

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE DUCHESS'S COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**

Howling Lane, Alnwick, Northumberland. NE66  
1DH

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122362

Headteacher: Mr. G.A. Thompson

Reporting inspector: Mr. R.B. Higgs  
1608

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 249616

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: Howling Lane,  
Alnwick,  
Northumberland.

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Telephone number: 01665 602166

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. I. Walker

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1608	Mr. R.B. Higgs	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	Summary of the report The school's results and achievements
11358	Mrs. V. Lamb	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1549	Mr. T. Robshaw	Team inspector		How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
1622	Mrs. L. Aers	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31550	Mrs. S. Fall	Team inspector	Mathematics	
22083	Mrs. K. Hinton	Team inspector	Science Biology	
32333	Mr. R. Lilley	Team inspector	Information technology	
8751	Mr. J. Chidgey	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3755	Mr. T. Hulbert	Team inspector	History	
1576	Mr. G.W. Stephenson	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship	
18955	Mrs. C. Earlam	Team inspector	Art	
32087	Mr. J. Mitcheson	Team inspector	Physical education	
16359	Mr. J. Farrow	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
8009	Mr. J. Forsythe	Team inspector	Music	
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	
16431	Mrs. E. Graham	Team inspector	Health and social care	

1547	Mr. G.L. Clarke	Team inspector	Physics	
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The inspection contractor was:

Durham Local Education Authority

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Duchess's Community High School, with 1051 pupils and students on roll, is an average size 13-18 comprehensive school for boys and girls. The school is housed on two sites within walking distance of each other. It draws its intake from market town and rural families across a wide area. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. However, pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Their attainment on entry ranges from well above average to well below and is broadly average overall. The proportion of pupils having special educational needs (SEN) is below average, and of those with statements of SEN is average. Almost all pupils are of white British descent and use English as their first language. The school is a Technology College and is also the base for an extensive community education programme.

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

This is a good school. Academic standards are above average but generally higher in Year 9 and in the sixth form than at GCSE. However, there are signs of improving attainment in the current Years 10 and 11. This is due to generally good teaching throughout the school and the clear direction being provided by the head teacher. The expectations of staff and very good relationships promote high standards of behaviour and very good attitudes to school. The school has improved since the last inspection. However, the outdated accommodation on the Bailiffgate site constrains curriculum development and uncertainty about its future hampers investment decisions. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Pupils and students are very well behaved and have very good attitudes towards school.
- The school very successfully promotes the personal development of pupils and students and provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Academic monitoring and target setting are good and helping to raise standards.
- The provision made in most subject areas is good.
- The school is staffed by well qualified, specialist teachers.
- The school is strongly led.

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

- The teaching of lower sets and mixed-ability classes where most of the teaching that is satisfactory is located.
- The effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning outside of the performance management arrangements.
- The planning and management of cross-curricular information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision for learning about careers.
- Standards of attainment and achievement in history.
- The accommodation on the Bailiffgate site.

*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 February 1997. There has been improvement in standards, particularly in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in post-16 courses. Results at GCSE have kept pace with the general rise in standards nationally. The quality of teaching has strengthened with a higher proportion of lessons now very good or excellent. Satisfactory to good improvement has been made with the key issues identified in the previous report. Whilst some progress has been made with textbook availability, Technology College status has enabled very considerable improvement in ICT facilities. Departmental planning is clearer now about how to seek improvements but some weaknesses in identifying how these can be financed remain. The provision for religious education (RE) is much better. Accommodation problems have been largely remedied but major improvement to the Bailiffgate site has proved intractable. Agreement has now been reached with the Local Education Authority (LEA) on a feasibility study of different options following determined action led by the school.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

GCSE results have been in line with the national average for all schools in the proportion of pupils gaining 5 A\*-C grades in recent years. They have varied a little in the proportions of pupils gaining 5 and 1 A\*-G grades and in the latter case in the last two years results have been below average. However, based on the average points score per pupil, standards were above the national average in 2002 and in line with the attainment in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds thus representing satisfactory achievement. In comparison with these pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 in 2000, value was added at a rate above the national. The school fell a little short of reaching its targets in 2002 but has again set challenging targets for 2003. At the end of Key Stage 3, national test results in English and mathematics were well above average and above average in science. Pupils did well at the higher levels and in all three of these core subjects results were above average at Level 6+ (Level 5 is the expected level at the end of Year 9). Pupils' achievement is good. The trend in the last five years has improved above the national whereas that for GCSE results has been in line with the trend. Standards and records seen during the inspection show that pupils are on track to achieve at least similar results in both key stages in 2003. In English, mathematics and art and design, standards are above average at both key stages. Only in history of all the subjects inspected are standards below expectations. Pupils with SEN make good progress throughout the main school.

For the last year national comparisons were reported, standards in the sixth form were well above average. The average points score dropped back a little in 2002 but still represented an upward trend in recent years. In work seen, students continue to reach standards at or above average on the whole and they generally achieve as expected or higher taking account of their prior attainment.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are mature, responsible and generally keen to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good both in lessons and around the school on both sites. Pupils and students have a good degree of self-discipline.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are constructive and pupils acquire a clear set of values.
Attendance	Satisfactory. In line with the national average.

The school is an orderly community. Pupils are respectful of one another and their environment.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 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.*

Teaching and learning is good throughout the school with a high proportion of very good teaching in the sixth form. Overall, in seven out of ten lessons, teaching was good or better with a third being very good or excellent. Very few lessons seen were unsatisfactory. The common features of good teaching include, good specialist subject knowledge, good planning and preparation, good relationships and interesting activities. Around a third of lessons taught were judged to be satisfactory. However, these were found mainly in lower sets and in mixed-ability classes in the main school. The teaching for these groups of pupils is less successful in addressing their needs.

The teaching of all three core subjects is generally good. The teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory across the curriculum. History is the only subject in which there is a significant element of unsatisfactory teaching.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets pupils' various needs well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good. There is effective additional support and the curriculum on offer supports good progress
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made in each aspect. There is a varied and wide range of opportunities available within and outside the curriculum. Well-planned citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) courses make a good contribution to personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good with a number of strengths. There are well-established systems of pastoral care and pupils are known well by their teachers. Monitoring of academic progress is effective and supports learning and progress.

There are weaknesses in the provision for careers education. Though the careers service provides appropriate advice and work experience is well organised, the taught programme is limited in its scope and depth. The links established with parents and the community are generally good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Leadership is good. The head teacher, supported by senior staff, provides clear and effective leadership. There is a strong commitment to securing the best education for all pupils. Management is satisfactory overall but there are weaknesses in monitoring systems.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors know and support the school very well. They provide a good critical voice to decision-making and offer a wide range of expertise. They are seeking to extend their monitoring role based on greater first-hand experience of provision.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall but with strengths and weaknesses. There is very good analysis of results but some aspects of provision such as ICT have been inadequately monitored. Systems of monitoring and evaluation need to be applied more rigorously.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school has a clear strategic plan and has used its budget effectively to support major initiatives such as technology college status.

