involving combinations of probabilities. The highest attaining pupils have excellent understanding of the abstract aspects of science. High attainers generally have a very good understanding of the subject and are able to apply their understanding in a range of contexts. Pupils have good practical skills, and lower attainers show impressive persistence. Pupils' standards of drawing are satisfactory and they achieve well in three-dimensional work. They can produce precision drawings in engineering and show presentational flair in textiles. ICT skills continue to develop in DT and geography. More generally, most pupils are confident users of the school ICT network, but the skills of information handling are not as well developed as those of presenting and searching for information. Higher attaining pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged. Pupils show a good understanding of historical context and produce good well-structured essays. Pupils' work in French and German is often of a very high standard, with a secure grasp of tenses and wide vocabulary. Listening is a well-developed skill, speaking less so. Pupils have a good knowledge of musical terms and performance skills are often very good.
6. Pupils with SEN make good and occasionally very good progress at both key stages. The school uses its knowledge of their prior learning very effectively, setting realistic individual targets that challenge these pupils to continue to strive to achieve as well as they can. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils with SEN generally achieve standards above those of comparable pupils nationally.

## **Sixth Form**

7. Results in 2001 and 2002 for candidates entered for GCE A/AS exams were above the national average, with boys outperforming girls. In 2001 results in performing arts, physics, sports/PE studies and business VQ were well above the national; in chemistry, English, French, geography and mathematics above; in art, biology, DT, sociology and leisure and recreation VQ in line; in economics below and in history well below. Results in history were on average lower than in students' other subjects. However, in 2000 and 2002 school evidence shows that results were in line with expectations.

8. The commercial scheme used by the school shows that over recent years the value added by the school has been in line with expectations and improved in 2002 from the previous year. Individual students, particularly those entering with lower prior attainment, have achieved well. Retention on courses is good and over the last three years about four-fifths of students have gone on into higher education.
9. Currently, attainment overall is above average. Achievement overall is good. It is at least satisfactory in all the subjects inspected in detail and good in DT, health and social care, music, geography, history and English. It is very good in business studies, PE and sports studies, leisure and recreation, art, performing arts and French.
10. Students present arguments well in mathematics. Higher attaining and average students use algebra confidently. Students with lower prior attainment often achieve well. Students in biology and chemistry have a good understanding of lesson content and have good practical skills. They are creative and confident users of new found skills and knowledge in DT and are advanced users of ICT. Achievement in PE/sports studies builds on success in the GCSE PE course in Key Stage 4. The quality of performance in practical sports lessons is very high and students can engage in meaningful group discussions. In art the students work confidently with a range of media. They articulate their views very clearly and their work shows a mature and independent approach.
11. Students' very good achievement in performing arts builds on the strength of drama in the main school. They work very well to define concepts in drama, are knowledgeable about a range of styles of dance and achieve high levels of competence. In geography, students use terms confidently and effectively manage a wide range of information. Students in history develop good note-making techniques and those on the A2 course can write mature, analytical essays. Students coming into Year 12 with lower levels of attainment need more help in moving from narrative to analysis. Students in English understand the influence of context on texts, are aware of the connotations of language and are able to carry out their own research. In French some students need help in making the move up from GCSE, but are confident and fluent about everyday topics. On the A2 course the higher attaining students show a deep sensitivity to the language.
12. Students on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism achieve very well from the basis of relatively low prior attainment. The students on the advanced leisure and recreation course show good understanding of the key issues involved. The good achievement on the intermediate health and social care course also includes students with lower than average attainment at GCSE, although they need more support in relating practice to theory. Students on the advanced course provide comprehensive and clear written accounts. Students on the vocational music technology course achieve well in displaying a range of techniques in ICT, are articulate and can work independently.



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

13. Pupils respond positively to all aspects of school life and thrive on the support and encouragement they receive from staff in both their academic and personal development. They are well mannered and respectful of each other and staff. They enjoy school and are eager to learn. They apply themselves well to their studies both collaboratively and as individuals. In some 80% of lessons observed their attitudes were noted as at least good, a high proportion very good and some excellent.
14. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in the steady improvement in attendance from 89% at the previous inspection to 93.6% for the current academic year. This is in excess of the national average and comparable schools.
15. Pupils have confidence in the staff. They are aware of their progress and targets they need to achieve to meet their ability and goals. They are open and willing to contribute their ideas during lessons and are respectful of the opinion of others. They also welcome the opportunity to take on various roles of responsibility offered by the school through the house system, tutor groups, sports and social clubs, organisation of charity activities and the school council. The mature responsibility shown by the members of the school council is impressive, as is their appreciation of their role within the school in representing their peers, debating issues and presenting their ideas for school improvement to the senior management team.
16. Behaviour is predominately very good, both within and outside of the classroom. There is a calm, friendly, respectful atmosphere within the school with no apparent indication of oppressive or aggressive behaviour. Pupils are confident to share any personal concerns with their tutors, knowing that any incidents of bullying will be promptly and effectively addressed by staff. They respect the code of conduct, respond positively to sanctions and welcome the range of rewards and certificates that celebrate their academic, personal and sporting successes both within and outside of the school.
17. Good use is made by pupils of the discipline of recording homework and tracking their achievements and targets through the personal organiser. Older pupils are keen to support their juniors and welcome the formal role of peer mentoring for which a number of sixth form students are currently being trained.

## **Sixth form**

18. In September 2002 80% of pupils in Year 11 chose to continue their relationship with the school in the sixth form. They benefit from the wide range of curricular opportunities offered by the school through AS, A, Intermediate and GNVQ courses, carefully matched to their range of academic and personal skills. This is a further 10% increase in entry to the sixth form from the previous year, again a positive reflection of their appreciation of the school. Attitudes of students in lessons observed were all recorded as at least good, with a high proportion identified as excellent.
19. The majority of sixth form students appreciate the support and guidance they received from staff, but some have concerns regarding advice given on course content and careers development. Overall students have an excellent approach to lessons, participate with enthusiasm, work well collectively and are keen to produce work of a high standard.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching is good across the school, with 70% of lessons good or better, including 30% very good or excellent, and only 3% unsatisfactory. These figures are at least as high as the good standards of teaching reported at the last inspection.
21. During this inspection, teaching was judged to be good in almost all areas. It was very good in RE and, at Key Stage 4, in PE, business studies and drama. Lessons overall were judged to be satisfactory in geography, ICT and in MFL at Key Stage 3. In the sixth form there were no unsatisfactory lessons and almost all teaching was good or better, with a high proportion of very good. Across the whole school, this shows a high level of consistency.
22. Teaching is characterised by good planning. This leads in turn to a good variety of activities, which keep pupils' interest. Most lessons are longer than in many schools, but teachers are aware of this and break the time up by using a mix of whole-class, group and individual work. Usually lessons are drawn to a meaningful conclusion, as in a science lesson where time was well used to summarise learning, check pupils' knowledge and give them practice in speaking the specialist vocabulary. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most departments are fortunate in having a team of knowledgeable specialist teachers, although this was not always the case during the week of the inspection in a few subject areas where teacher absence had occurred.
23. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, who show a very positive attitude. Pupils enjoy the active approaches that are used. In history, they are asked to analyse information rapidly, as in a lesson using ICT, which simulated a newsroom. In music, teachers consistently encourage learning through active involvement. In French, pupils are given imaginative contexts in which to use the language, for example, interviewing Napoleon in exile. Drama activities are frequently used within English lessons. In art, pupils have the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills, using a variety of materials.
24. Teachers are aware of the importance of developing thinking skills and staff have been involved in training on this, together with partner middle schools. Developing independence of thought is a strength of the teaching. This is well shown in the thought-provoking tasks that are set in RE, where in one lesson Year 9 pupils engaged in a lively debate on free will. In English, pupils are encouraged to be critical, which was demonstrated in a lesson where pupils highlighted bias in newspaper articles on current events. Teachers across the curriculum ensure that pupils are able to back up their views with evidence. This is achieved through skilful questioning in subjects as diverse as mathematics, science, art and PE. Pupils are enabled to work in groups and clarify their thinking through talk. In drama, pupils plan their presentations in groups and show a high degree of independence, culminating, in one example, in a performance sharing different aspects of the struggle for women's rights.
25. Some subjects make good use of new technologies, especially DT where ICT is well used as a tool to assist and improve standards for designing and manufacturing. In PE, videotapes of other pupils and professional performers are used effectively. Some subjects, for example art and MFL, could use ICT more and perhaps in a school that does so much to promote skills in speaking and listening, Powerpoint could be used more by pupils making their own presentations.

26. Teachers have high expectations, which are shown by the challenging tasks they set. Occasionally, however, lessons are not planned to take into account pupils of differing abilities. Assessment is well used in order to move pupils on and self-evaluation is used in several subjects so that pupils can identify their own strengths and weaknesses. In examination classes, staff are well aware of assessment objectives and make these clear to pupils. Homework is used appropriately to extend or consolidate learning.
27. Teachers and learning support assistants provide sensitive and effective individualised support that is well matched to their pupils' special educational needs. They use questioning and classroom talk particularly well to help these pupils develop a better understanding of challenging concepts met during their studies while also seeking to develop their independent learning and thinking skills. This means that teaching successfully promotes high expectations for all while effectively supporting the self-esteem of pupils who learn more slowly than their peers.
28. The school is committed to raising standards of teaching and learning as high as possible and there is a culture of observation and improvement.

### **Sixth form**

29. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons observed and the majority of lessons was good with many very good. Art, music technology, business studies, performing arts, PE and French in particular provide very good teaching. As a result, students are learning very well and their achievement is good.
30. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they also have a detailed grasp of the examination courses they teach and assessment criteria. They are enthusiastic about their subjects. Students respond with very good levels of interest and engagement in lessons. Relationships between staff and students are very good and this is a major factor in the overall success of the sixth form work.
31. Courses are often very well structured and teachers often plan lessons very carefully and imaginatively. They are always very well prepared and use resources very well. A range of teaching methods is used in order to achieve different outcomes. For example, in PE there is a good balance between practical sessions and discussing theory, including key issues in sport. In English, pupils are asked to respond to texts in a variety of ways, including a visual response. In art, students are asked to articulate their views on their own and other artists' work, including local artists. In some areas, such as leisure subjects, ICT is used well to promote research. ICT is also an essential resource in music technology. In some subjects, such as history and PE, it could be used more.
32. As in the main school, teachers take care to foster students' independence of thought. Students are enabled to carry out investigations, as in an economics and business lesson where they worked in groups using up-to-date newspaper articles and then shared their findings. In several subjects, such as history, students regularly make presentations to the whole group. In performing arts, they are able to follow their own lines of enquiry and make decisions how to present their material. In DT, students pursue their own ideas with creativity and confidence. In geography, they are advised to produce detailed 'mind-maps' to organise their ideas. In all subjects, questioning is focused well to make the best use of students' views.

33. Teachers give good guidance on their courses and provide students with useful background materials. In mathematics, staff also provide revision booklets. In French, teachers provide a wide range of resources, including well-researched websites. All staff have good knowledge of their students' prior attainment, and assessment is well used to give advice for improvements. They plan well for progression from AS to A2 so that skills are consolidated and developed to a higher level.
34. Staff work hard to relate their subjects to contemporary society, for example discussing sponsorship in PE, and using French to explore topics such as racism. In health and social care, students experience examples of real situations, such as a health visitor talking to mothers. Departments have good links with outside agencies to enhance teaching, for example businesses and leisure providers for the relevant subjects. Art students visit galleries and studios. Visits are arranged for most subject areas, for instance to the theatre, and a study trip to Paris is organised.

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

35. The curriculum provided for pupils is good. The Key Stage 3 curriculum provides a good stepping-stone from the middle schools to Key Stage 4. To secure good curriculum continuity as pupils enter the school the school is involved in a number of activities including joint professional development and also with shared schemes of work and use of attainment data. This is used to ensure that pupils are taught in appropriate groups when setting is provided on the basis on prior attainment or in the case of MFL, in terms of prior experience. Time allocations are appropriate. However, equal provision is not made for the DT subject areas. There is a lack of fieldwork in geography and history. An illustration of the breadth provided is the three languages offered in Year 9.
36. At Key Stage 4 a good range of courses, including vocational as well as academic, is provided and continues into post-16 course provision. The DT and vocational courses introduced give a good pathway to sixth form subjects and this is evident in the increased take up at sixth form. Performing arts is well reflected in school life and within opportunities and courses provided. Drama within the curriculum is a strong feature of the learning provision. There is richness within the curricula provided by subject departments, particularly in history and DT. Thinking skills are developed well in history, geography, science, DT, MFL, RE and English. Citizenship is developed in art where there are also opportunities for independent thinking. The weaknesses are in the provision for careers and ICT. National Curriculum requirements are met although the school is not providing access to RE for all in Key Stage 4. Access for a minority of pupils whose RE is delivered on an integrated basis with ICT and citizenship remains an issue.
37. The school's technology status is reflected in Key Stage 4 courses. All students must follow one course of this nature and there is a wider range of applied courses that have been developed to meet and be in line with current qualifications at both pre and post-16. It has also resulted in some subjects making good use of IT-based teaching and learning. However, this is affected by issues of access and availability across subject areas.

38. An extensive portfolio of links with business and outside organisations has been established both locally and within the wider community. All make significant contribution to pupil experience, enhancement of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Excellent links with the local community are also provided by the youth service both through their youth team role within the school and continuity of contact through the youth centre outside school hours, and particularly through the external use of community facilities within the school premises. Twinning with a French town also acts as an important vehicle in developing wider community and cultural links with pupils playing roles of responsibility in hosting and leading of events.
39. As well as in English, mathematics and discrete ICT lessons the school is also promoting cross-curricular approaches to literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils' development in literacy is securely promoted across subjects. There are good examples of provision for literacy across the curriculum. Speaking and listening are developed particularly well and assessed in English and drama, but good opportunities for discussion were observed in most other subjects, including mathematics and art. Teachers place emphasis on the correct use of technical language in their subjects and most departments have a display of key words. Writing for different purposes is developed, for example through the use of writing frames in science and RE. Guidance is given in laminated form on structuring writing in history, including suggested openings for paragraphs. Teachers in MFL encourage pupils to relate what they have learned about English grammar to other languages. Pupils' own reading is encouraged through independent reading sessions in English. Sixth formers volunteer to help reluctant readers. Literacy across the curriculum is co-ordinated as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy. Numeracy is not as secure, being provided within some defined subject areas currently. Cross-curricular provision for ICT varies in quality and the use of ICT to support subjects is inconsistent.
40. In addition the curriculum provides opportunities for citizenship and for personal health and social education to be developed within subjects, within tutorials and during life skill days. This model is generally sound but the approach is dependent on the quality of departmental contributions to these areas, and some weaknesses exist. Life skill days not only give the school the opportunity to address a range of cross-curricular and other issues but enable it to use professional groups and agencies to deliver and make an input to the teaching. The school provides opportunities to develop thinking on moral and ethical issues. Good examples were seen of this during inspection and in samples of work. However, the school does not have a secure over-view of this provision. The response of departments to taking responsibility for elements such as anti-racism indicate that the school has not done an adequate map or analysis to see if things have been put in place, are of the required quality and meet requirements. For example, for citizenship there is no overall school plan to ensure that pupils have access to comparable activities and experiences.
41. A good variety of extra-curricular opportunities is provided by subjects, for example in DT, ICT and PE. There is a history club, opportunities for performance in drama and for coaching awards provided through community education. The curriculum is further enhanced by trips to France and to Germany, involvement with contemporary arts practice in the region, and PE events. Pupils are encouraged to enter competitions in DT and mathematics. Overall, the community makes a good contribution to this curriculum. There are very strong links with outside agencies that support music and art provision.

42. The school successfully provides a broad range of curricular opportunities that meet the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of existing pupils with SEN well. New courses and timetable arrangements are used imaginatively and creatively to sustain or re-engage the learning and interest of pupils at risk of underachievement or disaffection. The benefits of this approach were seen for example during discussions with students involved in piloting a new horticulture course or in the quality of various work samples. The school keeps these curricular opportunities under regular review to ensure they remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate and meet the diverse learning needs of its pupils well. This provision helps the school to maintain its inclusive ethos.
43. There are some strengths in careers education and guidance (CEG), but overall provision has significant weaknesses. There are good links with the local careers service and the school's careers adviser provides very good support, working with groups of pupils, interviewing individuals and organising the CEG library. A well organised and monitored programme of two weeks work experience is provided for all pupils in Year 10. There is no detailed, planned, taught programme of careers education and insufficient time is allocated. Form tutors responsible for teaching any CEG have not been trained and there is no teacher with specialist qualification or expertise. Any CEG work is done in tutorial time, but there is no monitoring to check on teaching, quality and quantity. Pupils do not have folders of notes and there is no assessment of any work. During lessons there are insufficient opportunities for researching careers using computers or the CEG library, which is an underused resource.
44. Overall, provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has a useful guidance document for this aspect. However its implementation is not effectively monitored and co-ordinated and this leads to some inconsistencies in the provision of social and cultural elements.
45. Provision for spiritual education is good. RE lessons offer many opportunities for students to become more reflective and explore the concept of belief. Throughout the curriculum, there are examples of a sensitive approach to major issues. For example, in English students have written poems about September 11<sup>th</sup> - one year on, and following their tour of the French and Belgian battlefields students produced a moving collection of prose and poetry. A candle of remembrance in the school foyer is lit by students on significant occasions to focus their thoughts and reflections. The school celebrates individual achievement through awards evenings and assemblies. Students are encouraged to develop their own means of expression through the performing arts and take part in school productions and talent shows. Students take pride in their achievement and are enthusiastic and positive about the opportunities provided.
46. Moral development is good. Relationships between staff and students are very good and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers provide many opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour and this has a positive effect on students' attitudes, which are generally mature and sensible. Students take the initiative in researching and organising collections for charities. They are given many opportunities to explore moral issues. In RE, they investigate the effects of global policies in the third world and issues of prejudice and discrimination. They discuss issues such as cloning and genetic engineering in French. Students value events such as the Life Skills day where they debated capital punishment and racism.
47. Social development is good. The programme of extra-curricular activities, such as in sport and performing arts, provides good opportunities for students to work together co-

operatively. There are many social events such as discos and there is a successful community band. Work in drama and music has a positive effect upon social development. There are good examples of peer mentoring, such as in art and design where sixth form students work regularly with younger pupils. A training system to further develop peer mentoring is planned. Pupils' views are well represented by the work of the active school council.