The school is well staffed. It is successful in recruiting and retaining well-qualified, specialist staff in all areas. The school is on two sites and the Bailiffgate site is rightly recognised as inappropriate for the demands of a modern curriculum. The complex arrangement of rooms, their irregular sizes and the difficulties of movement along narrow corridors and staircases are generally managed well to lessen the impact on learning but constrain what is offered. Protracted negotiations over the future of the site have created uncertainty about capital investment and refurbishment. Principles of best value are applied well. 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>• The high expectations for pupils to do their best.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress.</li> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The approachability of the school.</li> <li>• How pupils are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<p>A small minority of respondents expressed these views:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To work more closely with parents;</li> <li>• To get the right amount of homework.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the largely positive views that parents have of the school. The school has a sound range of strategies to involve parents in its work but recognises that the partnership could be further extended. Homework is set in line with the school's requirements and reflects typical practice elsewhere.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

## **THE DUCHESS'S COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is larger than average with 261 students on roll. It has been steadily expanding since the last inspection and now stands at the largest in the history of the school. The sixth form offers a considerable variety of courses to students who enter with a wide range of attainment at GCSE. These courses lead to A and AS levels, vocational A levels and GNVQ qualifications. Most courses are studied over a two-year period.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form makes good, cost-effective provision for its students. It has important strengths in a number of areas. Standards are high and students generally achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to their courses. This is due to teaching that is very good overall and to the effective leadership and management of the curriculum and systems of support. The breadth of course choices available to students and the generally good opportunities for wider personal development ensure that their needs are well met.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are both very good.
- Students display very good attitudes to work and develop independence.
- Very good relationships are conducive to advanced study.
- The breadth and quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- Students receive good individual guidance and support.

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

- The provision of careers education.
- Private study facilities, particularly on the Bailiffgate site.

*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> Very good teaching and student attitudes produce above average results at A level.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and curriculum provision leads to high attainment.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> Teachers' very good subject knowledge, coupled with precise assessments sustains good achievement.
Design and Technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Individual support and advice is good. Some further development is needed for the GNVQ engineering courses.
Business Studies	<b>Very good.</b> Very good leadership and management and teaching is reflected in above average attainment.
ICT	<b>Good.</b> Good specialist teaching encourages independent study and good achievement.
Physical Education	<b>Good.</b> Students' achievement is good due to their very good attitudes towards learning fostered by good specialist teaching.
Health and Social Care	<b>Good.</b> Teachers use a good range of methods to promote learning. Achievement is good.
Art and Design	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching in a very positive climate for learning supports very good achievement.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Very good leadership and management and quality teaching produce good achievement.
History	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Specialist teaching is promoting good progress but resources for learning are restricted in range.
English	<b>Good.</b> Consistently good, knowledgeable teaching results in positive and sometimes enthusiastic learning.
French	<b>Very good.</b> Although attainment is below average, achievement is good. Standards are improving due to very good teaching by a new team of teachers.

The quality of teaching and learning in 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	Students receive good individual guidance and support. Systems are effective and students are known well by their teachers. A weakness is the lack of a planned careers education programme. However, advice and support for entrance to higher education and by the careers service is good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is managed effectively within the leadership team and against the priorities agreed for school improvement. In common with the main school, there is no systematic monitoring programme of lesson observations.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are taught well and challenged to do their best.</li> <li>• The help and advice provided by teachers.</li> <li>• Their work is assessed thoroughly and this helps them improve.</li> <li>• The help they get to study independently.</li> <li>• They enjoy life in the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice about careers.</li> <li>• Information about progress towards their qualifications.</li> <li>• The range of additional activities and enrichment courses.</li> </ul>

The positive features identified by the students are well founded. The inspection team agrees with these and with the view that careers education could be improved. Whilst students receive good support in preparing university applications and good advice from the careers service, there is no organised programme of careers education in the sixth form. Extra-curricular provision is good. The feedback students receive about progress towards external qualifications is satisfactory but more frequent availability of data available to tutors would secure the process.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' and students' attainment is above average at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. It is in line with the national average at Key Stage 4. Their achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and in their post-16 courses in Year 12 and Year 13. It is satisfactory at the end of Year 11 though there are signs of improving attainment due to good teaching in many subject areas, the steps being taken to rectify weaknesses in several subjects where results have been below average and increased intervention when pupils are underachieving.
2. In national tests in 2002 at the end of Year 9, results in English and mathematics were well above average and above average in science. Results at higher levels were above average in all three subjects. These results were above those of similar schools in English and mathematics and in line in science. Pupils' performance in tests has been improving above the national trend in the last five years. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In comparison with their prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress overall. This is confirmed by the learning seen in lessons in Year 9, which is the first year in this school. Attainment at present is above average in English, mathematics, science, art and RE. It is average in other subjects except in history and modern foreign languages (MFL) where it is below average. Achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects other than history in which it is unsatisfactory due to unsatisfactory teaching and management. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, art, design and technology (DT), physical education (PE), music and RE.
3. Results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2002 were above average based upon the average points score of pupils for both boys and girls. Their achievement was satisfactory in relation to schools with similar proportions of free school meals and with similar prior attainment. Value was added from Key Stage 3 at a rate above the national. The average points score has been improving during the last five years in line with the national trend. Results in GCSE examinations have been average in recent years in the proportion of pupils gaining 5 A\*-C grades. They have varied a little in the proportions gaining 5 A\*-G and at least one A\*-G grade, in the latter case falling below average in the last two years. The school has set itself challenging targets for attainment in 2003. Following detailed analysis of the pattern of results, it has now tightened its pastoral procedures and tracking of performance and is intervening more directly in cases where pupils are not doing as well as they should. In ICT and MFL pupil attainment is improving due to better and more consistent teaching. Forecasts of higher results in geography and history in 2003 are supported by inspection evidence. However, in lower sets and mixed-ability groups where the teaching is satisfactory, there are some pupils whose achievement is not secure because they are not consistently challenged. In 2002 pupils performed better than in their other subjects in PE, mathematics, English and in business studies. They performed less well in German, history and ICT. At present, attainment is above average in English, mathematics, art, DT, music, PE and RE. It is below average in history. Achievement is good in mathematics, art, DT, PE and RE. It is satisfactory in all other subjects, though is unsatisfactory in history.