48. Cultural development is good. There is a wide range of theatre, art gallery and museum visits both locally and to London and many residential visits abroad. In English, art and music, students are encouraged to study examples of the arts and literature of other cultures. The performing arts department offers opportunities for students to have first-hand experience of the work of other cultures such as the visiting Indian Theatre Company. There are many drama and music performances that are enjoyed by the school and community. Students study aspects of other cultures in geography and MFL. In PE they investigate the effects of the media on sport, although there are some good examples of developing an awareness of the multicultural nature of our society, this is an element that would be improved by a better co-ordinated approach.

### **Sixth form**

49. The curriculum in the sixth form is good. A strong feature is its inclusivity and diversity, provided through a combination of AS, A2 and vocational courses. The school has a clear commitment to develop and make available appropriate courses for all its sixth form students. It takes varied and innovative approaches to providing learning and qualification opportunities. Students are happy with the range offered and believe that there is good extra-curricular activity. There is very good breadth within subject courses for mathematics, history, MFL, and PE. An example of good and effective provision to provide a broad curriculum is the Young Enterprise activity that is very worthwhile to those business studies students involved.
50. Efforts are made to enhance the curriculum by developing multicultural awareness, for example through life skill days where there are sessions on racism; and a visit by the Indian Theatre Company. Monitoring of the curriculum needs to ensure a more wide impact on the experience and awareness of all students.
51. The school has made good progress with addressing the key issue relating to provision of RE in the sixth form. It offers a range and variety of approaches to ensure that RE is accessible to all students, and as such are meeting statutory requirements. A good example of this being within the philosophy and ethics course that has attracted 23 candidates and testifies to the interest generated by the full and short course as well as the work done at GCSE to promote this subject area. Other students have access through programmes within the collapsed timetable days (life skill days) which gives pupils engagement with moral and ethical issues.

52. Good guidance and support is provided for students in preparing applications to higher education. However, there is no broad, taught programme of careers education to guide students in making appropriate choices for progressing beyond the sixth form. Students recognise the weakness and confirmed it in a questionnaire completed before the inspection. Over half of the students who returned the questionnaire think that they are not well advised on what to do after leaving. There is some good support and guidance for students studying vocational courses about how they can progress when they leave. This is particularly so in the business education department. Insufficient time is allocated to CEG and there are no teaching resources. There is no teacher with specialist knowledge or qualification and any training for tutors is very limited. For students studying vocational subjects, there is work experience as part of their course, but there is no planned work experience for other students. Links with the local careers service are good and the school's careers adviser provides very good support speaking to groups and interviewing individuals. The careers library has a good range of university prospectuses, but broader careers information is limited.
53. The school is now catering very successfully in the sixth form for several students with statements of SEN. This is due to the combination of good teaching and the provision of increasingly flexible courses and programmes that are well matched to their individual needs. Their transition into the sixth form builds well upon the firm foundations laid during Key Stage 4 where the school's high expectations and sensitive teaching and support strategies sustained their self-esteem as learners and began to develop a greater emphasis upon more independent study.

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

54. The school has very well structured welfare and guidance arrangements. It promotes high standards of behaviour and attendance. The heads of year and pastoral co-ordinators, with neighbouring offices within the pastoral suite, work closely as a team in regularly reviewing support strategies for groups and individual pupils. The pastoral suites also incorporate the referral room providing immediate oversight of discipline procedures.
55. There is a well-structured code of conduct coupled with an emphasis on recognising and celebrating individual and group success, both within and outside the school. Pupils then have confidence in the support provided by the school, their relationships with staff and that hard work, skills and personal achievements in a wide context will be rewarded. This serves very well to raise whole-school confidence and self-esteem.
56. Attendance has steadily increased but the school is keen to further improve levels through close collaboration with parents, effective use of education welfare officers and providing a curriculum that encourages pupils to attend.
57. There is very effective liaison with partner middle schools with respective staff exchanging detailed pupil profiles, reinforced by testing of pupils in the core subjects. A preparation day, with pupils working together in their appointed tutor groups, provides a firm foundation for their entry into Year 9. Pupils then feel confident and comfortable on entry and acknowledge that any setting in subjects is appropriate to their ability.



58. The school places strong emphasis on good manners as a sound basis for getting on in life. Codes of conduct are clear and consistently applied. This is matched by the use of praise, rewards and certificates to celebrate success both within and outside the school. Staff are alert to signs of distress in pupils with clear codes of procedure for addressing any issues related to child protection. There is very good liaison with support agencies with weekly multi-agency meetings to review individual cases. Pupils are confident to confide in staff and any bullying problems are promptly and effectively addressed, engaging all involved plus parents as appropriate. Confidential support is also available from the school nurse, psychological and educational welfare officers through regular liaison with heads of year.
59. There are good child protection procedures. A programme of health and safety training has been organised for site staff, together with first-aid qualifications for non-teaching staff to ensure immediate access to first-aid for pupils, without disrupting teaching. A healthy living programme is also in place linked to school catering with its facility for oversight/control of pupil diet.
60. Academic and personal development data is used very well as a basis for appraising individual pupil plans, curriculum development and delivery to maintain and further improve educational standards.
61. A detailed database has been established for all pupils. This is used consistently throughout the school to assess progress and set achievable targets. These are shared with both parents and pupils at guidance consultation evenings when expectations are carefully explained and targets agreed. These are reviewed with curriculum delivery to ensure co-ordination of homework timetabling and the spread of coursework programming. These are conveyed to parents to facilitate their support and are regularly reinforced through personal organiser lines of communication.
62. Pupils are provided with access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visitors and visits outside school, together with opportunities to take on roles of responsibility through their house, tutor groups, school council, in the organisation of events, hosting of school activities and town twinning. Peer mentoring is also being introduced with pupils and students keen to volunteer to receive training to support younger pupils. Parent mentoring is also being planned. This support and encouragement is reflected in pupils' self-confidence, development of independence and responsibility, particularly as they mature into the sixth form.
63. The different curriculum areas, guided by the school assessment policy, have developed good internal procedures, using the subject level descriptors, for assessing pupils on a more regular basis and checking progress towards targets. However, in ICT, teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 are not accurate enough.
64. The results of Year 8 tests from the middle schools are used as a guide to give predicted levels for the end of Key Stage 3 when pupils enter the high school at the beginning of Year 9. Teachers revise pupils' predicted levels for the end of the key stage as soon as further information of their performance, including class work and homework, becomes available. A detailed picture of pupil performance levels and estimated examination grades is built up during Key Stages 3 and 4. Effort grades for pupils are also provided as a further indicator to decide targets. Regular pupil guidance days are arranged whereby tutors meet with parents and pupils to check on progress and modify or set new targets and to provide additional learning support if required. When pupils write their subject targets into their planners classroom teachers are also able to monitor progress.

65. SEN assessment and review arrangements are well established and effectively managed. They facilitate the school's actions to meet the individual needs of pupils on the SEN register well. The SEN policy has been revised to take full account of the latest code of practice and the co-ordinator oversees the implementation of special educational provision arrangements appropriately in line with these expectations. Individual students receive their entitlement to the additional support set out in their statements meeting these statutory requirements with sensitivity. Individual education plans are well written and provide a clear description of the pupils' learning difficulties and useful intervention strategies that subject teachers can use when these pupils are unsupported in their lessons. However, their targets often lack specificity and are of limited use helping teachers and parents judge the good progress normally being made by the pupils.
66. The work of the SEN team is also very well complemented by the effective provision of support to pupils experiencing social, emotional or academic barriers to effective learning. The inclusion manager is well qualified to offer counselling and mentoring services to both individual and groups of pupils at risk of underachievement and runs short anger management, anti-bullying and self-esteem courses that are well matched to the individual needs of pupils with problems.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

67. The majority of curriculum areas have developed good internal procedures for assessing pupils on a regular basis and checking progress towards targets. In MFL this works very well in the sixth form with full and helpful feedback. Some subject areas like DT use the examination board's criteria and proformas effectively to provide ongoing assessment of performance with coursework. Additional written comments by subject teachers, sometimes with exemplar solutions, as in mathematics, also provides students with information on how to improve their grades. In leisure and tourism, however, more information could be given to students on how to improve further, and in business studies more attention could be given to providing students with grades for their work to enable them to make comparisons with their estimated examination targets. In art and in English, students evaluate their own progress and have developed the capacity to learn independently.

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

68. The pastoral support structure extends into the sixth form with similar patterns of appraisal of academic and personal development through detailed personal profiles and regular review of progress against targets.
69. The school is particularly keen to encourage and provide opportunity for students to continue their education into the sixth form through the introduction of an increasing range of courses and curriculum opportunities to match the range of ability and interest. This is proving particularly effective with a further 10% increase in student numbers in September 2002.
70. Very good support is provided for students pursuing entry to higher education and there is a growing development of links with partner education providers and work-based experience for students following intermediate and conventional GNVQ courses.

71. The school also recognises the significant difference in the demands of sixth form courses to expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. There is then a carefully staged programme for selecting course options and organisation of the related sixth form timetable. This is aimed to ensure that students have access to their preferred courses and that, where appropriate, they match the needs of a chosen career. There is also the facility to review choices early in the autumn term to allow students to experience the demands of selected courses to ensure that they are comfortable with their selections. This careful support is reflected in the high standards of success achieved by students at the end of their time in the sixth form.
72. Every opportunity is also provided through extra-curricular activities and roles of responsibility across a range of events both within and outside the school to raise students' confidence and self-esteem.

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

73. The school provides every encouragement to parents to become active partners in their children's education. Parents respond well to opportunities offered to liaise with staff on their children's academic and personal development, the review and understanding of levels achieved and setting of targets. They also appreciate contact from school to resolve any difficulties related to matters of discipline, but in particular the sharing of celebration of successes. Parents value the standards set and achieved by the school. While some concerns were registered in parents' questionnaires with respect to the amount of homework set and the range of activities available outside lessons, this was not substantiated in discussions with pupils and staff during the inspection. Any individual concerns are substantially outweighed by parents' overwhelming appreciation of the quality of education and support for their children provided by the school.
74. There is a very well structured system for communication with parents: including a detailed prospectus; regular newsletters incorporating comprehensive coverage of events; developments in subject departments; and progress on the school development plan; consultation evenings and pupil guidance days, when parents can review with staff the progress against targets and ways in which they can support their children's learning. These are underpinned by constructive use of pupil organiser diaries to record homework, progress, targets, sanctions and credits. These are examined and signed weekly by parents and used for exchange of concerns with staff. There is also a policy of prompt acknowledgement of parent queries and earliest considered response. Effective use is also made of governing board funding of postal delivery of principal communications with parents, and staff are encouraged to immediately telephone parents to advise them of their children's successes. This serves to raise pupil self-esteem, both at school and at home and reinforce relationships between home and school.
75. The school is also working closely with the parent teacher and friends association to enhance their role from a social/fundraising organisation to one more directly involved in their children's education. This has promoted a parent mentoring initiative with parents offering their professional skills to support pupils and enhance the curriculum. Family learning and adult education projects have also been introduced. Some funds raised by the PTFA are also channelled through the school council to sponsor initiatives of their choice.

76. Links with parents of pupils with SEN are robust, supportive and undertaken in a spirit of partnership. Their views are incorporated into actions designed to support their children's learning, for example during annual review meetings, parents frequently report positive comments about their children's progress following well managed transition from their previous schools.

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

77. The head teacher, with the support of the governing body and senior members of staff, provides very good leadership to the school. They promote an inclusive and engaging spirit in the school.
78. The governors trust in the leadership and management of the school. They are rightly proud of the inclusiveness of the school and the head teacher's implementation of their principle of not giving up on pupils. The school is aspirational for all of its pupils to achieve and this has resulted in a breadth of provision and routes to qualification.
79. The governing body is very well informed about the school through a range of actions and a good structure of governing body and committee meetings, where reports are received and discussed with the head teacher and other senior staff. A particularly effective approach is that the governors meet one Saturday per year to review the school through a process of challenging and questioning, as well as evaluation of findings from their representatives linked to departments and areas of the school. Through its monitoring and evaluation systems the governing body is aware of areas for development as well as strengths. The governing body seeks to support the school in improving further, to see continued improvement in the examination results and breadth of sixth form courses by making finance available so that provision is in line with new developments, and to continue improving strong links with the community through the arts as well as the sports provision. The governing body meets its responsibilities very well. Through its careful financial management the school has moved from a poor, high deficit budget situation four years ago to being able to set a budget not only to maintain but also to develop provision. Finance is well monitored and appropriate decisions on spending are made.
80. The head teacher empowers and supports a development culture by giving responsibility and trust, and by establishing in staff a belief that they can affect the direction of the school. Adjustments to the management structure were made at the beginning of the current academic year. Changes to responsibilities have created vacancies for both established and newer members of staff to engage in middle management roles and school development initiatives which they have engaged with enthusiastically and effectively.
81. Management is good, for welfare and guidance, SEN, science, history, MFL, art, PE, and very good for English, performing arts, leisure and recreation, business studies, DT, MFL and PE. RE has also made rapid strides in a short time as a result of strong leadership. The management of music is responding to responsibility and trust with the support on monitoring of the performing arts department manager. Such supportive arrangements are evident across the school and have resulted in well-organised teamwork. However, an area for improvement in many departments is the lack of detail within the development plans, particularly in relation to the specific and measurable success criteria to enable them to evaluate how well they have achieved what they set out to do.

82. The head teacher has a clear picture and understanding of what the information from national assessments and other data indicates about the school. As well as being aware of improvement in national assessment data the school has a good system for the monitoring and evaluation of its training programmes to bring into practice features of effective learning. There are very good monitoring and evaluation systems. These are particularly well focused on the quality of teaching. The school uses assessment data very well to analyse its performance, achievement and added value at a departmental and whole-school level. However, there are weaknesses in the monitoring of the implementation of cross-curricular ICT and citizenship.
83. The financial planning and budget setting process are part of a well-organised school improvement cycle. The three-year school improvement plan has a clear statement of the priorities for development. The one-year plan then has specific actions that focus on bringing these about. The budget is well managed and budget control is ensured through good administration by the school finance manager. The school has very well organised and supportive school administration provided through its clerical staff. ICT is used well to support management functions. There is a good cycle and systems for financial planning and monitoring. This has resulted in a better financial position and the governors are already planning to further improve provision through better teaching ratios and support for the expansion of the Key Stage 4 curriculum as well as more time for professional development. The plans for the use of capital grant for the next three years are clear and appropriate. The school makes very good use of funding sources of all kinds. An example of procedures to bring about good value for money is the use of an outside consultancy to set and evaluate tenders for the allocation of the school meals contract.
84. The school has a good framework for effective individual, subject-based or whole-school staff development within the school and within its pyramid. There is good commitment to sharing practice beyond the school. The school is involved in a number of initiatives from its technology status, its beacon status and its involvement with the network learning community. These are well co-ordinated to address the school's main priority of continuous improvement to teaching and learning. The school has a very well organised system for the induction of new staff. The school performance management system is very effective in setting targets and expectations for teachers and leads to the identification of appropriate individual staff training provision. Some teachers need further training in ICT, but generally the school is well staffed with specialist teachers with good subject knowledge.
85. Departments make efficient use of resources available through the funding allocated. Resources are very good for drama and dance. There are some resource shortages in science, geography, RE, history and music. Across the school, availability of ICT varies. It is good in business studies and in DT, where pupils can access high quality on-line resources via the school's Internet. There is limited availability of ICT in MFL and art and in the sixth form for music and for independent study. There are some weaknesses in accommodation and some maintenance issues in science, music, and PE.
86. The school's leadership makes effective strategic use of its overall SEN resources, with decisions on SEN spending increasingly well linked to clear educational priorities. For example the school is investing in experienced teaching, counselling and support staff who in turn are able to develop creative and flexible curricular provisions such as the ASDAN courses or the pilot horticulture course. These arrangements are promoting the achievements while supporting the often-fragile self-esteem of less able pupils with SEN very effectively.

## **Sixth form**

87. Arrangements for management of the sixth form are clear and effective. Sixth form issues are regularly discussed within senior management team meetings. The new leadership team balances seniority with recent experience of sixth form tutoring. The individual sixth form courses are generally well or very well managed.
88. The governing body seeks to support the school in improving further, to see continued improvement in the examination results post-16 and breadth of sixth form courses by making finance available so that provision is in line with new developments
89. Good use of money is evident in the expenditure on sixth form development that has enabled the school to meet very well its objective of increased staying-on rate. However, the learning resource centre is not always available for independent or directed study by students as it is used during lesson time on occasions. The private study facilities for sixth form students are inadequate for the current numbers and inconveniently situated.
90. The sixth form is cost-effective in terms of balancing the income received against the main headings of expenditure to provide a good curriculum, very good teaching and good results.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to improve the planning and monitoring of the taught programme of careers education the school should:

- allocate sufficient time and organise a detailed taught programme;
- provide leadership and training for form tutors responsible for teaching the subject;
- monitor the quality and quantity of careers education in lessons.

(Paragraph 43)

92. In order to improve the co-ordination of aspects of citizenship, ICT and multicultural education that are provided across the curriculum the school should:

- ensure the scheme of work in each case is more coherent and has clearer progression;
- ensure that pupils access comparable activities and experiences;
- ensure that assessment of progress is more accurate.

(Paragraphs 39, 40, 48, 131, 161-163)

### Sixth form

93. In order to improve the programme of careers education the school should:

- plan a broad programme of careers lessons to guide students in making choices for progressing beyond the sixth form;
- provide appropriate teaching resources and training for tutors.

(Paragraph 52)

94. In order to improve private study facilities the school should:

- review the size and location of the space made available;
- review the access to ICT for independent study.

(Paragraphs 85, 89)

95. **Other areas for improvement, not included in the issues for action, but that should be considered by the school:**

- history and geography fieldwork; (Paragraphs 35, 148, 154)
- access to RE at Key Stage 4; (Paragraphs 36, 197)
- accommodation in science, music and PE; (Paragraphs 85, 123, 176, 186)
- the shortages of resources in some subjects. (Paragraph 85)
- a lack of detail in departmental management plans. (Paragraph 81)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	249
	Sixth form	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 9 – 11</b>							
Number	5	40	65	47	7	0	0
Percentage	3	24	40	29	4	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	24	32	7	0	0	0
Percentage	5	36	48	11	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y9– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	721	318
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	66	12

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	82	3

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10



## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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	117	132	249

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88 (75)	91 (98)	94 (101)
	Girls	116 (87)	102 (95)	98 (90)
	Total	204 (162)	193 (193)	192 (191)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (70)	78 (84)	77 (83)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (33)	58 (60)	40 (52)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	72 (63)	90 (99)	98 (94)
	Girls	107 (86)	107 (95)	113 (90)
	Total	179 (149)	197 (194)	211 (184)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (65)	79 (85)	85 (80)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (40)	57 (56)	51 (50)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	121 (117)	125 (109)	246 (226)

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	63 (71)	119 (114)	121 (117)
	Girls	83 (66)	122 (105)	125 (107)
	Total	146 (137)	241 (219)	246 (224)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (61)	98 (97)	100 (99)
	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	43.7 (42.8)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	49	53	102
	Average point score per candidate	15.8	16.3	16.1
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	33	40	73	12	14	26
	Average point score per candidate	18.7	17.2	17.9	9.2	12.9	10.8
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.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	1027	59	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	11	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	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	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	0	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: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

#### **Education support staff: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	174

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	22.6

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,018,749.00
Total expenditure	3,079,779.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,104.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	71,718.00
Balance carried forward to next year	61,028.00

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	970
Number of questionnaires returned	96

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34.4.	52.1	11.5	2.1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41.7	51	4.2	3.1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29.5	53.7	6.3	3.2	7.4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21.9	54.2	17.7	4.2	2.1
The teaching is good.	30.2	56.2	5.2	2.1	6.2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35.1	48.9	12.8	3.2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	41.7	5.2	2.1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56.2	38.5	2.1	2.1	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	52.1	15.6	3.1	3.1
The school is well led and managed.	34.4	41.7	6.2	4.2	13.5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33.3	53.1	9.4	3.1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18.1	35.1	23.4	7.4	16

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Very good management of the department.
- Good development of pupils' independence and thinking skills.
- Good range of teaching and learning styles.
- Good development of speaking and listening skills.
- Careful planning and thorough assessment of pupils.

#### Areas for improvement

- Match of work in a small number of lessons.

97. Standards of attainment in English are above national averages. At Key Stage 3 in 2002, 83% of pupils gained Level 5 or higher. This was well above national figures and also the results of similar schools. 41% gained Level 6 or better, which was above national figures and those of similar schools. The point score was above the national average for both boys and girls. Results in 2002 were an improvement on results in 2001, which were already above average. At GCSE, results in English and English Literature were above national averages in 2001 and 2002, especially in the number of A\*, A and B grades. The school has a high entry policy, with 100% of pupils taking GCSE English in 2002 and 97% taking English Literature. In both cases, 100% of pupils entered gained A\*-G grades.

98. Pupils enter the school with high levels of attainment in English and these are maintained during Years 9, 10 and 11. Achievement is satisfactory and consistent. Written work scrutinised during the inspection showed that a number of pupils enters struggling with skills in writing, but the majority coming into Year 9 can write at length, although with some weaknesses in sentence construction and spelling, and a significant proportion of pupils enjoys using language in written work and is conscious of its effect. By the end of Year 11, lower attaining pupils show a sound understanding of texts, although their own control of language is insecure. Middle attaining pupils can write for a variety of audiences and purposes. Higher attaining pupils show very good understanding, for example of complex imagery in poetry. They command a wide range of vocabulary and can construct an argument skilfully. Pupils make good progress in improving their performance in speaking and listening. This is because teachers give abundant opportunities to develop these skills, through paired work, group work, whole-class discussion and individual presentations. Achievement in speaking and listening is good.

99. Teaching in English is good or very good in three-quarters of lessons. This is a high level of consistency. There are many strengths in the teaching, but above all in the way in which members of the department encourage pupils' independence of thought and enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. This was well shown in a lesson where the teacher asked pupils to formulate their own questions around a poem without giving them any prior information. Another teacher helped pupils to draw on their own experience of the media, and to make this knowledge explicit, by asking them to create visual images linked to sound. The department is committed to a critical study of the media and pupils learn to read newspaper articles or advertisements closely, so they do not take them at face value.
100. Teachers plan a variety of activities and pace of lessons is generally good. In Year 9, where mixed ability teaching is carried out, pupils support each other in group work. Preparation for the GCSE examination is good. Teachers make effective use of pupils' self-evaluation. Occasionally, in a small number of lessons, the task is not well-matched to pupils' level of ability. Where support is provided for pupils with SEN, this is usually well-deployed and the class teacher takes care to draw all pupils into the lesson through skilful questioning.
101. Pupils respond very well to their lessons. They are keen to contribute to discussion. They volunteer willingly to read aloud; for example, three boys who volunteered to read parts in Macbeth made memorable witches. Pupils collaborate very well in groups and listen carefully to each other in feedback, sharing their learning. They clearly enjoy drama activities.
102. The department is very well managed. In Year 9, the English curriculum is constructed around units of work that are linked to word level, sentence level and text level objectives. These enable pupils to take part in a wide range of activities. Homework is set appropriately. Opportunities are provided to reinforce skills in ICT, for example, to create a persuasive brochure using Publisher. There are good links between English and drama lessons. All pupils in Year 9 have the opportunity to learn drama skills, and the Shakespeare text for the Key Stage 3 national assessment is taught through drama. This means that pupils are well aware of the dramatic potential of the text. In Years 10 and 11, the course is constructed to follow the GCSE syllabus with close reference to assessment objectives. Coursework is completed on schedule. All class teachers have relevant data on their pupils and progress is carefully tracked and updated. The department makes a valuable contribution to all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the rich and varied diet of literature from different ages and cultures, and through co-operative learning in discussions and tasks in pairs and small groups.
103. Teaching is well monitored within the department and staff are committed to the whole-school strategy for improving teaching and learning. There are good systems in place to support the newly qualified teacher.
104. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have been maintained. There are now clearly understood systems for monitoring teaching and pupil progress. Whereas at the time of the last inspection only 50% took English Literature at GCSE, now almost 100% do so. Practice in transition and liaison with middle schools has been transformed. Units of work have been developed for Year 8 that are built on in Year 9. Staff work together with middle school teachers to raise achievement. The department is in a good position to continue performing well.



## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good; teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge; relationships are good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning.
- Good liaison supports the transition of pupils from middle schools.
- There are effective arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress leading to the identification of targets.
- The department is well organised with secure monitoring systems in place.

### Areas for improvement

- There is limited use of ICT to support mathematics teaching.
- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking in Key Stage 3.
- In a small number of classes instances of inattention and off-task chatter reduces the quality of learning for the individuals concerned.

106. Standards attained in the national tests at Key Stage 3 in 2002 are above those found nationally at Level 5 and above and well above the national figures for higher levels. Results in all measures are well above similar schools. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C is above the national figure. Achievement is satisfactory at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Standards in GCSE statistics are well above average.

107. Standards achieved by all pupils in lessons and as seen in the sample of work are in line with prior attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils can find quadratic formulae and can apply Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve right-angled triangles. In statistics they find averages of grouped frequency distributions. Middle attaining pupils use trial and improvement methods to find the solution of quadratic equations and solve problems involving the area and circumference of circles. Lower attaining pupils consolidate the knowledge of negative numbers and, in statistics, can find the average of a set of discrete data. Year 9 pupils also work on investigative tasks to develop their skills of using and applying mathematics. The Key Stage 3 strategy is being embedded into lesson planning with most lessons beginning with mental warm-up activities such as 'Countdown' in which pupils are encouraged to explain their calculation strategies. On occasion this leads to spontaneous applause in appreciation of a particularly difficult problem solved. Most lessons conclude with a plenary to recap the main objectives of the lesson and which sometimes requires pupils to make a self-assessment of their performance in the lesson.

108. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above the national average and achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils can solve problems involving trigonometry in three-dimensions and can transform graphs. In lessons they demonstrate high levels of skill in algebraic manipulation. Pupils of average ability solve problems involving combinations of probabilities and explore the congruency of shapes under various transformations whilst lower attaining pupils analyse problems of value for money and the 'best buy'. Pupils at Key Stage 4 prepare for GCSE handling data coursework in mathematics by considering sampling procedures and how to avoid bias in questioning.
109. The teaching of mathematics is good and has a number of strengths that support pupils' learning and achievement in lessons. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics is very good and they use this to plan sequences of activities and to model exemplar solutions. They have high expectations of the pupils and place emphasis on the correct use of technical language. As a result of this good teaching pupils also quote technical terms and meanings correctly. Teachers' questioning skills extend pupils' learning and give plenty of opportunities for pupils to explain their methods and reasoning. This sometimes involves paired or group work where pupils rehearse and refine their thinking before presenting their solutions. Teachers create a purposeful and supportive climate in the classroom in which time is generally well used with short-term targets introduced to help maintain concentration in lengthy lessons. In a few lessons or pairs of lessons the pace is slow or the level of challenge is insufficient. This sometimes leads to instances of low-level off-task chatter. Behaviour management strategies used by the teachers are nearly always successful in addressing the inattention. The quality of teachers' marking in Key Stage 4 is good and supports pupils' learning with comments of encouragement, the modelling of solutions and attention drawn to the correct use of units and conventions of rounding. Whilst some marking of high quality is also seen at Key Stage 3 there are some inconsistencies.
110. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They listen attentively and take pride in their work that is well presented with appropriate diagrams drawn and full solutions shown. Relationships are good and pupils work with concentration. When asked to work in pairs or groups they do so well, collaboratively sharing out the tasks to be done. A strength is the willingness of pupils of all abilities to take part in lessons, demonstrating methods and reasoning. For example, an average attaining pupil in Year 9 succinctly summarised a lesson related to angle facts.
111. 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 at GCSE. Higher attaining pupils also take part in intermediate and senior mathematics challenges. The department supports literacy across the curriculum via its emphasis on vocabulary and in the writing frames provided for coursework in Key Stage 4. The number of computers in the department's ICT suite is insufficient for whole-class use. The department's solution to this is the construction of a rolling programme of access for half classes at a time when staffing is available with the result that there is infrequent use of ICT in mathematics. The contribution made in mathematics to pupils' personal development is good.

112. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the department. The head of department was not present during the inspection but the extensive documentation to support staff shows that the department is well organised. There are effective arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress leading to the identification and sharing of target grades or levels. Liaison arrangements with middle schools are good with extensive transfers of pupil data that is used to determine setting in Year 9. Responsibilities are clearly identified across the department and a monitoring system operates to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. The departmental improvement plan identifies actions in line with school priorities but not the success criteria by which they will be judged. Schemes of work rely heavily on one core series of textbooks that provide some continuity from Year 8 to Year 9. The scheme, which follows the textbook chapters, is modified by the introduction of starter activities into lesson planning although the scope of these is not yet identified with the schemes of work for each year group. The core members of department meet five times per term but there is limited opportunity for the discussion of teaching and learning and no collaborative planning. The department's use of data is good but the use of ICT as a management tool is under-developed.
113. Accommodation is adequate, but some mathematics is taught in rooms distant from the main group of rooms with little or no mathematics focus in them. Generally displays in and around the main mathematics classrooms create a mathematical environment. Since the last inspection the number of classrooms available for mathematics has increased by one and there has been good improvement in the opportunities for pupils to make oral contributions in class. Standards of attainment at both key stages have increased since the last inspection.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- A high proportion of teaching is good or better.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships with teachers are very good.
- There is good teamwork amongst the staff in the department.

### Areas for improvement

- Establish more comprehensive procedures for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning and disseminating best practice.

115. Standards in science are well above national averages at both key stages and this is a consistent pattern over the past few years. At Key Stage 3 attainment at both Level 5+ and Level 6+ is well above national averages and those of similar schools. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are also very high and progress during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory.

116. At Key Stage 4 most of the pupils take double award science at GCSE and gain an award. The percentage of A-C grades is above the national average. A small number of pupils take a triple award examination and all gain A-C grades. Overall attainment at these higher levels is well above national averages and pupils make good progress during Key Stage 4.

117. Standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books reflects this generally high level of attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3 high attaining pupils have very good understanding of scientific processes, such as chemical changes and the effect of acid rain on rocks and soils. Middle attaining pupils have good knowledge and understanding of parts of the human body and can explain the structure and function of the skeleton and joints. Lower attaining pupils are generally working below national expectations but are developing confidence with some of the important ideas in science, such as forms and sources of energy, and are able to use some of the technical vocabulary accurately. Skills and understandings of experimental and investigative science are good. Higher and middle attaining pupils can identify variables and understand the principle of fair testing. They make accurate observations and can calculate averages and plot line graphs. Pupils' books contain work of a high standard, in terms of both scientific content and presentation. All pupils are making good use of quantitative measurements, calculations and graphs. Chemical equations are used with formulae by higher and middle attaining pupils, and in word form by lower attaining pupils. Almost all work across the attainment range has been done with care and is complete.

118. During Key Stage 4 pupils build well on their high attainment at Key Stage 3. By the end of the key stage the highest attaining pupils have excellent understanding of the abstract aspects of science, such as atomic structure and radioactive decay. High attaining pupils have very good understanding of the subject and are able to apply their understanding in a range of contexts. Pupils constructing an electric motor are able to explain how the magnetic fields of force make the motor work. They are able to use formulae to carry out calculations, such as acceleration, and are able to use their knowledge of chromosomes to work out patterns of inheritance. Middle attaining pupils generally have good understanding of these same areas of science but are less clear about some of the underlying principles, such as the differences between elements, mixtures and compounds. Most are able to apply their understanding to new contexts but sometimes are not very confident in doing so. Lower attaining pupils are working below national expectation but, as at Key Stage 3, are developing confidence with important ideas such as inheritance and the genetic determination of sex. They also know about the structure and function of the main body organs and about the working of physical devices such as an electric motor. Pupils have good practical skills. High-attaining pupils use delicate equipment, such as gas syringes, with confidence and accuracy. Other pupils follow instructions well, use equipment with care and make good observations. Low-attaining groups are sometimes impressive in their persistence with fiddly tasks, such as constructing an electric motor. Pupils' books contain a good range of their own work and handouts from the teachers. Almost all work is complete and well presented. Coursework in the form of investigation reports is always done with care and is of a standard appropriate to the different attainment levels.
119. In all the lessons seen pupils behaved well and generally pupils are well motivated and work hard. Some of the lower attaining pupils need regular encouragement to behave and work well, whilst a few of the highest attaining pupils are particularly fascinated by the subject and are full of questions. Many pupils are very interested in science and want to continue their science education beyond GCSE.
120. Teaching is a strength of the department. Virtually all teaching is satisfactory and two-thirds is good or better. There is more very good teaching at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and are well prepared for their lessons. Explanations are almost always clear and are sometimes made particularly interesting through the use of relevant experiences or contexts. Where teaching is good there is a good range of activities that require the pupils to think for themselves. Pace is kept up so that all pupils work throughout the lesson and have time to complete the work. Practical activities are well chosen so that they relate directly to the theory as well as develop practical skills. Often teacher-prepared results tables save time and enable pupils to concentrate on doing the practical activity and learning from it. For example, in a Year 11 lesson about radioactivity pupils were able to record both their individual and the class results on prepared charts and move quickly on to drawing a graph. Good questioning of pupils is used to explore pupils' understanding and provide further appropriate explanation, as in a lesson about energy. In another lesson about the heart, time towards the end of the lesson was very well used to summarise the lesson, check pupils' knowledge and give them practice in speaking the specialist vocabulary.
121. In otherwise satisfactory lessons pace is sometimes slow and time is wasted or work is too easy, especially for high-attaining groups, or does not require them to think for themselves. In two cases the materials for practical activities were incorrect or insufficient, so learning from practical work was limited.