4. Attainment in English is above average in both key stages. Pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and satisfactory by the end of Year 11. They produce good quality work overall. Writing is of a high standard at Key Stage 3 with all groups of pupils showing an awareness of different audiences and purposes. Reading skills are better developed than writing at Key Stage 4 due to the weak grasp of sentence structure shown by lower-attaining pupils. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are generally well developed, with many that are quick and articulate.
5. Attainment in mathematics is well above average by the end of both key stages and achievement is good amongst all groups of pupils. They show a good understanding of the range of mathematical skills and a capacity to solve problems. In Year 9, higher-attaining pupils can draw graphs of linear and quadratic functions whilst lower-attaining pupils can solve simple linear equations. In Year 11, higher attainers can solve quadratic equations, average pupils show good algebraic skills and lower attainers can transform shapes and find percentages. Pupils have become good at explaining their methods that supports the development of their numeracy skills.
6. Attainment in science is above average at the end of Year 9 and average at the end of Year 11. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in both key stages. Higher attainers in Year 9 recall information readily with a good understanding of scientific ideas and processes. Lower attainers find abstract ideas harder to explain but make accurate observations using correct terminology. Further development is needed to support understanding and independence in scientific investigations at this key stage. Higher attainers who take three separate sciences in Key Stage 4 show very good understanding of a range of complex ideas. Middle attainers have more difficulty in applying their scientific understanding and pupils in lower groups find it hard to recall information and work out reasons for their scientific observations.
7. Standards of attainment in ICT are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory overall by the end of both key stages. Pupils attain above average standards in some aspects of their Year 9 work, as this is the focus of the course they all take. Some aspects of the National Curriculum are not covered by this course and standards in these areas are inconsistent. Standards are improving in Year 11 compared to the results in the 2002 examinations due to effective specialist teaching. However, the skills that are acquired by about half of the year group who learn their ICT through other subjects are less secure as provision for these pupils is not adequately mapped or monitored.

8. Pupils achieve at least satisfactorily overall in all of their other subjects with the exception of history, where some unsatisfactory teaching and weak management leads to underachievement in understanding and skills in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils achieve well in art and design in both key stages, developing a range of skills to make good personal responses. Similarly, in DT pupils make good progress in skills of designing and making products during Years 9 to 11. In geography, pupils systematically develop skills in using a range of sources and apply these well in local studies. Pupils' achievement is more mixed in MFL. They make satisfactory progress in Year 9 from a low starting point. However, some pupils in lower and middle sets in Key Stage 4 make uncertain progress in acquiring language skills and lack confidence in using the language. Higher attainers have a secure grasp of tenses and a good vocabulary but Year 11 have been held back by having been taught by a series of different teachers. Improvement in the department is however beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. Achievement in PE is good to very good in Years 9 to 11. Pupils make good progress in games skills, in athletics and in dance. Those who take the GCSE course attain well above the national average. Standards in RE are high in both key stages. Pupils acquire a good understanding of religious beliefs and how these impact on personal and social values. In the new subject of citizenship, good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in learning how to consider the impact of their actions on others and to reflect on their own values and opinions.
9. Pupils with SEN make good progress at both key stages. This is because teachers know their pupils well, assess their progress effectively and set relevant and challenging individual learning targets that build well on their prior learning.

### **Sixth form**

10. Results in 2001 for candidates entered for GCE A/AS examinations were well above the national average for both male and female students. This is the last year for which standards have been reported compared to national averages. In 2002, the average point score attained by students was a little below the 2001 figure and closer to the national average for that year. The 2002 results were higher than those previously attained in 1999 and 2000 indicating a continuing upward trend.
11. The school measures the value added from entry to sixth form courses to A/AS results using a popular commercial scheme. It shows in 2002 that, on the whole, students attained above expectations. This represents a good level of achievement, sustaining the performance of recent years. Retention on courses is good and around four-fifths of students have continued to higher education in recent years
12. Standards during the inspection are never less than average in all reported subjects and above average in most. Students' achievement overall is good. It is at least satisfactory in all subjects inspected in detail and good in biology, ICT, PE/sports studies, health and social care, art and design and geography. It is very good in French and similarly so in business education. In many subjects, there are examples of students who enter the course with relatively low attainment at GCSE who make good progress. In subjects such as physics and mathematics where attainment on entry is generally high, students make expected progress to secure similar standards at A/AS level.



13. In mathematics, students present well supported arguments and can explore alternative explanations with good reasoning. Higher and middle attaining students confidently tackle algebraic problems and those who entered with lower attainment make progress with good teacher support. In physics, most students develop good personal research and investigative skills though some lower attaining students do not produce reports that are supported by sufficiently detailed evidence and explanation. Students taking biology are also skilful in carrying out practical activities but weaker students have some difficulty in expressing their understanding. Strong features of students' work in business education is the very good use they make of previous knowledge to understand new ideas and their well developed skills of analysis and evaluation. Students in ICT show good skills enabling them to design systems to link and access databases. PE students make good progress in theoretical and practical aspects of their studies and many perform at a high level in their chosen sport.
14. Students make good progress in art and produce good final pieces of work, confidently using a range of media. A particular feature of students' achievement is the way they research the context for their work. Direct observational study is, in contrast, weaker than other aspects as it receives less attention through all key stages. Students in history make good progress in Year 12 from low standards at the end of Year 11. They become skilful in using sources of information and have a good knowledge base. Skills of analysis and evaluation are less developed as they have limited opportunity to extend and refine these through engaging in debate. In geography, students also acquire skills in using and managing a wide range of information to produce good notes and essays. Students in English are able to critically respond to texts showing good knowledge and understanding of the effects of context though less of form, language and structure. Students learning French make impressive progress from GCSE into AS level developing confidence to speak fluently. Higher attaining students have a good grasp of complex grammar.
15. Students who are following intermediate and foundation GNVQ courses in health and social care achieve well and those doing business and engineering achieve satisfactorily considering their GCSE results. In business education, these students show that they can build case study examples into their existing understanding, in health and social care they can similarly apply theory to practice though sometimes lack practical placements to get the most from this. In engineering, students can apply ICT skills effectively to complete drawings and demonstrate practical machining skills. The small number that resit GCSE subjects achieve well.
16. Pupils with SEN are increasingly able to access more flexible post-16 curricular provision by remaining at their local school into the sixth form, for example business studies is now able to offer a GNVQ course for lower attaining pupils with a statement of SEN at foundation level while others follow the course at intermediate level.

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

17. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. Behaviour during the inspection was very good around school between the two sites and in lessons. Pupils' personal development is very good and the very good relationships established between staff and students make a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work.

18. Most pupils are keen to come to school and arrive on time, displaying very positive attitudes towards lessons and school activities. They are willing to take responsibility, for instance to represent their form and year group at the school council or to contribute their views to their representatives. Pupils respond well to the rewards and sanctions system, in particular to praise from teachers. They are happy to talk about their work and school life when asked to do so. Pupils are courteous towards visitors and helpful in offering assistance.
19. Around school and in form time pupils are polite and well mannered and self-disciplined. Pupils move in an orderly way along corridors. A higher level of responsibility is placed on pupils in this school than in most others by the need to travel along the street to lessons on different sites between lessons and during breaks. Students' behaviour is particularly commendable at these times. They demonstrate very mature and responsible attitudes towards each other and members of the public, giving due regard to personal safety. Isolated instances of inappropriate behaviour during movement between sites were noted during the inspection but these had no significant impact on the overall conduct and safety of pupils. In particular, pupils' response to staff supervision and guidance to take care on staircases and in potentially congested areas makes a significant contribution towards safety.
20. Pupils make good use of breaks to enjoy time with their friends and they move back into lessons in a purposeful way. Behaviour in the dining room and hall during lunchtime is particularly good as pupils keep to established routines and take advantage of their free time without resorting to rowdiness. Very good use is made of the school site by pupils who wish to spend their time outside, or in energetic pursuits. For instance, small groups of pupils work very well together on the school courts during lunchtime when they practice sports skills. Behaviour in assemblies is very good. Here pupils are attentive and interested in the topics. During the inspection, for instance, pupils responded with thoughtful respect to the opportunity to gather together to acknowledge the impact of the outbreak of hostilities with Iraq on the lives of all concerned.
21. Although most pupils respond well to the school's behaviour management strategies, for instance by showing pleasure at receiving rewards and by heeding warnings, a minority display sufficiently unsatisfactory behaviour to warrant sanctions being imposed. Very few pupils develop a pattern of unsatisfactory behaviour, however. The ultimate sanction that pupils can expect from persistent unsatisfactory behaviour, or as a result of a serious breach of school rules, is exclusion from school. A rise in the number of exclusions recently stems from the school's drive to raise standards of conduct in line with very high expectations. The frequency of incidents and the number of pupils involved indicates that the school is achieving considerable success.
22. Behaviour in lessons is very good and very well promoted through the generally very good relationships between pupils and teachers. This builds pupils' confidence and helps them to know how to conduct themselves. Pupils get along together well and demonstrate good regard for the views and feelings of others. They take care of materials and equipment. Where behaviour and attitudes in some lessons are not so good, pupils are passive and not well motivated to take part, showing little enthusiasm and declining to answer questions from staff.

23. Attendance is satisfactory in comparison with other schools nationally. The rate of unauthorised absence is below that found in the majority of other schools. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time and make their way to lessons to enable a prompt start, although difficulties are experienced when moving to lessons on the other site and a significant number are often delayed.

### **Sixth form**

24. Sixth form students have very mature attitudes to their work. They are satisfied that they are treated as responsible adults and challenged to do their best. A particularly good feature is the independence fostered by home study leave. Students are trusted by staff to study at home for part of their time, subject to them establishing responsible study habits in their early days in the sixth form. Attitudes in lessons are very good. Students respond very positively to the expectations of advanced study.
25. Sixth form students play a significant role in their own personal development through taking part in projects that also support the needs of others. For instance, they organise fundraising events each year and several students have undertaken training to enable them to work as personal supporters for younger students who are experiencing difficulties. A number contribute effectively to the school council and this acts as a focus for expressing student opinion and extending participation in the life of the school.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

### **Main school**

26. The quality of teaching in the main school is good in both key stages and in almost all subject areas. Teaching in two-thirds of lessons is good or better, and in over a quarter is very good or excellent, with only four percent unsatisfactory. The proportion of very good teaching is higher than in the last inspection and other figures are very similar. The quality of teaching is an important factor in securing the above average attainment at Key Stage 3 and the signs of improving standards at Key Stage 4. However, whilst teaching is good overall, the one-third of lessons where it is satisfactory is found predominantly in lower sets and mixed-ability groups. In these groupings the needs of all pupils are not consistently met. This is reflected in the recent pattern of results at GCSE where the performance of pupils achieving one or more A\*-G grades has been below to well below average.
27. In RE and citizenship, teaching is very good and often excellent. It is good in English, mathematics, art, geography, PE and for pupils with SEN. In most of these departments the teaching is often very good. This results in good learning in these subjects. Teaching is unsatisfactory in history where there are inconsistent and sometimes low expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in Key Stage 3.

28. A strong feature of a number of the good lessons is the quality of the learning opportunities provided and the planning and preparation of materials used. A textiles lesson on hats was very carefully planned and skilfully managed to meet the needs of a lower attaining group in Year 9. A variety of activities support pupils in their learning, promote their interest and in some cases are challenging to the pupils. For example, in English lessons, pupils give presentations, engage in discussion and analysis, use diagrams and writing frames to develop their understanding and improve their level of work. Practical activities in science are chosen well so that they relate to the theory as well as develop practical skills. There is inconsistency in some departments. Some innovative approaches are used, for example in GCSE PE theory lessons where introductory activities set the tone for learning. However, in PE lessons with boys there is poorer planning and preparation of activities.
29. To support and promote the learning of pupils with SEN subject teachers plan their lessons carefully making good use of their specialist knowledge. They use questioning and classroom talk particularly well to develop these pupils' understanding of the new ideas they meet during their studies. Support teachers and learning support assistants also provide good quality individual support when working in class or in small group withdrawal situations. The learning support team set and review individual achievement targets for pupils with SEN on a termly cycle, balancing the provision of help with challenge well and promoting pupils' independent learning skilfully. This means that despite these pupils' often low levels of literacy they make good progress and achieve successfully in relation to their prior attainment.
30. Relationships in the classroom help produce a positive learning environment and a positive attitude in pupils throughout the school. A very good climate for learning is created in art. In mathematics this results in pupils being encouraged to participate and respond to the teacher's challenging questions, and have the confidence to explain their reasoning. Pupils are well managed to engage in learning although some are passive and are not engaged fully. In history, ineffective classroom management reduces the impact of some lessons with some pupils spending too much time on undemanding tasks. Teaching of RE is based on high expectations and this makes considerable and effective demands of the pupils. Teachers provide good individual support when required.
31. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject in almost all areas. This enables them to provide good levels of work and clear explanations. For example, a teacher's high level of musicianship enabled him to use immediately an alternative approach to support a pupil's understanding. In geography, good subject knowledge and the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject helps pupils to improve the quality of their work. However, some weakness in knowledge of ICT is evident when some non-specialists teach aspects of this subject and this hinders the learning of pupils.
32. In many lessons, a clear structure is apparent with pupils being made aware of what they are intended to learn, activities are appropriate and clear explanations are given. In a number of lessons explanations are well supported by the use of technology to present ideas and information to the whole class. Computer-based systems are used for this, and, as in some MFL lessons, the overhead projector is used to present language and a variety of games to aid learning. In a considerable number of departments, ICT is not as well used to provide for individual learning or as a processing facility. It is well used within DT in support of learning.