122. Pupils' written work is regularly marked and teachers provide grades or marks, as well as helpful comments about the quality of the work and advice for improvement. Tests and examinations provide pupils with feedback about their standards and progress and all pupils are involved in setting targets for the end of key stage assessments. Pupils are aware of the grade descriptors for GCSE coursework but are less well informed about the expectations at Key Stage 3.
123. Leadership and management are good. There is clear rationale for the main decisions taken recently about the curriculum. There is a good team spirit and commitment to high standards. The department runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, with good technician support, and despite regular room changes caused by a shortage of laboratories, staff expertise is well used and there is now an appropriate staffing structure. Liaison with middle schools is well established and makes a significant contribution to Key Stage 3 continuity. Assessment information is regularly used to review pupil progress and allocation to sets. Procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not fully established, so the dissemination of good practice relies largely on informal communication, as does the sharing of materials.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Students enjoy art and design and make good progress.
- The curriculum in both key stages provides a good balance of opportunities for students to develop skills, knowledge and understanding about art and design.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment in GCSE examinations.
- Range of approaches to drawing.
- Use of ICT.

125. The number of students in the school taking GCSE art and design is well above the national average and all those entered for the examination in 2002 attained grades A\*-G. The percentage of students achieving grades A\*-A has been consistently high in recent years and in 2002 the number attaining grades A\*-C improved, although it remains slightly below the national average. Girls' attainment is higher than boys, in line with the national pattern.

126. In Key Stage 4 there are examples of good work from pupils across the ability range and the more able students show high achievement, with carefully annotated and evaluated sketchbook research that shows an awareness of the work of contemporary artists, such as Tony Cragg. Students respond well to the broad curriculum that is delivered through a rotation of groups and teachers and enables them to develop skills in drawing, painting, collage, textiles and sculpture. Standards of drawing are satisfactory. Most students can accurately represent still life using dry media, with accurate proportions and effective use of tone. However, the approach is sometimes limited and students would benefit from working more on different scales with a wider choice of media. Students across the ability range achieve well in three-dimensional work. They respond creatively to the opportunity to build a small 'environment', which can include hand-built ceramic forms which are modelled or cast, mixed media and 'ready made' found objects. Most students respond well to the opportunities that are provided for them to choose the direction of their work, but some of those who are less well-motivated make slower progress.

127. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of students reach the expected levels and students achieve well across a range of media and techniques whilst exploring the theme of 'Containers'. Drawing and painting skills are satisfactory, with some examples of high achievement. Most pupils are able to record accurately from direct observation of figures and still life. They show understanding of proportion, depth and volume. Most students show a good understanding of other artists' work and they are able to express and justify their opinions about art, both verbally and written. Pupils develop skills in hand building ceramics and are developing a creative approach to mixed media. The majority of students enjoy their art lessons and make good progress during Year 9.

128. Teaching in the department is consistently good. The positive relationships and a pleasant working atmosphere, where students are given responsibility to develop and plan their own ideas, help students work creatively. The curriculum is well planned and provides a good balance of media. The context of other artists' work is effectively integrated into the practical projects and students are encouraged to explain and justify their opinions. Students understand assessment procedures, which helps them to evaluate their own progress. The use of ICT as an art and design tool for the majority of students is very limited, although a small group of able students benefit from some lunchtime sessions with a local artist.
129. The department is well managed. Teachers are committed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject. Teamwork is good and teachers' strengths are used well through the carousel system of rotating groups. However in Year 11 this arrangement may result in a less focused approach to raising examination attainment and this is an area for review. The department makes a good contribution to students' personal development and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of education.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- A wide range of opportunities for pupils' learning.
- The role of the school council in encouraging participation.

### Areas for improvement

- Mapping the provision of citizenship so that it is evident how lessons in different subjects and different experiences link together into a well-planned scheme for each year group.
- Ensuring that pupils are clear that citizenship is a new subject that they are required to study and how it will be covered and assessed.
- Establishing a development plan that builds on the sound initial steps taken to introduce citizenship and takes account of the training needs of teachers and the monitoring of provision.

131. Citizenship is a new subject that has had to be provided for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 since September 2002. During the week of the inspection, citizenship was being taught as a subject to two classes in Year 10, was the focus of a number of tutorial lessons that contribute to the PSHE programme and formed part of lessons in several other subjects in Years 9, 10 and 11. Discussions were held with the school council and groups of other pupils and the work undertaken in the citizenship GCSE course in Year 10 and several earlier off-timetable Life Skills days considered. At this early stage of development of the subject, standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations. This is due to the predominantly satisfactory and some good teaching in these different lessons, to the positive relationships established in the school and the readiness that pupils show to participate in activities and express views and opinions. Taking account of the wider evidence, pupils' skills are developed better at this stage than the breadth of knowledge and understanding expected. This is because the range of provision they receive has not been fully mapped and pieced together into an overall scheme of work and some provision is left to incidental references to content in subjects.



132. In GCSE lessons, pupils were able to show a sound understanding of the role of the media in society, particularly how television news can vary depending on its intended audience. The two groups of pupils studying this new course have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the range of topics covered in the early stages due to a well planned scheme of work and teaching that is well organised and focused on clear aims and objectives. Other pupils receive their citizenship education through a wide range of other provision, some of it planned directly into other subject lessons, and some touched upon incidentally. In subject lessons that included citizenship as an aspect, pupils showed good ability to talk about issues such as human rights and racial prejudice and discrimination in Year 10 RE lessons and about world peace in history lessons in Year 9 following a study of the First World War. In several tutorial lessons in Years 9 and 10 pupils revealed sound understanding of how stereotyping can lead to racial discrimination and could appreciate the feelings and attitudes of others in these situations. Skills such as engaging in discussion and debate, expressing opinions and justifying an answer are well developed and evident in specific citizenship lessons and in lessons in English, drama, history, geography and in discussion with the school council.
133. A number of departments, including those above, have begun to make reference to citizenship in their planning and their documentation. Where citizenship topics and activities are the focus of the lesson or form a substantial part of it, teachers bring enthusiasm and sound knowledge to explaining issues and promoting discussion. As a result, in these lessons, pupils make sound progress overall. Where references to topics are incidental and made in passing, as they were in a number of lessons observed, the contribution made to pupils' awareness of issues for themselves as citizens is more limited. However, other provision in the school provides opportunities for the development of knowledge and skills. The school has introduced a cycle of days where the timetable is replaced by events and opportunities for different year groups to consider relevant issues. These Life Skills days make good contributions to citizenship. For example, the recent Year 11 day included presentations about issues surrounding crime and punishment and racism in the workplace. A folder of pupils' work shows good examples of their active participation in responding to these issues.
134. The effective school council is an articulate group of young people representing all year groups. It provides a good forum for debate and discussion of a range of matters affecting pupils' and students' lives and increasingly is being used by the school to refer relevant matters of school policy. Not only are the council members themselves acquiring important skills, the fact that the school encourages their participation and that of their peers, allows this body to make a real contribution to citizenship understanding. Elections to the council and communication systems promoting feedback and discussion of issues with other pupils is leading to it being an influential voice in the school.

135. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Planning for the introduction of citizenship has had a number of sound features. These include: piloting a short course GCSE, additional citizenship topics in the PSHE programme, greater links with school assemblies, Life Skills days and a subject audit to discover where opportunities for covering aspects of the programme of study exist. However, though a sound policy has been written and as valuable as the different opportunities established are, there is no overall, coherent school plan to ensure that pupils have access to comparable activities and experiences. Nor is provision mapped to ensure curriculum coverage and progression. There has been limited training for teachers on how most effectively to plan for and approach the teaching of citizenship. Pupils themselves show in discussion that they have little awareness that they are learning a new subject. Citizenship development is being co-ordinated by a senior member of staff who has vision for what needs to be done and is in a position to secure effective implementation.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Specialist knowledge of teachers.
- Standards of coursework.
- Range of curriculum opportunities.
- Leadership and management.
- Use of ICT.

### Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop strategies for boys' under-achievement.
- Create design opportunities at Key Stage 3 to enable more able pupils to attain higher levels.
- Improve pupils' (design) thinking skills.

137. Standards at Key Stage 3 are above the national average overall, although more girls attain higher standards than boys. Teachers in the department are aware of these differences in attainment and are implementing strategies to support boys' progress. Year 9 pupils learn quickly, during the year, how to design and make products successfully, using a range of materials and components and within a prescribed timescale. Pupils are making good use of ICT to assist their net developments for packaging, for programming in systems and control, generating electronic circuits and designing and manufacturing using CAD/CAM. They draw competently using freehand and three-dimensional sketches to develop initial ideas and can write detailed final evaluation comments in their emerging portfolios. More able pupils could attain even higher standards by providing them with opportunities to transfer information gained from analysing products to their own design decisions when developing ideas.

138. Since the previous inspection there have been further improvements in standards at Key Stage 4, reflected in last summer's examination results that are now above the

national average. Pupils' coursework across all material areas is a particular strength of the department. In textiles technology pupils not only display an additional flair for presentation of their work in their portfolios, but they also employ techniques that reduce the amount of cut and paste work featured generally across the department. In engineering, pupils can produce precision drawings correctly dimensioned in two and three-dimensions with a production plan. Teachers provide good written feedback to help pupils improve their work. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the key stage and become highly effective users of ICT in many elements of both their 'design' and their 'make' work.

139. Teaching and learning are predominantly good overall across the key stages and the department generally. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. An example of one very good lesson in food technology was where the teacher conducted a product evaluation session by assessing and providing feedback on pupils' presentations of vegetarian dishes they had made. Pupils benefit from, and appreciate, the good advice and direction that they receive from their knowledgeable specialist teachers.
140. Relationships are good and a highly supportive atmosphere has been established in the department. In the vast majority of lessons teachers' expectations are high, work is interesting and challenging and pupils respond by their positive application and industry in their design or practical tasks. Pupils themselves have high expectations of their work especially when they are working with machines, tools and materials, which they do correctly and safely to achieve the best possible outcomes. The desire to complete tasks quickly under pressure and to a high standard can sometimes lead to teachers giving too much direct instruction and assistance. Teachers should attempt to balance this good directive teaching by challenging pupils' thinking and encouraging them to think technologically.
141. Leadership and management are very good. Schemes of work and planning are in place to show progression in learning and these are implemented effectively. There is a good range of curriculum opportunities to suit pupils' interests and well planned and developed design and make tasks that engage the pupils and enable them to gain a rich experience of designing and making across a breadth of materials. There is good access to new technologies, especially ICT, which is well embedded as a tool to assist and improve standards for designing and manufacturing. A variety of extra-curricular opportunities are made available to pupils and the department is very good at promoting and encouraging pupils to enter competitions, which they sometimes win. Good support is provided by the part-time technician in the workshop area, but there is insufficient time to produce the exemplar materials for teaching that the whole department urgently needs, including the food and textiles areas that currently receive no such support. A health and safety risk assessment task needs to be completed for pupils doing practical work in the textiles room. There are good curriculum and training arrangements with the partner middle schools.

## GEOGRAPHY

142. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teachers' planning and lesson preparation.
- Good assessment and target setting for pupils.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning is developing well.

### Areas for improvement

- The achievement of the most able pupils.
- Insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop practical skills through fieldwork.
- The quality of some teaching.

143. Based on teacher assessments, standards at the end of Year 9 are above national average for boys and girls. They have performed consistently at high levels for the last three years. In GCSE examinations, pupils have performed at lower levels year on year for the last three years. Standards in 2002 were well below the national average. Geography is one of the weakest performing subjects in the school. The girls' results in 2001 were almost one grade below their performance in other subjects. The relatively weak subject performance continued in 2002. As a result of strategies introduced by the new subject leader, better results are expected this year and practice examinations show well over half of pupils are expected to reach A\* to C grades.

144. Lesson observations and pupils' work show standards above national expectation in Year 9 and in line with national expectation by Year 11. On entry to school pupils' experience of geography is variable and to reach the standards they do, their progress is good resulting in good achievement. Key Stage 4 pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The achievement of pupils with SEN is satisfactory. The most able pupils are often not challenged sufficiently, so their achievement could be better. This issue was identified during the last inspection and has not been addressed fully.

145. In Year 9 and in Key Stage 4 pupils have secure basic mapping and number skills, which is an improvement since the last inspection. They can measure, interpret data, construct graphs of various types and use co-ordinates to locate places. Year 9 pupils use a variety of written styles, including notes, extended writing and imaginative pieces. In their work on population Year 11 pupils demonstrate their understanding of key facts and issues and are able to classify them into groups using correct geographical terminology. The use of ICT in geography is developing well. In lessons most Year 9 pupils confidently use their skills to research information and use word-processing ability to produce magazine-type articles on earthquakes. Year 11 use ICT to produce maps and graphs to enhance the quality of their coursework.

146. Pupils generally show commitment and work with interest. They show ability to think for themselves and work independently. This was evident in lessons when ICT was used. During 'thinking skills' activities most pupils work well together in groups discussing and sharing ideas. In the small minority of lessons at Key Stage 3 when attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory, it is a direct consequence of unsatisfactory class control and teaching.

147. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers plan their lessons well and are always well prepared. Their subject knowledge is good and teachers sometimes use their knowledge of the GCSE examination to help pupils improve their written answers. The teaching of thinking skills is a good development, but in Key Stage 4 it is sometimes at the expense of focused teaching on examination preparation. Literacy in the department is satisfactory and numeracy has been well integrated, with pupils in all years displaying numerical and mapping techniques. Some teachers confidently use good ICT skills to support learning. In the minority of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is due to unsatisfactory class control, insufficient focus and work not matched to the prior knowledge and ability of pupils. The assessment system is good and well used; it includes target setting for all pupils. Some useful self-review by pupils has been introduced, encouraging them to reflect on their own performance. Day-to-day assessment is good, but the quality of marking pupils' work is not consistent between teachers.
148. The subject leader is relatively new to the post and has made a good start in leading and managing the department. He has many ideas and has identified activities to improve the department. This year staffing has improved. All teaching is done by specialist geographers removing the need to use non-specialists. New courses have been introduced in Key Stage 4 to increase the number of pupils choosing to study geography and to improve examination performance. Some good subject links have been made with middle schools. Monitoring of teaching and pupils' work and the analysis of examination results and performance need further development. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop practical skills through fieldwork and the department needs to address this. Resources are satisfactory with a few shortages in Year 9 textbooks, practical equipment, ICT software and reference books in the library. Improvement since the last inspection has not been as good as it should be. However, with the new subject leader and staff commitment, the department has the capacity to improve on its current position.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results in recent years have generally been high.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 continue to improve and are above average.
- Teaching is good overall and often very good.
- Pupils enjoy history and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The department is a well-organised team committed to improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve the provision of GCSE textbooks and access to artefacts.
- Introduce fieldwork in Year 9.
- Continue to improve the monitoring of skills development in all year groups.