33. These strengths of teaching result in learning taking place at a good pace and pupils making good progress. When teaching is less effective, the learning objectives are sometimes too broad and lead to a lack of focus in lessons with teachers trying to cover too much, or, as in some science lessons, pupils are not involved as much as possible as the teacher talks for too long. In some lessons, even when they are for sets of pupils with similar prior attainment, the work provided is not appropriate for all individuals in the class and so some make less progress than they could.
34. Although it is clear that good teachers teach all groups well, predominantly the satisfactory teaching is with lower attaining or mixed-ability groups across the school. In these lessons, teaching is not as effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. At times work in mixed-ability classes is too easy for some and too hard for others. In lower sets, sometimes the demands placed on pupils do not result in a good pace of learning. Some departments, notably mathematics and science, make good provision for the most able and talented pupils through their setting arrangements, although even then some science lessons can lack challenge and be too easy for these pupils.

### **Sixth Form**

35. Teaching in the sixth form is very good overall. Of the courses observed, mathematics, ICT, art, French, business education, and PE/sports studies provide very good teaching. Teaching is good in English, health and social care, physics, biology and geography (very good in Year 13). The teaching of DT and history are satisfactory. Four out of five lessons are good or better and in two out of five, the teaching is very good or excellent. This is a high proportion. Some English teaching is inspiring.
36. Lessons are well planned, prior attainment and knowledge of what can be expected of the student. For example, work in health and social care is well structured so that students know what is expected of them. To implement these plans teachers make good use of a variety of strategies and activities. Physics teaching comprises well-structured activities and, as a result, students become fully engaged in lessons. Frequently in English lessons students are asked to work in groups and to make presentations, encouraging independence and developing their confidence. The lesson structure and activities used by teachers of sports studies make maximum use of time available. In the approach of these teachers there is evidence of good knowledge of current thinking on how students learn. In geography, as in other lessons, pupils learn well as a consequence of their enjoyment of the subject engendered by the teacher.
37. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and examination requirements. This enables them to give clear and informed explanations as well as being able to respond appropriately to demanding questions from the students. Teachers of French have a good knowledge of the French-speaking world and are up-to-date on current affairs, as a result they are well resourced to engage the students. Teachers use questioning well to develop and check on understanding. In mathematics, the interactive style provided through questioning leads to good response and discussion. As in the main school, teachers make good use of ICT and other resources in their introduction to lessons and ICT is used to further learning in some subjects. In science, it is used effectively to present photographs of materials and views down a microscope. In health and social care, ICT is an effective tool in motivating students. In business education and in engineering, it is used well to enable students to further their learning.

38. Relationship between teachers and students are very good and foster positive attitudes towards work. Many teachers' expectations of students are high. They know their students well. As a result they give good individual support. In art, high quality one-to-one guidance helps students improve. Students respond to the high expectations set and are well motivated, as in French lessons where they engage with the teachers' challenging use of the target language. Occasionally students' existing knowledge is not taken into account and work has insufficient challenge, as for some health and social care students who had previously studied GCSE child development. Similarly, lower expectations of students on the engineering foundation course and a slower pace overall to GNVQ lessons impacted on the rate of their learning.
39. Students have a very positive attitude towards learning. As noted in biology they are not only interested in their work but apply themselves well. They are appreciative of the quality of marking and feedback, which helps them improve the standard of their work. This with the quality of teaching described, results in very good learning in the sixth form.
40. Some aspects of teaching make a clear contribution to students' social development, as seen in a Year 13 physics lesson about applications of nuclear fission. Students generally contribute well and engage with the lesson but a few are passive if activities, particularly those involving group discussion, are not well managed. Teaching of subjects is enhanced by good use of visits, such as that to the Centre of Life in support of biology, and visits to art galleries.

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

41. The curriculum that is provided for pupils is good. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets statutory requirements and has some good features. Citizenship and PSHE are accommodated. In Year 9, PHSE aims to develop pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility, and a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' experience of RE is particularly good. PE is given a good allocation of time in Year 9. This is seen as important so that it will stimulate pupils' interest, in order to take part in extra-curricular sport and sporting activities beyond school. The majority of pupils take a second language in Year 9, and those who do not have an extra lesson of French, mathematics and English, integrated into their existing courses. Overall, the curriculum builds securely on the provision made by feeder middle schools. Most departments, though not all, have good links with partner middle schools to ensure curriculum continuity from Year 8 into Year 9.
42. At Key Stage 4, the range of learning opportunities is good. The curriculum incorporates GNVQ courses in Year 11, and applied GCSE in Year 10, within option choices. The ICT option has proved very popular. However, for pupils who do not follow this course, experience of ICT across the curriculum is limited and lacks coherence. Time allocation for these double award courses is low. PSHE in Year 10 includes an input on sexual health and in Year 11 on drugs awareness. There is a good quality taught citizenship programme. National Curriculum requirements are met. The school is planning to widen choices at Key Stage 4, making use of the greater flexibility that is now possible within the curriculum. DT will still be taken by all pupils at this stage. Links with local training providers will be improved. In this way, the effect of the school's technology status on the curriculum will be developed. Unfortunately, movement between the school's two sites has an effect on curriculum time despite the vigilance of staff. It causes, in particular, difficulties in timetabling the use of specialist accommodation.

43. The school has continued to provide an appropriate range of curricular opportunities that meets the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of pupils with SEN well. The school also demonstrates the capacity to overcome curricular barriers to the inclusion of pupils with SEN who present an increasingly complex range of learning difficulties. The mentoring programme provided by youth service staff is effective in this respect. The plan to introduce more non-examined options at Key Stage 4 and further develop alternative curriculum provision for individual pupils should improve the quality and range of such learning opportunities still further in the near future. Arrangements for the use of individual education plans (IEPs) have improved significantly since the last inspection but remain the subject of on-going development.
44. Provision for careers education and guidance (CEG) has some strengths but these are outweighed by its weaknesses. There is limited time for a coherent programme to be taught and any work pupils do is not assessed. A new co-ordinator has been in post less than a year who is keen to improve provision but lacks specialist knowledge. Form tutors involved in teaching the subject have not been trained. However, a good CEG library is located within the main school resource centre with a good selection of magazines and careers booklets and ICT access. Overall, the facilities are not well used, as there are no taught lessons by tutors. There are several strong features of provision. A very well organised programme of two weeks' work experience is provided for all Year 10 pupils. They are well prepared for the experience and afterwards a proper debrief is done. All staff are involved in visiting placements and they report back to the work experience co-ordinator. Good careers guidance support is also provided by the local careers service. The attached careers adviser interviews groups of pupils and individuals. She also works closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), providing very good help and advice for lower attaining pupils.
45. Literacy across the curriculum is developing well. There is a co-ordinator and a literacy management group that has a representative from most departments. The use of key words and correct terminology has been addressed by departments, by including this in lesson objectives and by having a display of key terms in each subject area. Such words are introduced carefully and precisely, for example in a mathematics lesson when the teacher gave very good emphasis to the definitions of relevant words while setting up algebraic expressions. In French lessons, reference is made to the 'Grammar Wall'. Speaking and listening skills are developed well in most subjects. This was particularly the case in RE, where good questioning resulted in very good contributions to discussion from pupils at all levels of ability. Very good group discussion and decision-making were also observed in this subject. Pupils have opportunities in English to develop their discussion skills in different contexts. In PE, good questioning was used so that pupils justified their opinions. Pupils were also asked in PE to make written comments on each other's work and then feed these back orally. Writing is developed in subjects other than English, for example RE, where a writing frame was provided to help pupils structure their work.
46. The literacy group has produced a whole-school 'marking for literacy' policy. This is clearly displayed in all classrooms and has also been shared with middle schools. It will be a very good strategy when it is securely embedded. Currently, a campaign to promote reading is underway, and posters designed by the art department are on display, featuring staff from the school with their favourite books. The literacy group has made good progress and now needs to put monitoring in place to ensure the inclusion of literacy objectives in schemes of work across the curriculum and the consistent use of the 'marking for literacy' policy.