150. At the end of Year 9, attainment in 2002 was above the national average of teacher assessments with a high proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels. In lessons and work seen standards are at least as good as these results. Pupils are achieving well and in line with the rising trend in standards in the department at Key Stage 3. They are developing good skills of using sources and acquiring the ability to understand events from different points of view. They showed this well when discussing and attempting to resolve the problems faced by the victorious Allies at the Versailles peace conference in 1919. Most are able to produce structured writing to reach historical conclusions, for example, in an essay explaining the causes of the First World War. Higher attaining pupils can justify their conclusions in convincing and considerable detail. Lower attaining pupils and those with SEN receive good support and as a result produce brief but relevant and accurate written work.
151. In recent GCSE examinations, results in both A\*-C and A\*-G range have fluctuated between well above and at the national average. In 2002, results were in line with the national average with a full spread of grades though slightly below average at the highest grades. Pupils achieved standards as good as they did in their other subjects. There was little difference in boys' and girls' results. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, standards in Years 10 and 11 are higher than this. Achievement is good taking account of standards on entry to the GCSE course. Pupils acquire knowledge and skills rapidly and mostly make good to very good progress in lessons that are often intellectually challenging.
152. This good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11, so that, by the age of 16 most pupils have developed an array of historical skills and have deepened their knowledge and understanding of the subject. They can examine and interpret sources showing a good understanding of the historical context and produce good, well-structured essays. Their notebooks are well kept and they produce good coursework about Roman forts in the locality and on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Standards are being raised for all groups of pupils by a commendable emphasis on developing their literacy and thinking skills and by identifying clear and specific targets for improvement in their writing and study skills.
153. The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good. The minority of lessons taught by supply or non-specialist staff is satisfactory. Lessons are conducted from the solid base of teachers' good knowledge and are planned very well. Classroom organisation is strong and relationships very good with the consequence that pupils are confident in expressing opinions and in developing their historical understanding. Teachers share the aims of lessons with pupils and structure activities very well to develop pupils' thinking. A wide range of activities is used to promote good learning including the use of ICT. Lessons often pose a high degree of challenge and pupils are expected to maintain a considerable pace of learning. Pupils are often asked to complete tasks in a short time scale to develop their ability to generalise and analyse information. These teaching methods were seen to very good effect in Year 11 lessons, during which pupils were thinking in depth about Jenner's discovery of vaccination. The teachers used group work, a card-sorting exercise, a written task and feedback from pupils to build a rich learning experience for the whole class. In a Year 10 lesson in an ICT room, pupils were responding as journalists to a series of news flashes about unfolding events showing a good and developing understanding of Arab and Israeli attitudes to the British occupation of Palestine. As a result of good teaching and enjoyable activities, pupils have a very positive attitude towards their studies and history has become a very popular option recruiting large numbers to the GCSE course.

154. Though the head of department was absent during the inspection, it is very clear that the department is a well-organised team committed to improvement. The department has been well managed in her absence. Non-specialist and supply teachers are given clear direction and effectively monitored. The quality of planning shown in schemes of work and in learning activities that support literacy, thinking skills and the incorporation of citizenship has created a good curriculum experience for pupils. This is now being added to by the introduction of a 'history club'. However, the acquisition of further textbooks for the large number of pupils in GCSE classes would assist joint planning and widening resources to include greater use of artefacts and fieldwork in Year 9 would add to the richness of provision. Marking is of a generally good quality and the assessment system is sound. However, more work is needed on supporting pupils' understanding of their developing skills in the subject.
155. The high standards noted in the last inspection have been maintained at GCSE and improved at Key Stage 3. The curriculum has been broadened with the introduction of learning using ICT, and 'thinking skills' and practise in writing skills more firmly embedded in lesson activities. The department makes a strong contribution to the personal development of pupils through emphasis on group work and other study skills. Improvement overall has been good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good use of ICT in technology and the humanities.
- Good attitudes to ICT by most pupils and good pupil relationships and pupil-teacher relationships.
- Good access to high quality on-line resources via the school's network.
- Good support for pupils with SEN.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Assessment of ICT against clear criteria and improved moderation and monitoring of the assessment process.
- The rigour and challenge provided in some parts of the scheme of work in ICT by the end of Year 11.

157. The standards attained by pupils now in Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. However pupils attain highly in some areas of the programme of study, but below national expectations in others, so there is an inconsistency to the standards attained. Pupils display high-level skills in searching for and presenting information for a variety of audiences. They are skilled in the use of control technology to support their work in technology. In their work with 'LOGO' to support shape in mathematics and use of spreadsheets to model information they are less well developed. Pupils with SEN attain well in all years however. Special supporting resources are available for them in many lessons and individual support is often provided for them during their independent work.
158. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is in line with national expectations overall. Pupils have a similarly broad range of ICT experiences to those in Year 9 with the ICT scheme of work delivered across the curriculum.

159. The achievement of pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 overall is satisfactory. Most pupils are confident users of the school network and search for and retrieve files and information from this and the Internet very effectively. Pupils are introduced to a broad range of ICT skills in a curricular context, including spreadsheets, word-processing, desktop publishing, control and monitoring. There is a bias in these experiences towards the skills of presenting and searching for information and the skills associated with information handling are not as well provided for.
160. Currently, although the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive satisfactory curricular provision in ICT there is no accreditation for their work, other than the small minority of pupils who are following the ICT GCSE or GNVQ course.
161. Teachers' classroom organisation and management are good, with many sensible techniques used to focus pupils' attention during explanations such as switching off computer monitors before instructions are delivered. The higher attaining pupils in all years are sometimes insufficiently challenged to enable them to attain at higher levels. Some of the learning activities do not extend these pupils sufficiently. Pupils enjoy their work in ICT and display good levels of engagement with the learning activities in most cases. Co-operative group work is strong with good relationships between pupils. Pupils show considerable respect for the expensive resources that they have been provided with. In most lessons good positive relationships exist between the teacher and pupils.
162. Although assessment procedures are in place, in some cases the teachers who are responsible lack the specialist subject knowledge to make accurate judgements to national curriculum levels. There is also over-emphasis on the assessment of outcomes of learning activities. In many cases the independence with which pupils have created work and the process by which their work is reviewed, modified and evaluated is not taken into account when coming to an assessment level.
163. The cross-curricular use of ICT is inconsistent. ICT resources are around national expectations with a computer to pupil ratio of 1:5.7. Access to ICT resources is very good in technology and good in humanities but unsatisfactory in art and music. The uptake of ICT training offered by the new opportunities fund has not yet benefited the majority of teachers. Further professional development and training in ICT is needed for some teachers.



## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Very good planning.
- Consistent planning across the department.
- Excellent subject knowledge.
- Very effective and sensible use of the target language.
- Provision for three languages.
- Inclusion of almost all pupils in courses leading to GCSE.
- Good leadership and management of the subject area.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure a consistently rigorous approach to the teaching of pronunciation and intonation.
- Greater use of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Maintain an equitable distribution between German and Spanish in Key Stages 3 and 4.

165. Standards of attainment in GCSE are above national averages for both boys and girls. Results continue to improve in both French and German. It is a strength of the school that very few pupils are disapplied from learning a MFL and that all who sit a GCSE achieve a grade in it. At the end of Year 9 attainment is well above the national average. Nearly all pupils in Year 9 study two languages and in Spanish and German they make very good progress so that those who embark on a course leading to GCSE in either of these languages are able to do well. Numbers taking two languages in Key Stage 4 have been increasing steadily. MFL are well supported by the senior management team and the governors.

166. Many pupils in Year 9 achieve higher standards than might be expected for their level of attainment at the beginning of the year. In French pupils are encouraged to develop their written skills by using known language in a variety of contexts. They are enabled to do this by practising grammatical concepts, which help them write longer sentences correctly and express opinions. Creativity is encouraged, for example, by writing an interview with Napoleon in exile. Pupils with low prior attainment are given more support to enable them to stay in step with the programme of study. Pupils studying German achieve a lot in three terms, and have a good grounding for a GCSE course. Spanish has been re-introduced and pupils have made good progress in the short time they have been studying the language.

167. Pupils' work in Key Stage 4 is often of a very high standard, both in French and German. Some of the written course work is of very high quality, showing few errors, a secure grasp of tenses, and a wide range of vocabulary. Longer reading activities are incorporated into lessons, and listening is a well-developed skill. Speaking is less secure, partly because time constraints and large classes make it difficult to give pupils opportunities to speak at length. Pupils are encouraged to bring creativity into what might otherwise be pedestrian assignments, such as a description of household chores in a family.

168. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good or very good. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge. In the most effective lessons the teachers are well organised and resources are to hand. This helps to maintain pace and a smooth transition between activities. The use of the target language is very effective, but English is sensibly used to explain difficult concepts. Teachers usually insist on accurate pronunciation and intonation, although this aspect is not consistent across the department. Teachers will not accept single word answers and pupils are quite used to giving full sentences. The best lessons are excellently planned; the sequence of activities anticipates potential problems and help pupils to grasp difficult concepts, such as the difference between the perfect and imperfect tenses. Constant feedback and checking and a variety of resources help to include the vast majority of pupils in classes where there is a wide range of prior attainment. However, in the least homogeneous classes it is more difficult to differentiate effectively. Several teachers use techniques to develop pupils' thinking skills, which help pupils to develop their ideas and express them. The overhead projector is used very well by all teachers both to present language and for a variety of games. Teachers use ICT to prepare materials, but not as a teaching resource. Access to ICT facilities is limited and consequently makes limited impact on the pupils' learning, although many pupils use ICT at home and some produce impressive accurate written work.
169. The quality of learning is at least satisfactory, particularly in Key Stage 4 where it is often good or very good. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN are making good progress. This is due to good teaching, high expectations and positive attitudes. There is a good attitude towards homework and learning vocabulary and pupils show curiosity about their learning, for example, why words are masculine or feminine, or to work out verb endings that they have not yet been taught. They enjoy games and competition, which help them learn new vocabulary and structures. They respond well to pressure and to marking. In some classes pupils are encouraged to indicate changes they have made after self-correction and before they hand work in. This is an effective way of developing reflective learners. The consistent approach to the teaching of grammar helps the pupils make connections and see the language as a tool. Assessment is also rigorously monitored and helps the department to plan and set targets.
170. The leadership and management of the department are good. A particular strength is the consistency of approach not only between teachers, but across subjects, so that, for example, the same materials can be shared. The teachers are reflective practitioners who are constantly seeking ways of raising standards further. The department's provision for the cultural development of the pupils is very good. Teachers regularly take groups of pupils to France and Germany, including the battlefields of Flanders. Some of the written work produced by pupils following such a visit was especially moving.

## MUSIC

171. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- Well-planned lessons.
- Good teaching.
- Good management of the subject.
- Good relationships with the pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve numbers of students taking AS and A level.
- Resources and sound proofing the practise rooms.
- The need for a department development plan determining future planning.
- Promote a more structured approach to singing in the classroom.

172. Standards in music are high. At Key Stage 4, whilst the number of candidates being entered has fallen in recent years, examination results have remained high. In 2002, 75% of the candidates gained A-C grades. There is clear evidence of satisfactory standards being maintained in the present Year 11 group and an improvement in both numbers and standards of attainment in the present Year 10 group, where the performance standards of several pupils is higher than the national average. At Key Stage 3, attainment is good. A large proportion of the pupils who enter the school at Year 9 are at Level 4 and there is evidence that their attainment improves by the end of Key Stage 3. Overall, attainment is in line with national expectations and in many cases is above the national average. There are a significant number of pupils with high quality instrumental skills, particularly in jazz improvisation.

173. The achievement of pupils at Key Stage 4 overall is good. In Year 11, achievement is satisfactory with one or two examples of pupils with significant skills. In Year 10 achievement is generally good or very good, particularly in performance skills. Pupils engage with ICT to produce compositions that show an understanding of structure and texture. Listening skills at Key Stage 4 are good. Pupils display a good knowledge of key musical terms and have the capacity to express an opinion about music that they hear. In the context of the classroom, they work well together and in particular Year 10 pupils create effective ensemble performances. At Key Stage 3 pupils also work well together. They compose at the keyboard and use graphic score very effectively. Their listening skills are good. The quality of singing at Key Stage 3 is poor and should be taught in a more structured manner. Standards of achievement in extra-curricular ensembles are good. In particular, the 'Swing Band' and 'Wind Band' play with a sense of style and dynamic variation.

174. The teaching and planning is good. As a result, learning opportunities are given purpose and direction. The teachers are new to the department and are in their second year of teaching. There is no head of department and the teachers plan together, each assuming responsibility for differing aspect of the work of the department. This unusual management structure is proving very effective. The teachers work well together and are efficient. The teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good or very good. In particular, Year 9 follows an imaginative curriculum that the teachers plan very carefully. They encourage learning via practical involvement.

175. Pupils take their work seriously, they are polite and supportive of one another. They work well either individually, in pairs or in groups and are very responsive to the teachers. The teachers have established strong links with the pyramid of feeder schools and support curriculum work as well as running a database of equipment that can be used by all schools in the pyramid.
176. It is to the credit of the new teachers that they have given the subject a sense of stability and purpose. Pupils speak very highly of the subject. The time has now come for the department to draw up a development plan that will both consolidate present practice and point the way forward. In particular active policies such as social, moral, cultural and spiritual education should be more apparent. Assessment procedures are not yet clarified in departmental policy, and these aspects in conjunction with citizenship, differentiation and literacy should be given a higher priority as far as future planning is concerned. Within the context of the curriculum, along with singing at Key Stage 3, the department should look to ways of improving the teaching of key skills and begin to consider Year 9 as a foundation course for GCSE. The accommodation requires attention. Noise spillage from the inadequate soundproofing of the practise rooms is having a negative impact on learning opportunities, particularly where aural work for examinations is concerned. Finally, whilst resources are reasonable there are no resources available in one of the music rooms. The department overcomes this imbalance by exchanging classes between the two music rooms, when classes from the same year group are timetabled together. The addition of a wider range of sound sources, including tuned and untuned percussion, and the updating of ICT equipment would benefit the department as it prepares pupils to study music post-16.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning is good or very good in the majority of lessons.
- Pupils make noticeable progress in lessons and achieve high standards in PE.
- Standards in GCSE PE are consistently higher than the national average.
- Pupils enjoy PE and display very positive attitudes in lessons.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Extra-curricular opportunities encourage pupils to excel in sport.

### Areas for improvement

- Differentiate learning to ensure pupils of all abilities are actively engaged in learning.
- Increase the use of ICT to enhance learning in PE.
- Create a dedicated teaching base for GCSE and A Level classes.

178. Standards are average in Key Stage 3 and above average in Key Stage 4. Pupils arrive in Year 9 with different levels of knowledge and experiences from their middle schools, some pupils have been taught some sports activities in-depth whilst others may not have been taught some major games or aspects of gymnastics. To compensate for this teachers set high expectations from the start and use their detailed subject knowledge to ensure pupils work hard to improve their knowledge and performance, and achieve the expected standard by the end of Key Stage 3. Progress is maintained throughout Years 10 and 11 and pupils attain above average standards by the end of Key Stage 4. In the past few years performance in GCSE PE show consistently high standards that are well above the national average.
179. In Key Stage 3 many pupils display basic levels of skill. In rugby, basic handling skills are under-developed, decision-making with a partner and in small groups is weak and pupils struggle to perform basic drills effectively. In gymnastics, most pupils can perform basic actions such as rolling and balancing and link actions together into basic sequences of movements, but these often lack fluency and control and complexity. However, by planning lessons with sustained periods of time to practice and improve performance, and providing high quality feedback on how to improve, teachers ensure that the majority of pupils make rapid progress and achieve the standards expected by the end of Year 9. A discrete group of pupils not involved in MFL get an additional PE lesson in Year 9, the full effect of this increase should be monitored closely to assess its impact on standards achieved.
180. The majority of lessons have clear introductions that share with pupils what the teacher wants to achieve in that lesson. They have energetic warm-ups, often to music, which help to stimulate and motivate pupils to learn, and teachers demonstrate key actions, skills and movements for pupils to try for themselves. Videotape of other pupils and professional performers is also used very effectively during lessons to show pupils the expected standards and identify ways of improving their work. Almost all lessons include links between practical activities and the physiological and psychological aspects of sport and exercise, and how these can affect performance. This is a real strength of the department as it extends pupil learning in lessons and provides a valuable insight into future learning covered on the GCSE PE course.
181. By Key Stage 4 teacher-pupil relationships are firmly established and this, combined with high quality teaching, generates a positive learning environment that allows most pupils to flourish. Pupils consolidate learning and show great interest in what they are doing. Teachers use questioning effectively to test understanding and reinforce learning, they ask pupils to identify how their performance and actions relates to particular events and well-known sports performers. Pupils are very proficient at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their own and others' performance and use this skill to help each other perform more effectively.

182. GCSE PE results have improved dramatically since the last inspection, this is due to high quality teaching from all members of the department who plan together to produce high quality learning materials and share different ways of teaching specific aspects of the syllabus that helps motivate and enthuse pupils to learn. Some of the best teaching was seen in GCSE PE classes; teachers maximise the use of time and make the subject interesting and involve all pupils in creative and physical effort. Practical and theoretical aspects of PE and sport are combined to make learning more meaningful and motivate those pupils striving to apply new knowledge to different sports activities. To raise standards further single gender groups have been introduced this year, this creates a very positive learning environment and it would be beneficial to assess its impact on standards following the 2003 examination. Increased use of ICT to enhance learning both in theory and practical lessons would help to improve standards even further.
183. In a very small minority of lessons standards are below expectations because lessons are not planned to take into account pupils' different abilities in specific sports or where a significant number of pupils have not participated in particular activities on a regular basis.
184. Learning is good and often very good in most PE lessons. It is most effective when teachers stimulate pupil interest and encourage them to take an active part in their learning. For example, in a GCSE PE lesson girls worked in small groups to produce a short performance including song and dance to explain the technical names of the joints of the body and the range of movements each joint could perform. Pupils display very positive attitudes towards learning in PE, behaviour is exemplary and is a direct result of strong teacher-pupil relationships based on mutual respect for each other. Most pupils are keen to get involved in extra-curricular sport and this has a significant effect on pupil learning in lessons and the high standards achieved. The school has a full programme of fixtures against other schools and many pupils achieve representative honours in their chosen sports.
185. The department is well led. The head of department manages a team of five specialist staff and makes very good use of the school's indoor and outdoor sports facilities to provide a broad-based programme of activities that meets National Curriculum requirements. The school hosts a School Sport Co-ordinator who has made considerable progress working with the feeder middle schools to raise standards in PE and increase extra-curricular opportunities. The department should explore whether this role could provide an ideal opportunity to establish a common Key Stage 3 PE curriculum in the partner middle schools and help to alleviate some of the difficulties present on arrival in Year 9 due to lack of exposure to specific sports.
186. The sports hall is a cold, austere environment for learning in need of considerable refurbishment. Whilst it provides a large indoor teaching space the floor is dirty due to the combined use by school and community groups, and a better cleaning schedule is required. The changing and showering facilities have been updated and are in good condition. The gymnasium is in good condition but the playing fields are often waterlogged and not always conducive to learning. There are outline plans to refurbish the sports hall as part of a new, floodlit, multi-use games area.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching by both specialist teachers.
- 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 development.
- Relevant, well-balanced curriculum combining knowledge, understanding and reflection appropriately.
- A challenging climate for learning with well focussed development of pupils' thinking and reasoning skills.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour, their powers of concentration and enjoyment of learning.
- Strong relationships in an ethos of mutual trust and respect.