47. Pupils' standards of numeracy are generally good and there is some usage of numeracy skills across the curriculum. The development of numeracy across the curriculum is at an early stage. A co-ordinator has been appointed and link teachers within the mathematics department are identified. The school has a numeracy policy. There is a need for training for teachers in order that the numeracy opportunities that might be identified in other subject areas can be developed with consistent approaches and strategies. In RE, Year 10 pupils graph marriage statistics to explore trends and in Year 9 pupils construct bar charts of mortality figures in World War 1. There is also evidence of data-handling in geography and in science. In geography, Year 9 pupils calculate with percentages.
48. A good variety of extra-curricular opportunities is provided, especially in sport and drama. Musical activities are increasing again after a lean period. Pupils can follow the Duke of Edinburgh's award at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school also provides opportunities for trips within this country and abroad. Visits to art galleries and the theatre are arranged by relevant departments, and there is fieldwork organised for geography and biology. Extra study support is offered, for example the week-long revision school in the Easter holidays for GCSE pupils.
49. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The aims of the school are reflected in the way in which pupils are encouraged to be reflective and mature members of the community and in their response to this approach. Spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection, with the recent appointment of the head of RE, who has audited provision and now has responsibility for this aspect. The quality of provision for this aspect is enhanced by the leadership provided by both the head of RE and the teacher responsible for PSHE and citizenship. The school's provision has been recognised through the achievement of the Healthy Schools Award.
50. Provision for spiritual education is very good. Throughout January there was a school focus on developing spiritual awareness across all subject areas and pupils responded well to visiting speakers, producing some moving pieces of written work. The school does not provide pupils with a daily act of collective worship. However, regular year group assemblies provide a secure vehicle for exploring spiritual and moral issues. During the week of the inspection, the school responded sensitively to world events by changing the planned content of the assembly to address the situation in Iraq. Pupils were helped to understand the complexity of current events within a supportive, reassuring yet realistic framework. RE lessons make an excellent contribution to spiritual development and pupils are encouraged to explore and reflect upon issues in depth, such as in the thought-provoking Anne Frank project. In many lessons, such as mathematics and art, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning within a positive, supportive atmosphere. They are helped to develop self-esteem and express their ideas and feelings through good visual and performing arts provision. Individual and group achievement is celebrated through many school productions and performances and the popular annual art exhibition. Pupils' work is attractively displayed across the school to exemplify achievement and stimulate discussion.



51. Moral development is very good. The school has clear expectations for behaviour and pupils know right from wrong. Pupils are trusted to behave well and given some freedom and independence to which they respond well. They are helped to explore moral issues, for example in science, where they discuss factors surrounding genetic engineering and in MFL, where moral dilemmas are debated. Opportunities across the curriculum are planned to put the work into a moral context, such as in food technology where the ethical and cultural implications of recipe ingredients are highlighted. Pupils learn about fair trade issues and consider their own personal morality with regard to global issues. In citizenship lessons, circle time is used to help pupils understand and respond to the opinions and beliefs of others. Pupils' views are represented by the work of the active school council. There are many examples of pupils taking responsibility for events, such as the very successful Charities Week that is organised annually by Year 12. Teachers provide good role-models for pupils' behaviour and treat them with respect, which is reciprocated.
  
52. Social development is very good. Work in PSHE has an impact upon this aspect, by using many visiting speakers who stimulate discussion on drugs awareness, sex and relationships. As part of an expressive arts GCSE module, pupils work well together to make a video animation exploring social issues. The varied programme of extra-curricular activities, which includes many opportunities for pupils to work in teams or groups through sporting activities, music and drama, is an important feature. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme encourages leadership and teamwork. Many sixth form students are involved in community service and the introduction of the Trident Community Involvement Scheme will further enhance these opportunities for all pupils. The peer mentoring system, through which older students support their younger peers is effective. In lessons, such as art, music, PE and mathematics, students are often encouraged to work together in pairs or small groups and they respond well to this opportunity.
  
53. Cultural development is very good. Pupils explore the traditions of other cultures, such as arranged marriages in RE and have heard about the present role of Muslim women in Britain from a visitor. Some sixth form students study classical civilization and the cultural heritage and visit Greece. There is a good range of theatre, art gallery and museum visits both regionally, nationally and abroad. 'Grease' in London is also to be visited prior to the school's own production of the musical later this year. The strong and successful choir and orchestra are involved in tours abroad and this year will visit Salzburg and many other residential trips enhance the opportunities for cultural development, such as the planned visit to Bolivia. In English, art and music, pupils are encouraged to study examples of the arts and literature of other cultures and in French Year 12 discuss the work of artist Rene Magritte. The school is beginning to address multicultural education and anti-racism is part of the citizenship and PSHE programme. However, the school has correctly identified the need to further raise awareness of multicultural issues and this is an area for development.

## Sixth Form

54. In the sixth form, subject provision for post-16 accreditation is good. There is a wide range of AS and A Level courses on offer, including vocational A Levels, and also GNVQ courses. The school has a firm commitment to developing and providing courses to meet the needs of all its sixth form students. Most students are able to follow their options, but it is impossible to meet the first choices of every individual. Lessons in key skills are provided within the curriculum. These are compulsory for GNVQ students and optional for A Level students. Library facilities and computers are available for students' own independent study during their non-contact time. There are also five laptop computers that are available for sixth formers to borrow for use at home on a short-term basis. However, facilities for sixth form private study on the Bailiffgate site are poor.
55. In addition to courses offered at the school, there are two courses available at Coquet High School (performing arts and geology) and various classes that are provided through the community association. These widen students' choice still further and include opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the community sports leadership award as well as GCSE and Advanced level courses.
56. Sixth form PE is voluntary. The provision of RE post-16 was criticised at the time of the last inspection. The school has gone some way towards addressing this. It is now an option within PHSE, amounting to a possible four lessons in the year. For those students who do not take religious studies at A Level, this amount of time restricts opportunities for progression.
57. There are many enrichment activities outside normal lessons in the sixth form, and this is a strength of the programme. Year 12 run a 'Charities Week' every year. The majority of students is also involved in community service, either within the school (for example, giving support to Year 9 pupils) or in the neighbourhood. There are also opportunities to take part in sports teams, drama productions, orchestra and choir. Students can take further responsibilities through the election of the sixth form council and form representatives.
58. Students are well supported by their tutors in preparing applications to higher education and detailed destinations records are collated clearly showing their successes. However, there is no taught broad programme of CEG for students to inform them of the range of post-sixth form opportunities and help them plan for future careers. In a students' questionnaire completed before the inspection, only just over a third of students thought they were well advised on what to do after leaving school. This reflects the under-development of CEG. There is no organised work experience for students, apart from those studying vocational subjects where there is a course requirement. College prospectuses and wide careers education literature are not held together in the library for ease of reference. The school's careers adviser provides good support in interviewing some students. There are some links with higher education, but links with employers and training providers are not well developed.
59. Pupils with SEN are increasingly able to access more flexible post-16 curricular provision by remaining at their local school into the sixth form, for example business studies is now able to offer a GNVQ course for lower attaining pupils with a statement of SEN at foundation level while others follow the course at intermediate level. Appropriate support is provided.

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

60. Pupils are well cared for and supported by staff through the strong pastoral system. Staff with specific responsibilities are conscientious in promoting very high standards of personal conduct amongst pupils by acting as suitable role models and reinforcing the school code of conduct through counselling students and applying sanctions when necessary. The tutorial system forms the basis of support for pupils and is well used to promote desirable personal and academic skills. For instance, pupils meet formally once each term with their form tutor to review the progress they are making with their work, their behaviour and enthusiasm and involvement in the wider life of the school. Tutors use this time well to help pupils set targets for improvement. Tutors make it a priority to get to know pupils and most move through the school with their form to provide effective continuity of care. Overall, relationships between staff and pupils are very good and make a significant contribution to pupils' welfare and personal development.
61. Arrangements to smooth the transition from middle school to the high school enable pupils and their parents to get to know the school and key members of staff before the time comes to move. Staff also work with their colleagues in middle school to help them organise provision for individual needs. Pupils are able to visit for a sample day and sessions are provided for parents to see what is on offer. A consultation session is organised early in the autumn term to enable parents and staff discuss any issues around settling in. Pupils are generally happy with induction arrangements.
62. The school promotes pupils' personal development very well through monitoring and promoting good attendance and high standards of behaviour and through its programme of PSHE and citizenship. There are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For instance, they elect representatives from each year group to work as school councillors to raise and consider pupils' views on a range of issues designed to enhance the quality of pupils' experiences in school. This enables pupils to be actively involved in the life of the school and participate in decision-making. Provision for pupils to be actively involved in their local community is very good and they support charitable events and good causes in the wider community. The vast majority of parents are very satisfied that the school promotes good attitudes and values and helps their child to become mature and responsible.
63. Policies for promoting good behaviour emphasise very high expectations. In their dealings with pupils and other staff, teachers demonstrate the kind of respectful behaviour they expect of pupils. The merit system is well used to motivate good attitudes to work and towards others. Rewards are well devised to be worth aiming for and sanctions are designed to be quickly administered and ensure that pupils get clear messages about what is and is not acceptable, ultimately for their own and others' safety, and to help them acquire self-discipline. For instance, the school operates a system of detention that removes pupils from classes to work under the supervision of senior staff. Persistent transgressors or those who seriously misbehave find themselves excluded from school for periods that increase with the number or severity of the offences. The recent significant rise in exclusions is now levelling out. There has been a conscious new drive to raise standards of behaviour. Further, individual provision is developing for a minority of pupils who are at greater risk of exclusion than most. The youth work team makes significant contribution to this provision.

64. Attendance is well monitored and promoted. Pupils who achieve very high attendance are rewarded with certificates. Good links are established with external agencies to provide support for those whose attendance gives cause for concern. Very effective systems are in place to monitor the attendance and punctuality of individual pupils. This requires parents to inform the school on the first day that their child is absent and send a letter to school on the day of return. Pupils are expected to support the school and their parents in this by remembering the procedures, and they are also expected to take personal responsibility for arriving for registration on time. Absences that are not notified to school are immediately followed up by contact with parents and a system of short detentions is used for those who are late or do not remember to bring a letter when they return after absence. Consequently, the school is able to ensure pupils' safety and deter truancy by identifying those pupils who may be in need of personal help and guidance and by encouraging all pupils and parents to recognise the importance of good attendance. However, the school does not ensure that all registers are completed to include the numbers of those present at the beginning of each session as a quick reference in the case of an emergency evacuation. It has only recently begun to collate percentage attendance rates over time to help staff monitor patterns of attendance that may require focussed attention, for instance across year groups, and between boys and girls.
65. Locally agreed procedures are established for child protection and staff are aware of who to notify about concerns. Staff with designated responsibilities are appropriately trained, knowledgeable and supportive of pupils in need. Very good guidance is provided in the staff handbook to help the rest of the staff identify signs that they should be aware of and how to respond should they become concerned about a pupil's welfare.
66. The school follows local guidance on health and safety and has established comprehensive risk assessments of the site and school activities. Procedures are well established for identifying areas that require improvement. The school, local authority and specialist agencies have identified specific risks and action to reduce or eliminate them has been identified by the governing body. However, the mechanism within the school's procedures that tracks the progress of any agreed action does not always ensure that practices match the identified control measures. During the inspection several hazards that had not been identified and acted upon were notified to the school. Clear routines and careful supervision of movements around the school, coupled with the responsible and mature behaviour of the vast majority of pupils helps to alleviate possible dangers posed by the split site and buildings, particularly the complex arrangement of rooms and narrow staircases in the Bailiffgate annex.
67. The school has good procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. An impressive range of statistical data is held for tracking an individual's progress, from when they enter, to when they leave the school. As yet, however, there is no formal mechanism for obtaining Key Stage 2 national test results in English, mathematics and science from the middle schools. However, during the autumn term when pupils join the school in Year 9, a combination of external and internal testing generates performance data that provides the school with detailed information for setting pupils' targets. The system is very effective for identifying a mismatch between how pupils are actually performing in school compared to their targets.