### Areas for improvement

- Range and variety of resources including first-hand experiences to support learning.
- Provision of a specialist teaching base.
- Access to RE for all students in Key Stage 4.

188. Standards are good. The students achieve well and they make good, often rapid, progress. The explanation lies in very good teaching that effectively captures the pupils' interest and creates a challenging climate for learning.

189. Standards of fourteen-year-olds are above expectations of the local Northumberland Agreed Syllabus. They have a well-developed understanding of at least two major concepts in religion, belief and deity. Their awareness that religious belief may influence behaviour, actions and lifestyle is considerable, demonstrated in lengthy pieces of writing on, for example, exemplary figures such as Mother Teresa. Further, they show a firm grasp of the nature of the Christian God that they apply well when putting forward perceptive views on God and the problem of suffering.

190. Students in Year 9 achieve well in response to demanding tasks that engage them in both talk and writing activities. In a good example, they reflected maturely on possible sources of evil and showed increasing skills of evaluation in a follow-up task, writing a letter of complaint to God. Equally, they make at least good and often rapid progress in acquiring and applying skills of thinking and reasoning. This is effectively demonstrated in questions they pose as well as answer. In a class discussion, for example, on natural and moral evil, one pupil voiced the view that choice, personality and motive may be factors in evil doing. This led to a lively debate on free will at a level better than might be expected for most fourteen-year-olds.

191. Standards in GCSE short course RE are very good with over 60% of students gaining within grades A\*-C in 2002, well above the national average and in line with the school's overall performance. A high number of students, reflecting a wide ability range, were entered for this examination and numerous students exceeded their targets. Similarly, students taking full course GCSE religious studies, although considerably smaller in number (approximately 6% of the Year 11 cohort), performed well in 2002 with 60% gaining at the higher grades. In both cases the high standards from the previous year were maintained.

192. Teachers prepare students well for examination work through provision of structured tasks that increasingly call for evaluation, argument, perspective and posing an informed view. This also accounts for attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 being above expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. Students are able to demonstrate in lessons and in written work a wide knowledge and understanding, for example, of theories for the existence of God. They are similarly fluent in expressing their awareness of aspects of Christian experience such as revelation.
193. The majority of students throughout Key Stage 4 achieve well and make good progress. Teachers challenge their thinking and imagination with interesting tasks that help students to consolidate and apply their knowledge and understanding progressively. In Year 10 for example, they were asked to imagine a conversation between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King helping students to achieve well in assimilating aspects of the Civil Rights Movement. Year 11 students applied their increasing awareness of the relationship between belief and life style effectively when asked to look at real life situations on, for example, genetic engineering and abortion.
194. Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understanding, communicate effectively with students, prepare and plan well and move lessons along at a good pace. Above all, teachers have high expectations and engage students in searching and thought-provoking tasks that are well matched and inclusive. Essentially, this explains the good standards, achievement and progress the students, including those with SEN, make in their development of key skills and concepts. Care is taken through use of praise and informative marking to build students' confidence and inspire further effort and improvement. In consequence, students know what is expected of them and how they may achieve their targets. Teachers regularly help students take stock of their achievement in either plenary sessions or timely intervention. This is invariably followed up with constructive homework tasks, well designed to probe further thinking and learning.
195. Teachers use interesting and relevant illustrations to make complex and unfamiliar religious ideas accessible. Information sheets are carefully prepared to engage the students effectively in open-ended activities. Even so, the range and variety of resources is narrow with few opportunities for examining first-hand experiences of religion. This is an aspect from the previous inspection report in 1997 that has not yet been addressed. This is not helped, however, by the absence of a specialist teaching base and convenient storage facilities. The use of ICT, on the other hand, is well planned for through the RE curriculum.
196. Teachers create a supportive climate of trust and mutual respect. The quality of relationships in lessons contributes significantly to the students' 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. The subject is highly regarded by the students and frequently in all year groups they show a tangible enthusiasm for RE. They give reasons such as, "we discuss real issues" and, "we learn to give a personal response".



197. The department is efficiently led and managed by a recently appointed head of department who has made a significant impact on raising the status of the subject among both students and colleagues. All procedures with regard to monitoring and review of students' performance and departmental practice are firmly in place and outcomes are used conscientiously to plan further developments. The head of department sets goals for improvement with a clear sense of direction and areas highlighted from this inspection have been well anticipated. There have been considerable improvements since the time of the previous inspection, notably in the achievement of higher standards. Allocation of curriculum time for RE at Key Stage 4 has been improved since the report of 1997. Access, however, for a minority of students whose RE is delivered on an integrated basis in ICT and citizenship remains an issue for the school to address. Nevertheless, currently, the majority of the students are being provided with a very good RE experience and further improvement is likely in the future.

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

198. In the inspection, 15 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.

199. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

### ***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	18	83	87	56	43	6.22	5.80
Chemistry	21	100	90	38	43	6.29	5.90
Biology	27	96	88	30	34	5.26	5.25
Physics	5	100	88	80	40	8.40	5.67
Other sciences	2	100	90	50	30	5	5.16
Science	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.71	9.80
Full design and technology	5	100	91	40	30	5.60	5.38
Business	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.75	10.45
Economics	11	82	89	9	36	4.55	5.52
Sports/PE studies	11	100	92	36	25	6.18	5.09
Leisure and tourism	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10.80	10.06
Health and social care	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18	10.79
Art and design	15	100	96	33	46	6	6.57
Music	2	100	93	50	35	8	5.74
Geography	17	94	92	35	38	6.24	5.74
History	7	71	88	0	35	3.14	5.45
Sociology	14	86	86	36	35	5.57	5.32
English Literature	18	100	95	44	37	6.33	5.91
Communication Studies	9	100	93	56	31	7.11	5.53
French	7	100	89	43	38	6.29	5.59
German	2	100	91	100	40	9	5.81
Spanish	1	0	89	0	39	0	5.70
General studies	27	74	85	22	30	4.07	4.91

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### MATHEMATICS

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

##### Strengths

- A Level and AS level results in recent years have been above national averages.
- Teaching is good; teachers have very good subject knowledge and support students with high quality notes and detailed marking.
- Students are highly motivated and work hard; relationships are good.
- The breadth of curriculum offered in mathematics is very good.
- Personal and academic support is very good.

##### Areas for improvement

- Occasionally students are passive learners, reducing the levels of interaction with the teacher.

201. The inspection covered the two A level courses offered by the school – mathematics and further mathematics – plus AS mathematics and the re-sit GCSE course for students who did not gain grade C in Year 11.

202. The mathematics department does well for its sixth form students. Over recent years advanced level students have gained results consistently higher than the national average. In 2002 the pass rate at A level was 96.7% with 60% of the students achieving grades A or B. Students achieve in line with their prior attainment at the higher levels. There is some good achievement by students who begin advanced courses having achieved lower average points scores at GCSE. The numbers of male and female students taking mathematics are approximately equal with female students attaining slightly better than male students in the last two years but in line with their prior attainment.

203. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' books is good. Mathematical arguments are well presented with full working and supported by appropriate diagrams. Higher attaining students demonstrate the ability to write detailed reports on the analysis of information presented in a variety of charts, tables and graphs. In discrete mathematics students show that they can solve problems involving the shortest path through a network. Students of average and above average ability use algebra confidently, for example when working with functions of functions. Students whose previous experience was of intermediate level GCSE find the algebraic manipulation more taxing but are prepared to seek help at an early stage and thus make good progress. Students re-sitting their GCSE course in the sixth form achieve satisfactory pass rates. In summer 2002, 43% achieved C grades.

204. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is good and, in almost half of the lessons, is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons well and to provide very good quality notes that are valued by the students. Relationships are good. Time in lessons is used well with a mixture of theory, practice and reflection. Teachers' marking of students' work helps students make progress by providing detailed comments and exemplar solutions. There is a supportive atmosphere in the classrooms and beyond where students are provided with revision booklets of examination-style questions for each module of work. As a result of the good teaching students are highly motivated, showing positive attitudes to their work and expressing interest and enjoyment in the subject. They showed this in a lesson in which they were introduced to the convergence and divergence of sequences. Students worked well collaboratively and tried to distil the key messages as they worked through examples. Students were aware of the links between Fibonacci sequences and nature. Students generally participate well in lessons as in a Year 13 class where students entered into a debate about the vector form of the equation necessary to get to any point on a line, knowing a point on the line and its direction. Occasionally, students are more passive learners, reducing levels of interaction with the teacher.
205. There is a broad range of modules offered at A2/AS Level including pure, applied, statistics and discrete mathematics courses. In addition, further mathematics is offered in Year 12 and has recruited well. Sixth form students have the opportunity to take part in the senior mathematics challenge and each year a number of students are successful and are awarded gold, silver or bronze certificates.
206. The provision of mathematics in the sixth form is well managed with clear schemes of work and supportive materials. There are effective arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress leading to the identification of target grades and areas for improvement. Students likely to under-achieve receive mentoring.

## CHEMISTRY

207. Overall the quality of provision in chemistry is **good**.

### Strengths

- Chemistry is a very popular subject and always recruits a good mix of girls and boys.
- Teaching is very good and uses an appropriate balance of theoretical and practical activities.
- The team of teachers co-ordinate their work well.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- Students get good feedback about how well they are doing and support for improvement.

### Weaknesses

- Textbooks and a wider range of reading material for independent research.
- Increase the number and condition of laboratories.

208. Chemistry has been a popular subject for some years with large numbers opting for it. Almost all students complete the two-year course and gain an A Level (A2) pass. The percentage gaining A-B grades has been close to the national averages, although somewhat lower in 2002. Student attainment in chemistry is about the same as in other subjects. Overall attainment in 2001 was above national averages and was good.

209. In lessons most students have good understanding of the lesson content. In a Year 12 lesson involving energy changes in a chemical reaction, students are able to use their measurements to calculate enthalpy. In another Year 12 lesson students are confident about the molecular structure of hydrocarbons and are able to use molecular models to demonstrate that structure. By Year 13 students are able to apply their understandings of redox reactions to unfamiliar reactions. In practical lessons students have good practical skills, working at a good pace and using equipment with care and accuracy.
210. All teaching is good or very good. As a result students learn well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Explanations and instructions are clear so students are clear what the lesson is about. There is good learning directly from the teacher as well as from the activities provided. In most lessons learning activities are deliberately planned to provide a good level of student involvement, although occasionally lessons are dominated by teacher talk, questions require one-word answers and there is little student activity. Practical work is well planned and clearly supports theoretical understanding. In a Year 12 lesson, students carry out two practical tasks measuring heat energy in order to calculate enthalpy. Very clear instructions, prepared handouts and good organisation enable all students to complete this work. In a lesson about hydrocarbons a sequence of activities using molecular models, diagrams and formulae is very effective in developing understanding of complex molecules. Graphs are used to very good effect, such as in a lesson about heat energy and enthalpy, in which the teacher provides a very good interpretation of the shape of the graphs. Relationships are very good with friendly yet rigorous interactions between students and teachers. Teachers' expectations are high, students feel well supported by them and know that they are available for additional help if needed.
211. Students' files are generally well kept and of a good standard. They contain accurate notes from lessons and some photocopied handouts from teachers. Practical work is written up in report style with good diagrams and with clear results, tables and graphs where there are quantitative results. Formulae, equations and calculations are regularly used. Other written work takes the form of answers to questions from textbooks and past examination papers. These give students plenty of practice at examination-style questions. They are thoroughly marked with grades, comments and advice for improvement, including the resubmission of unsatisfactory answers. Coursework reports are treated in the same way. Students are clear about the demands of the syllabus and the level they are working at and know their target grade.
212. Students have very positive attitudes towards learning. They pay very good attention to the teacher, follow instructions and work hard at the activities set. They work well in groups, collaborating and listening to each other. Students put effort into their independent work, usually complete it in the time-scale required and to the standard appropriate for their attainment level.
213. The good teaching and learning result from there being a team of committed teachers. They co-ordinate their work well, ensuring complete coverage of the syllabus. The scheme of work provides good guidance for teachers from which they can prepare their own materials. Teachers pool their knowledge about students and their progress and target setting is a collaborative exercise. Overall leadership and management are good.

## BIOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Biology is a very popular subject and always recruits a good mix of girls and boys.
- Teaching is good and uses an appropriate balance of theoretical and practical activities.
- The team of teachers co-ordinate their work well.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- Students get good feedback about how well they are doing and support for improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- Textbooks and a wider range of reading material for independent research.
- Improve laboratories and student study areas.

215. Biology has consistently been a popular subject with large numbers opting for it. Almost all students complete the two-year course and gain an A Level (A2) pass. The percentage of A-B grades has been close to national averages, although somewhat lower in 2002. Student attainment in biology is sometimes better than in other subjects but recently has been about the same. Overall attainment in 2001 was satisfactory.

216. In lessons most students have good understanding of the lesson content. In a Year 13 lesson about the body's defence mechanism against disease, most students were able to answer questions about the response of lymphocytes and plasma to disease causing bacteria. They are able to quickly identify similarities and differences between particular kinds of cells. In a Year 12 lesson about the heart students recall earlier work and are confident in their understanding of double circulation and most can relate this to the muscle size of the four chambers of the heart. In a Year 12 lesson about the replication of DNA, students have satisfactory knowledge of the double helix structure of DNA and of the need for accurate replication.

217. All teaching is at least satisfactory and most is good or very good. As a result students learn well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Explanations and instructions are clear so students have a good sense of what the lesson is about and learn directly from the teacher or from the activities provided. In most lessons learning activities are deliberately planned to provide a good level of student involvement, although some lessons are dominated by teacher talk, questions require one-word answers and students have little opportunity to think for themselves. A particularly good activity involved students in handling wire models of DNA in order to explore the effects of different types of replication. In another lesson the dissection of hearts by pairs of students was a very effective way for students to extend their understanding of the structure and function of the heart. Teachers make good use of prepared handouts of diagrams and information. A particularly good example of this was in a lesson about the structure and function of bacterial cells, where two versions of the diagram greatly assisted student learning. Relationships are very good with friendly yet rigorous interactions between students and teachers. Teachers' expectations are high, students feel well supported by them and teachers often provide additional tutoring outside of normal lesson time.

218. Students' files are generally well kept and of a good standard. They contain accurate notes from lessons and photocopied handouts from teachers. Practical work is written up in report style with good diagrams and clear graphs where there are quantitative results. Other written work takes the form of answers to questions from textbooks and past examination papers. These give students plenty of practice at examination-style questions. They are thoroughly marked with grades, comments and advice for improvement, including the resubmission of unsatisfactory answers. Coursework reports are treated in the same way. Students are clear about the demands of the syllabus and the level they are working at and know their target grade.
219. Students have very positive attitudes towards learning. They pay very good attention to the teacher and work hard at the activities set. They work well in groups, collaborating and listening to each other. They answer questions put by the teacher, though a minority offers answers. When students need help they usually ask for it, though some are slow to do this during lessons. Students put effort into their independent work, usually complete it in the time-scale required and to the standard appropriate for their attainment level.
220. The good teaching and learning result from there being a team of committed teachers. They co-ordinate their work well, ensuring complete coverage of the syllabus. The scheme of work provides limited guidance for teachers and they largely prepare their own materials. Teachers pool knowledge about students and their progress and target setting is a collaborative exercise. Overall leadership and management is satisfactory.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

### DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (PRODUCT DESIGN)

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

#### Strengths

- Use of ICT.
- Standards of coursework.
- Leadership and management.

#### Areas for improvement

- Increase the range and amount of products for students to analyse.
- Ensure that students record modifications to their design work.

222. Results are good overall and still improving, although they are better in the graphics products option than in resistant materials. In recent years all students achieved at least a pass on the A Level course, with 40% gaining grade B in 2001. The high quality coursework that is prevalent at Key Stage 4 becomes more refined and sophisticated at this level. Sixth form students continue to make good progress. They are able to demonstrate and utilise knowledge and understanding from other subject areas to assist them with the developments of their own design ideas. Many students are advanced users of ICT, especially CAD/CAM, which they use to help them achieve quality outcomes. Complementary to this is the high standard of freehand sketch work and presentation of ideas with detailed annotations that students achieve, although these do not always articulate the modifications that students demonstrate practically or orally. A Level students are creative and confident users of new found skills and knowledge. One student, for example, with an interest in music, and knowledge of electronics from his GCSE course, was developing electronic metronomes and tuners. Where students are pursuing their own interests and designs they accept quickly and readily the need to learn new skills and work independently.

223. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and they work hard supporting individuals with their project work, offering good advice and guidance on solutions to problems and preparing students for examination requirements. Excellent relationships have been established between teachers and students. Many students on the A Level course are also taking on the responsibility of training and learning new skills for themselves in order to achieve the high standards expected. They are pursuing their own ideas with creativity and with the confidence to embrace new technologies.

224. Both the graphics and resistant materials options are combined to form one group in both the A and AS groups. Numbers of students opting for A Level in product design has increased to twenty in the current AS group, indicating the impact that the department is having in the school. Leadership and management of the combined options are very good. The head of department leads by example and has managed to ensure that students receive specialist support in their respective options by adopting a shared teaching approach. Students respond positively to their teachers and they work hard to meet the standards expected of them. The climate in the department is stimulating, with good displays and ICT resources, although a greater range of exemplar products to observe and analyse would enrich the design experience for students.



## BUSINESS STUDIES

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

### Strengths

- Lessons are well structured and have a good variety of activities.
- Questioning is clearly directed and demanding.
- The department makes good use of visits by students and their own work experience.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The less rigorous approach to the awarding of marks or grades to work, other than coursework, makes it difficult for students to judge their level of achievement.

226. The department offers a wide range of courses at post-16 including both A Level and AVCE. Standards are either in line with national standards or above. The 2002 results at both A2 and AS show considerable improvement. At GCSE the results for business studies has been consistently above national standards and above the average for the school. In terms of national standards, the boys' results have been high. This is a reflection of consistent targeting of this group.

227. The standard of teaching is very good. The teachers' expert subject knowledge provides a framework within which a variety of activities allow good learning to take place. Lessons are well structured and have a good variety of activities so that the students learn well. A very good example of this was a Year 12 economics and business lesson on the effects of change, where students worked in groups to identify factors affecting change in a variety of businesses through the use of recent newspaper articles and discussion. They were then able to exchange their findings through a whole-class question and answer session. Questioning is a particular strength of the teaching. It is clearly directed and demanding of the students and allows them to use knowledge gained earlier in the course to enhance current learning. The result of the good teaching is that the students have a very good attitude towards learning and are very responsive to questioning and group activities. All of this ensures that attainment in all lessons was at least good and in the majority of cases very good.

228. The department has a satisfactory level of resources with good access to, and use made of, ICT both in lessons and as a research tool. All coursework and assignments are word-processed. The main teaching rooms are of a suitable size, but the need for refurbishment and the geographical spread of the other rooms somewhat detracts from the work of the department.

229. In addition to formal links with industry through work-related learning, the department makes good use of visits by students, and their own work experience, to enhance their understanding of the work being undertaken. There is an opportunity for Year 13 students to take part in Young Enterprise. This allows the students both to get a better insight into how businesses operate, but also enhances their personal development. This is an area that could be extended with benefit within the school.

230. The leadership and management of the department are very good. This ensures that there is a consistent approach to the way in which teachers achieve high standards and implements teaching strategies designed to support student progress. This is helped by the good teamwork that the leadership has fostered. Whilst work is assessed on a regular basis, with good and helpful comments provided, especially in the case of coursework/assignments, the less rigorous approach to the awarding of marks or grades to other work makes it difficult for students to judge their level of achievement. The students would benefit from a more thorough approach in this area throughout modules and units.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards of attainment in A Level PE/sports studies are high.
- Teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupil attitudes to learning are very good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Enhanced use of ICT in lessons.
- Improved monitoring of students' progress and marking of coursework.

232. The school offers a good range of PE experiences within and outside of the curriculum. A GCE AS and A2 course has been introduced since the last inspection. All sixth form students have the opportunity to participate in sport and recreational activities through an enhancement programme included within curriculum time. In addition, leadership opportunities are provided through the Community Sports Leader Award delivered by PE staff and the Duke of Edinburgh Award led by a teacher in another curriculum area, both are delivered as extra-curricular activities. Pupils are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular sport and the school organises a regular programme of fixtures in boys' and girls' sports teams. Students are also encouraged to take other sports NGB coaching awards organised by the Community Association that they can use to help deliver sport in the local community.

233. In the A Level course achievement is very good and standards are above average. Since the introduction of the course in 1999 the boys' average points score has consistently been above the national average and apart from the year 2000 when girls' average point score slipped below the national average, overall results show high levels of achievement well above the national average. In 2002 the subject achieved a pass rate of 86% at A2 level and 78% pass rate at AS level. Many students opt to follow the GCSE PE course in Key Stage 4 and continue to study sport at AS/A2 in the sixth form. The quality of performance in practical lessons is very high, most students are quite proficient in at least one sport and are guided to find their strengths in performance in other sports to prepare them for their practical assessments. In theory lessons pupils work hard and apply themselves to their study. They engage in group debate about key issues in sport and can provide relevant and meaningful examples of people and organisations involved in sport. Good quality coursework and homework combine to make a detailed revision resource and some personal exercise studies are produced to a very high quality.

234. Teaching and learning is very good in lessons because teachers plan effectively and produce good resources to help deliver effective lessons that challenge and inspire students to learn. They set high standards and develop excellent working relationships with students. Teachers combine to produce individual lesson plans for each aspect of the course that contain specific learning objectives, lesson structure and homework tasks. Different techniques are used to make the most of the lesson time available, and theoretical and practical aspects are taught in the same lesson to reinforce learning and make learning more enjoyable. For example, in one particularly effective practical lesson focusing on athletics, students were shown a video of top performers applying a new running style and then asked to investigate whether its application could improve their own technique. Students' actions were filmed using a camcorder and then analysed in-depth to identify further development of their running action in order to improve their performance. Students following the AS course are encouraged to join the A2 practical lessons to boost personal performance, if they do not have other curricular commitments. This is a particularly effective strategy to increase opportunities for learning in PE.
235. In a small minority of lessons learning was less effective because teachers did not give sufficient time to explore important moral and ethical issues present in sport. For example, students were able to debate at length on the issue of sponsorship and sports promotion but were not encouraged to give their opinions or views on the reasons behind marketing techniques and the long-term effects on consumers. To improve this, and to develop their confidence and oracy skills students should be asked to prepare and present their own views on key topics and provide rational argument to add to the debate. Whilst there are some good examples of computer-generated personal studies, ICT is not used extensively and further application of ICT in lessons would help to raise standards. In addition, a dedicated classroom base for PE and sport studies, equipped with ICT resources would enhance teaching and learning.
236. Student attitudes are exceptionally positive, and all pupils are willing to work hard, contribute to lessons and support each other. Monitoring of pupil progress includes regular testing and marking of homework tasks, a particularly effective strategy used in most lessons is to set short, five minute examination-type questions to review learning in the lesson and prepare students under examination conditions, then discuss answers as a group. Whilst marking of homework and set tasks is generally up-to-date some coursework files are untidy and contain work that is incomplete and unfinished, this could be improved by completing regular checks of coursework files, in discussion with individual students. Closer monitoring of pupils achieving lower grades at AS level, and specific action to support these lower achieving students in the lead up to A2 examinations is recommended. Reading lists are provided for each aspect of the syllabus and the library has a good range of A Level texts and support materials.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM

237. Overall, the quality of provision in leisure subjects is **very good**.

### **Strengths:**

- The high standards of teaching seen lead to very good and often remarkable progress and value being added.
- The achievement of students whatever their prior attainment.
- The leadership of and team spirit within the department.
- The very good level of resourcing including ICT facilities that promotes learning.
- The climate of care and for learning that promotes students' personal as well as subject development.

### **Areas for development:**

- Greater consistency in the constructive feedback given to students so that all know and understand what they need to do to improve.

238. Both the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and the AVCE courses in leisure and recreation were inspected. The AVCE course is a replacement for the successful Advanced GNVQ course as a result of the Curriculum 2000 changes. The number of students has risen substantially in recent years to almost 200 students in the business education department to which leisure subjects belong. The GNVQ course is a significant new development as part of the school's inclusion programme for which there are not yet examination outcomes and results.

239. Standards in the former Advanced GNVQ course have been well above average since 1998 when each year the majority of students obtained a pass with merit grade. In the period 1998-2001 only one student failed to get a grade. In the 2002 AVCE examination there was a wider spread of grades obtained by students, and 28% of students failed to obtain a grade although special circumstances apply here. Even so, the average point score remains above the national average.

240. GNVQ intermediate students have well below average previous attainment for this course but the school has gone out of its way to offer specialist provision as part of its inclusion and widening participation policy. Few students have GCSE grades above E. From this base their achievement as shown by their work and performance in lessons is very good and often remarkable.

241. AVCE students have a broader base of prior attainment and are undertaking the twelve unit course equivalent to two A level subjects. The work of first year students indicated some difficulty in making the transition from GCSE and was from the first term only. Their performance in the lesson observed indicated significant progress and good levels of achievement now that they understand more of the consultative style of teaching and greater independence required in their learning that they enjoy. Second year students have made good progress and their assignments and portfolios are showing good achievement with key issues and concepts in the leisure and recreation industries being understood at regional and national levels.

242. Teaching is always good with some very good, largely as a result of detailed planning, very good subject knowledge, very good resources and strong teamwork. Lessons are carefully crafted, use a variety of techniques to retain interest as well as challenge students to think, are matched to student need and prior attainment so that they develop good learning. Staff are good at encouraging, getting the best out of their lessons for students and the climate within the department for effective learning is a strong feature. They use the very good ICT facilities to advantage promoting research, analysis and evaluation not just simple exercises in word-processing or spreadsheet work.
243. Assessment is continuous by nature of the courses with assignments being graded as units are completed. Students benefit greatly from the support they get but feedback is not always consistent in suggesting what needs to be done to improve further in written work.
244. Leadership and management are very good via a very effective and experienced subject leader who is an inspiration, particularly to the GNVQ inclusion group in Year 12. Systems are up-to-date, schemes of work have been reviewed and show meticulous planning. Staff work together constructively and share courses according to their specialism. Work experience is arranged from school and a great deal of effort has gone into securing a variety of meaningful experiences in study visits to cover the range of leisure units in either course.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

245. The quality of the provision in health and social care is **good**.

### Strengths

- Most students achieve well in relation to their GCSE attainment on both the intermediate GNVQ and AVCE courses.
- Overall the teaching is good.
- Relationships are good.
- Students have a positive view of the provision.
- Teachers provide students with good quality written evaluations about the quality of their work.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve the mechanisms for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the teaching team.
- Consider how students can be better supported over the course as a whole.
- Consider how placements can help students to relate theory to practice more effectively.
- Resources are insufficient for the increased numbers of students on the courses.

246. Overall standards are below average but students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment on both the GNVQ intermediate and the AVCE courses. Very small numbers of students have been entered for Advanced Health and Social Care courses in the last four years and this is the first year that the school has offered the Intermediate course. The department has a history of sound results for past students, all having attained at least pass grades and occasionally the higher grades have been reached. There has been an encouraging increase in the numbers of students recruited onto both the GNVQ intermediate course and the AVCE course in the current year and the department has begun to attract a small number of male students to the subject.

247. Students currently on the intermediate GNVQ course have below average previous attainment for this course. Many students possess two grade Cs or fewer at GCSE. Most have made a good start to the course and are beginning to respond to the opportunities provided for them to take responsibility for their own research. In lessons, they are lively and confident and are not afraid to question the information presented to them. Many students are compiling portfolios that are well organised and provide evidence that they understand the social care services. However, only a small number of higher attaining students are presently reaching the higher levels by tackling some of the more difficult issues such as comparing the care values that underpin aspects of care work. Lower attaining students are finding it difficult to relate practice to theory and to reflect on how they would respond themselves as carers. The school could help them to improve this aspect of their work by exploiting the placements most of these students experience as part of the NCFE Certificate In Working With Children that they study in parallel with the GNVQ course.

248. Students currently studying for the AVCE qualification have average previous attainment, most possessing the minimum of four grade Cs at GCSE. They are making good progress in the units studied so far and are on course to achieve well in relation to their GCSE attainment. More able students use visits to different care settings effectively to illustrate their work. Their written accounts of the inter-relationship between the body systems are comprehensive and clear and they are beginning to interpret and explain the meaning of data derived from health tests.
249. Overall, teaching is good and helps students to learn effectively. Teachers use a good range of resources and a good variety of teaching methods to help students to make good progress. Students learn particularly well when teachers provide examples of real situations for them to investigate. A good example was seen in a lesson delivered as part of the AVCE course that offered students the valuable experiences of a health visitor, three babies of different ages and their mothers. These resources were used effectively to teach about children's growth and development. Each teacher delivering a unit of work provides students with good quality written evaluations about the quality of their work and clear information about what they need to do to improve their grades. At present, however, the department does not provide students with anyone who can act as tutor to oversee their progress over the course as a whole. The large increase in the numbers of students has resulted in a shortage of resources for some aspects of work but teachers use what is available creatively in their lessons. For example, in a lesson to investigate lung volume, teaching was effectively adapted to take account of the limited resources available.
250. Relationships are good and students are growing in confidence as they respond to the opportunities they have for presenting their own views and ideas. They report that they find the courses interesting and relevant to their needs. Most are well motivated and take pride in their work.
251. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The course co-ordinator leads the teaching team effectively. She provides good support in the form of schemes of work and regular meetings and arranges appropriate training to help them improve their understanding of the course requirements. There are, however few opportunities to monitor the quality of the teaching across the large team that is involved in teaching different units on the courses.



## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### ART

252. Overall, the provision in art and design is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Formative assessment procedures help students make very good progress.
- The curriculum is enhanced by links with contemporary art practice in the region.

#### Areas for development

- Use of digital technology.

253. The school offers courses in AS and A2 art and design. In recent years attainment in A Level art and design has been in line with national results. In 2002 95% of students passed the A2 examination and over a third of these gained the highest grades A-B. Students' achievement in relation to prior attainment was good, as a result of some very good teaching within a well-planned curriculum.

254. In Year 13 students' achievement is very good. They work confidently with a range of media including drawing, painting, printmaking and textiles. The most able students achieve highly, with thorough experimentation and research that is developed into a well-realised personal response. Good links between practical and written work can be seen in the personal investigation that is often based upon the study of a local artists. The use of such primary sources is a good feature of the curriculum and extends students' knowledge and understanding. They are able to articulate their views about the development of their own and other artists' work very clearly, as a result of the system of shared 'personal crits' which are very well managed by the teacher, who provides both challenge and support. Students across the ability range make very good progress during the two-year course and there are examples of excellent work, which shows a mature and independent approach.

255. Standards in Year 12 are good; students achieve well and make good progress from the GCSE course. They experiment with texture and print, sometimes developing work into three dimensions, for example in a hat made as a personal response to the 'natural growth' brief. Others use mosaic and ceramics to develop ideas for public sculpture, which are well researched using drawing, photographs and digital images. Annotation of sketchbooks and evaluation provides good evidence of a sound process.

256. The quality of teaching is very good and the course is managed well so that students benefit from different teachers' strengths. Effective systems ensure that individual students' progress is tracked and very clear one-to-one guidance is given to students on how to improve their work. Assessment objectives are made clear, students understand the course requirements and are able to evaluate their own progress and work independently. Teachers' subject knowledge and commitment is very good. Opportunities for students to develop ideas through the use of digital media are limited, although some students use their home computers for art and design.

257. The leadership and management of the department are good and teamwork is effective. The curriculum is well planned to cover a broad range of practical work and this is put in context with contemporary art through visits to both regional and national galleries. Students have had the opportunity to work at the Northern Print workshop and take part in life drawing classes and are encouraged to participate in the annual art tour of artists' studios in the region. Links with outside agencies enhance the sixth form curriculum, such as the community arts project with the local hospital, first school and university.

## MUSIC

258. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- Classroom management.
- Good relationships.
- Evidence of independent learning.
- Good listening skills.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT needs to be updated.

259. There is no Year 13 A level course at present and only one student taking music at AS level in Year 12. However, there is a vocational music technology course, now in its second year, in which three students are presently involved.

260. Attainment is in line with the national average for the courses concerned. Whilst the numbers taking the subject have remained low, the results have been good, with all students in 2001 and 2002 gaining A-C grades. The instrumental attainment at AS level is good. Likewise, attainment in composition and analysis complements that of the instrumental performance. Standards of attainment in the music technology course are at least satisfactory, and in one case attainment is higher than the national average.

261. Students' achievement is good. Students display a grasp of a range of techniques in ICT, particularly in sequencing. They produce compositions and use the computer to develop their understanding of structure, as well as improving their aural skills. They use their instrumental skills in conjunction with ICT and this has helped their knowledge base considerably. They are articulate and can work independently on their own projects. One student was using Mendelssohn's "Fingal's Cave" Overture as a stimulus for her own composition. However, problems with computers were, in some cases, inhibiting the quality of student work, particularly where the computer was unable to reproduce the sound of the student composition.

262. The teaching is satisfactory at AS level. The teaching in music technology is very good. The teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to teach the subject, however they lack experience of teaching at this level. Lessons are well planned and the teachers have taken it upon themselves to develop their own ICT skills in order to deliver the music technology course more effectively. There was clear evidence of the teachers' ICT skills being used to create valuable learning opportunities, for instance in the recognition of scoring for percussion. Analysis is well taught and the teacher promotes a 'sound before symbol' philosophy. It would be more advantageous to give the student prepared photocopied notes rather than waste time in the traditional style of dictating course notes. The extra time gained could be devoted to more in-depth scrutiny of the music.
263. Although the numbers of students taking the post 16 music courses is small, there is every indication that, with the improvement in the quality of teaching and course content at Key Stages 3 and 4, there will be an increased number of students opting to follow A Level courses in the future. In preparation for this, the department should maximise the use of the recording studio and improve resources, particularly relating to updated software and hardware in ICT. The acquisition of a synthesiser with access to high quality MIDI and sampled sound would be of great benefit, particularly to the music technology course.

## PERFORMING ARTS

264. Overall the quality of provision in performing arts is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The teaching of drama and dance with drama teaching outstanding.
- The positive attitudes of students.
- Resources and accommodation.
- Quality of performance.

### Areas for improvement

- Music teaching component requires more appropriate teaching styles and strategies.
- More inclusive approach to planning to create balance of opportunity in each discipline.

265. Standards in performing arts are very good indeed. Examination results in recent years have been well above national averages and last year 100% of candidates entered achieved A-C grades. The OCR examination syllabus is clearly performance-oriented, with significant opportunity for students to work in a community arts setting and be responsible for the production, financial planning, marketing, publicity and other related aspects. The evidence of video record, student commentary, publicity and community response shows clearly that students on this course attain high levels of competence in all aspects of the course. Drama tends to dominate the course and it is work in this aspect that results in sustained high level examination success. Standards in dance are very good and complement the work in drama. Music is satisfactory. It has not as yet achieved the high quality of dance or drama but that is because the teachers are inexperienced, new to the subject and to the school. However, there have been significant improvements in the development of music within performing arts within the past two years. Further professional training will help the music teachers improve their delivery and teaching styles to be more in line with dance and drama. However, students were attaining very good standards of work in their use of ICT and in particular through the use of sequencing in minimalist composition.

266. Achievement is very good overall. In drama it is excellent. Students are passionate about the subject and spend a great deal of extra-curricular time improving their performance skills. The nature of the course is such that students are encouraged to research material and give presentations, which often entail defining key concepts, through dramatic presentations of information. This was evident in work that Year 13 students were doing in defining concepts such as; satire, burlesque, bawdy humour and 'Commedia del Arte', as a prelude to including them in their study of the work of the Italian playwright Dario Fo. Students were clearly absorbed in the activity and their achievement was very good. It is appropriate to add that the high achievement of students in drama has much to do with the quality of achievement and levels of attainment in drama at Key Stages 3 and 4. In dance, students are knowledgeable about a range of differing styles and genres. Examples include jazz dance, contemporary dance and ballet. Their understanding of the value of ballet training in producing flexibility, strength and stamina in the dance was impressive. In music students found the concepts of minimalism very challenging. Their level of achievement was only satisfactory, partly because their musical skills were somewhat limited for the more esoteric concepts that were being studied, for instance, the development of rhythmic ambiguity in minimalist structures. A more realistic choice of subject options within the course would prove more beneficial for the students concerned. However, their achievement was good in the use of ICT where interesting, embryonic minimalist compositions were being created using sequencing techniques.
267. The quality of learning is directly influenced by the quality of teaching. In drama the teaching is outstanding. The teacher's background in professional theatre serves to create a 'model' environment for the students. They hold the teacher in great respect and affection and his passion for the subject is matched by their desire to learn. Attitudes in all three disciplines are excellent and there is a clear sense of independent learning taking place. Students are able to follow their own lines of enquiry and present their own material, either in the form of scripts, compositions or choreography. The dance teaching displays skill and commitment to the students. The teacher is very knowledgeable and uses demonstration to explain ideas and concepts. The students have a clear grasp of technical elements and their knowledge base is good. Teaching and learning in music is satisfactory. The teachers are skilful and well qualified, and there is every reason to believe that further training and experience, along with some modifications to the course structure, will produce higher standards in the future. It would benefit the department for teachers to share insights of their own discipline with each other. This would improve understanding and interaction. The quality of learning would also improve if all students were given access to each discipline, thereby gaining new insight and skills, for example vocal training. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which include whole-school performances, community arts projects and the opportunity for students to work with invited professional performers.
268. The performing arts department has strong leadership. All the teachers and in particular the music teachers, value the support given to them by the head of department. He has universal respect as well as the capacity to promote the performing arts in such a way that they are now an integral part of school and community life. The department is managed very well. The curriculum follows an externally examined course. Assessment procedures meet requirements and preparation for performing arts examinations is such that students are able to maximise their opportunity to perform at a high level.

## HUMANITIES

### GEOGRAPHY

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

#### Strengths

- Students' attitudes to learning are often excellent.
- Good quality of teaching.
- The use of 'thinking skills' activities to enhance learning.
- Good assessment system, target setting and monitoring of progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for independent study using ICT.

270. A Level examination results for 2001 show students performed close to the national average, with over a third gaining A-B grades and in 2002 AB grades were slightly higher. Males do consistently well in geography examinations. In 2001 they did particularly well compared to their performance in other subjects. Comparisons for females cannot be made due to the low numbers. For the two years that AS examinations have been taken, some good grades have been gained. In 2001 almost a third of students gained A-B and in 2002 approximately two-thirds obtained these grades. There were too few students to make meaningful national comparisons.

271. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of their work show standards above average in Years 12 and 13. They make good progress in lessons, resulting in good achievement. All students use geographical terms confidently and effectively manage a wide range of information in various forms. An example of this was evident in a lesson on the impacts of natural hazards. Students were able to identify environmental, financial, human and political implications using prior knowledge and information from case studies. ICT is well used to produce quality homework assignments and course work, but opportunities for independent research in school are limited due to the lack of facilities. Attitudes in lessons are often excellent. Students show good commitment to work and are aware of what is expected from them. They work well collaboratively, supporting each other and sharing ideas during discussions. The positive attitudes to work and well-sustained efforts in lessons contribute greatly to students' levels of attainment.

272. The quality of teaching is good with many strong features. Lessons are well planned and prepared and teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to explain geographical processes clearly to build new learning on what students already know. Students are encouraged to be actively involved in their learning and demands are placed on them to complete work on time. This promotes good learning. 'Thinking skills' have been introduced effectively in the department. Students are encouraged to produce detailed 'mind maps' as effective resources for preparing for examinations. A good example of this was seen in a lesson on issues of population change. Students were able to comprise and classify detailed lists of reasons for growth and decline using this strategy. Teachers have good knowledge of the examination requirements and provide students with feedback on their progress in meeting these. However, the quality of marking their work and detail of feedback varies between teachers. Good quality relationships give students confidence to approach teachers for help and contribute well to their learning. Teachers know their students well and use a good assessment system to set targets for them and to monitor their progress.

273. The subject leader has been in post for a relatively short time and has made a good start in leading and managing the department. There is a clearer policy for accepting students on to courses and the subject leader has ideas for increasing the number of students who choose to study geography, especially the most able. He is very responsive to new ideas and has been instrumental in introducing 'thinking skills' to enhance the range of teaching styles and to involve students more in their learning. Resources are satisfactory.
274. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory with sixth form issues having been addressed. The new subject leader has the necessary drive and confidence to improve the department. Priorities need to be clearly identified and strategies to address them carefully planned. The team of specialist staff has the capacity to improve standards.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Results in 2002 in A level and AS level were above average with students achieving well overall.
- Students produce well-structured and argued essays and good independent studies.
- Teaching is good or very good; lessons are well planned with a good range of learning activities.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and collaborate very well.

### Areas for improvement

- Further encourage all students to participate strongly in discussion and debate.
- Further develop the use of ICT for class teaching and independent learning.
- Continue to extend the use of thinking skills strategies to develop students' learning.

276. Results in the GCE examinations in 2002 were above average and an improvement on the results in 2001. All the students who were entered attained a grade and a high proportion was awarded grades in the range A-C, though many of these were at C grade. This represented a good achievement overall when taking account of students' attainment on entry to the course. Performance at the end of Year 12 in the AS examination last summer was stronger still and higher than the attainment of students at this level in 2001. In lessons seen and the work scrutinised on inspection, students in Year 13 are attaining above average standards with many reaching the highest grades. In Year 12, standards in work and lessons seen is broadly average but still reflecting good achievement on the whole from the students' results at GCSE level. This good level of achievement overall in history is due to the department's increasing familiarity with the new modular course and their high expectations for learning. Teachers have planned the course thoroughly together taking full account of the range of skills required. They are able to motivate and engage students with well-prepared and interesting lessons and provide high quality guidance and support to individuals.

277. In Year 13, students typically show that they can grasp challenging historical sources showing a good understanding of context. Answers focus well on key issues, making critical reference to the usefulness and reliability of the sources. They have developed good note making techniques and their files shows diligent independent study and considerable evidence of challenging wider reading, for example about the debate surrounding Ramsay MacDonald's role as prime minister. They can write mature, analytical essays that directly attempt to answer the question. They can competently organise historical investigations such as that of examining the role of Lenin in the Bolshevik movement, which show an ability to understand difficult theoretical concepts. In class, they are well prepared to engage in question and answer about Stolypin's agrarian and constitutional reforms showing a capacity to absorb information and ask searching questions but some do not readily engage in extended discussion and debate.
278. Students in Year 12 are coming to terms with the higher demands of AS level study and their work reflects an appropriate standard at this stage of their course. They are developing good note-making skills and show on the whole a sound understanding of their study of the Weimar Republic and Hitler's rise to power. There is a wider range of attainment in this large group and both essays and contributions in class reflect that less capable students need considerable help in moving from narrative to analysis and need to be engaged more consistently in discussion about their work.
279. Teaching is good or very good and is based on a secure platform of specialist subject knowledge. Teachers are conversant with current developments that they use well to focus on issues of interpretation and major areas of debate. As a result, students learn very well and make good progress on the whole throughout the AS and A2 years. Lessons are well planned with very clear outcomes in mind that are shared with students. A range of teaching methods is used which provides opportunities for different kinds of learning and engages students' intellectual curiosity. Teachers are beginning to make use of ICT but this could be explored more frequently to extend learning. During the inspection, students were making presentations about key individuals in the Nazi hierarchy, collaborating to create a front page on the British view of events in Germany in 1934, preparing a plan of campaign for the White Army in the Russian Civil War and assessing constitutional changes in Tsarist Russia. Students respond very well to these different challenges, particularly to those that more actively involved them in thinking through and solving problems. They are mostly well prepared for lessons showing a good capacity to take responsibility for their own learning and able to recall and contribute a considerable amount of relevant information to class discussions. They maintained a very high level of interest and engagement with activities in all lessons.
280. Though the head of department was absent during the inspection, the good teaching and learning observed is built on detailed planning and understanding about how students learn effectively. Good systems have been established for assessing and monitoring progress and these provide effective feedback on how the student can improve through precise targets for writing. There is an evident commitment to further improvement. As a consequence, history is growing in popularity in the sixth form, a high proportion of students continue from Year 12 to 13 and are considering higher education in the subject.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- Quality of teaching is good.
- Good use of assessment objectives.
- Good guidance through the course.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

282. GCE AS and A2 courses are offered in English Literature and English Language (the latter having started this year for the current Year 12). Both courses are popular. Results in A Level English Literature in 2001 were above national averages, both in relation to the proportion of A and B grades and to the average point score. The number of A and B grades also compared well in 2002. All students who took AS level in 2002 passed, many exceeding their predicted grades. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are in line with national expectations, but students are performing above predictions, especially in respect of higher grades. Consequently, achievement is good.

283. In discussion work in Year 12, students are able to use literary terminology appropriately. By the second year, their confidence has grown and they express their personal views well. In the English Language course, students are quick to perceive negative and positive connotations in language use, for example in a lesson on the representation of women in media texts. They are learning to deconstruct texts and to create their own for a variety of purposes and audiences. In written work on literature, some students in Year 12 need to analyse the writer's choice of language in greater depth, but most make good progress in this as they move into Year 13, and also learn to structure an argument more clearly. Students are conscious of the assessment objectives in their writing and a particular strength is to show that they understand the influence of the various contexts in which texts are produced and understood. Students are able to carry out their own research, using a range of sources including the Internet.

284. Students are positive about their interest and enjoyment of English. This is reflected in their very good attitudes and behaviour. They come well prepared, contribute well and show respect for each other's ideas. They are keen to develop the skills and understanding required by each subject. They appreciate the guidance they are given and the background notes and materials that teachers provide.

285. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Staff have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons with a clear focus on assessment objectives. All teachers make good use of students' own views. Students are given the opportunity to engage in discussion in groups and then to feed back to the class as a whole. This is a good strategy to give students responsibility for their own learning, and to maximise the sharing of ideas. Teachers expand the comments of students through skilful questioning.



286. Essential skills are systematically developed, for example, how to approach a poem for the first time in practical criticism. In an English language lesson, a good introduction was provided on the topic of regional dialect, showing how closely attitudes to accent and dialect are linked to stereotyping. The students then had a good basis from which to carry out their own investigations. In literature, students are encouraged to explore their own cultural references, for example in finding images of 'innocence' and 'experience' in contemporary society during a study of William Blake.
287. English studies are enriched through theatre trips and the opportunity to attend conferences. A season of war films is being shown, open to all students, which will back up the literature unit on war poetry.
288. Pupils' progress is well tracked, using predictions from GCSE and current data. Teachers mark students' work carefully, with good advice for improvement. Moderation is carried out between different members of the department who work well together. Results at AS and A2 are carefully analysed.
289. The courses are very well managed. Information provided for the students on the structure of the course is very clear. The department benefits from the fact that the head of department is an experienced examiner. She has led training and development work as AS/A2 Level teaching, including work for teachers in the region through the school's Beacon programme. New teachers to the courses are given thorough induction. The department is committed to continual improvement in its sixth form work.

## FRENCH

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

### Strengths

- Excellent relationships with the students.
- Very good planning.
- Excellent subject knowledge and ability to help students grasp difficult concepts.
- Provision for the spiritual, cultural and moral development of students.
- Students make good progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Strategies to help students use the target language as a means of communication within the classroom.

291. The number of students studying French in the sixth form fluctuates, but remains substantial for both AS and A2. All students following the A2 course are successful. Standards of work seen in the current cohort suggest they will do equally well. As nationally, fewer boys do A level French than girls, but those that do achieve equally well, and grades are higher than the national average.
292. The current AS group is making good progress, and, although some students find the step from GCSE daunting, attitudes are good, and very good teaching is helping them to acquire the more sophisticated language they need. They are confident and fluent in everyday topics, but fluency is sometimes at the expense of grammatical accuracy.

293. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is always very good. Where classes are shared very good planning makes transition easy and takes into account the strengths of the individual teacher. All teachers are up-to-date with current affairs in the francophone world and are able to provide the students with a wide range of resources, including well-researched web-sites, to help them in their research. The use of the target language to the students is excellent, combining sensitivity with an ability to make things comprehensible without too much recourse to English. Students, however, rarely use the target language among themselves or to the teacher.
294. Attitudes are very good. Students in the AS group receive frequent, challenging homework, but accept that it is necessary to enable them to make the transition to A level. They are keen to learn new language. Their good listening skills mean they have high levels of comprehension, but their productive skills are less well developed. However, good teaching helps to develop these skills, and students are able quickly to extrapolate key phrases from long texts. Although they still lack the ability to discuss abstract concepts, they are able to sustain a conversation, using paraphrases to say what they want to say. None of the students is afraid to volunteer an answer or to make mistakes, and this positive attitude helps them to respond quickly and to acquire and re-use new vocabulary.
295. The quality of learning in the A2 group is very good. Students show a combination of simplicity and intellectual curiosity that results in delighted appreciation of their progress. The most able students are making considered judgements about the choice of words, which shows a deep sensitivity to language. Progress over the four terms in the sixth form has been very good. They are helped to meet the demands of the course by a variety of exercises designed to develop their competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Topics demand an appreciation of, and willingness to discuss subjects such as racism, drug addiction and genetic modification. A wide range of written exercises helps them to use complex grammatical structures accurately and confidently, and thus extend their repertoire of active language for speaking. This work contributes significantly to the students' social, moral and spiritual development as well as their appreciation of citizenship. Some students find it harder to write fluently without translating into French what they have first thought of in English and this is sometimes detrimental to accuracy.
296. Assessment is very good. Written work is marked in detail and provides advice for improvement. Students' response is positive and helps teachers plan for progression. Apart from use of the Internet for research and of computers for homework, there are few opportunities for ICT within lessons. However, teachers do use a wide range of resources, including the overhead projector, very effectively. Their commitment to the students' progress is proved by the extensive range of learning resources they have prepared and by their willingness to add an extra-cultural dimension to the students' experience, such as a study visit to Paris, or arranging for them to guide French visitors round the town.