68. Early diagnoses of under-achievement leads to the subject teacher preparing an action plan which identifies how and what a pupil has to do to make the necessary progress and get back on track. The teacher responsible for pupil assessment has developed good procedures for compiling supportive comments which take into account the pupils' preferred learning styles and for monitoring the impact. This is a sophisticated system that is being used effectively to raise standards. However, not all subject departments are using the system consistently well. Hence, the full potential of this individual pupil tracking and combined supportive system has yet to be realised across the school.
69. The learning support department monitor and support the progress made by pupils with SEN very well. Pupils known to have SEN before admission are identified in good time, allowing the SENCO to attend their transition review meeting in the feeder middle schools before fully preparing Year 9 subject teachers for their entry. They then receive appropriate additional support that meets their needs well and that is appropriately matched to the learning targets contained within well-written IEPs. These plans provide a clear description of the pupils' learning difficulties and useful intervention strategies that subject teachers can and should use when these pupils are unsupported in their lessons. Pupils receive their entitlement to the special educational provision set out in their statements although many of the older statements lack precise information.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

70. The assessment performance data gathered on pupils in the main school is supplemented by further external analysis provided by a commercial scheme when students enter the sixth form. The head of pupil progress generates predicted grades for examination results in the sixth form based on the data accumulated in the main school and the new external information. Good continuity of statistical information is achieved throughout students' careers in school, including the sixth form, for tracking their progress and attainment. The system also highlights any under-achievement with individual students, which initiates action plans and other supportive measures agreed between students and their subject teachers. Teachers monitor students' progress and utilise examination criteria to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses. Form tutors also make use of this data to monitor performance and provide guidance. Students' views expressed in the questionnaire they completed before the inspection indicate that they would like more information on progress towards the qualifications they hope to get. More frequent availability of data to tutors would facilitate this.

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

71. Students in the sixth form receive good advice, support and guidance. In discussion and response to the questionnaire, students clearly value the sixth form provision. They find staff friendly and easily accessible for advice. They believe that they were helped to settle well into the sixth form and sixth form work and that they are taught well and challenged to do their best. The advice and guidance they receive on choice of subjects is good, as is induction to the sixth form. A good quality prospectus clearly sets out the range of courses on offer. Students are satisfied that teachers are accessible to help them with difficulties associated with their work and that the tutorial system is good. The vast majority of students who shared their views with inspectors do not feel well advised by the school on what they should do after leaving school. The inspection has confirmed there are weaknesses in the provision of careers education. However, students feel that subject teachers know individual strengths and weaknesses and will give good advice when asked. Advice on entry to higher education is good and appreciated by parents and students. Links with other education providers and for work-based experience for vocational courses are developing well. The quality of support and guidance open to sixth form students makes a strong contribution to the high rate of retention into Year 13 and the proportion continuing onto higher education.

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

72. The school works well in partnership with parents. Information provided for parents is of good quality and the school seeks the views of parents on various aspects of its work. Parents are pleased with the school overall although a minority express dissatisfaction in a few areas.
73. Parents are most pleased that the school expects their child to work hard and achieve their best and that their child makes good progress. Parents find teaching to be good and feel welcome in school. They find staff approachable should they have any queries or concerns. The vast majority of parents are pleased that children like school and that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible.
74. A number of concerns were raised by a small proportion of parents. A significant minority would like to see the partnership with parents improved. Some dissatisfaction was expressed with homework, which a number of parents feel is inconsistently set and is sometimes excessive, creating problems with deadlines when several pieces of work are due for completion at the same time. Several parents are not satisfied with the way that they perceive the school is run. These views are not consistent with the findings of this inspection, which found that systems work well on the whole. This is endorsed by an independent survey of a random sample of five hundred parents commissioned by the school last year, found that those parents are most happy with homework, school discipline and anti-bullying procedures and least happy with textbook availability, school facilities and choice of subjects.

75. A wide range of good quality information is provided for parents to help them take an active part in their child's education. The school prospectus is a thorough and clearly presented document. It gives a good range of information on school life, including routines, the curriculum and the results of public examinations for the previous year. It includes all of the information that parents are entitled to receive. Consultation sessions are held at key points in the school year so that parents and staff can discuss pupils' progress but some parents feel that the quality of information provided varies from teacher to teacher. Annual reports to parents are specific to individuals and give parents a good idea overall of what progress their children have made and what they need to do to improve but there is no information contained in them relating to national tests, such as the levels already achieved or that their child is working towards. Parents generally find the annual reports helpful but feel that an additional one during the year would give them a clearer, up-to-date picture of how well their child is doing. A very good feature of the information provided is the way in which the school sends letters by mail rather than requiring pupils to deliver them. Parents appreciate this as the system generally works well. The head teacher sends monthly newsletters with information on special events and projects and to seek parents' views on some proposed new developments and aspects of school life. Although a small minority of parents express dissatisfaction with the information that they receive, overall they feel that they can comfortably approach school for additional information. Parents are confident that the school contacts them quickly if they need to know about any concerns that may arise with their children.
76. Parents are well involved in the life of the school. In particular, the school emphasises the importance it places on maintaining a good working partnership and welcomes their involvement. Attendance at consultations with staff about children's progress is good. The school seeks to involve parents well when their child is transferring to the school from middle school. However, some parents of pupils in Year 9 do not feel sufficiently involved in the life of the school compared to their previous experiences.
77. The school works well with parents whose children are experiencing difficulties by providing timely information and opportunities to discuss remedies with staff. There is a small group of parents who organise social and fundraising events that are generally well attended by parents, especially when their child is directly involved. The school has provided parents with further opportunities to be actively involved by giving their views on pastoral and academic aspects of its work. Often, however, the response that the school receives is low. The school responds constructively to this in an attempt to promote involvement by linking responses brought to school by pupils with the merit system. Similarly, parents' involvement through supporting the school's aim for high standards of attendance and punctuality is improving as pupils find themselves responsible for bringing notification of absence from home and for arriving on time. Parents are very supportive of fundraising organised by the school, for charities and for school funds.
78. The learning support department works hard to establish robust and supportive links with the parents of pupils on the SEN register. The school demonstrates the capacity to take account of and incorporate their views into the special educational provision arrangements made for their children. Parents' comments contained within pupil records generally indicate that they feel able to work in partnership with the school and are helped to understand the school's approach to supporting their children's learning difficulties.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

### The school as a whole, including specific aspects of the main school

79. Leadership of the school is good. The head teacher is clear on the main priorities for the school. He has focussed on the need to develop courses and teaching approaches appropriate to all pupils including those who do not have the highest aspirations. The head teacher provides good leadership to the governors on school matters, through documents and commentary that are scrutinised in governing body meetings. Management of the school is sound. There are some good features, such as the successful first time bid for technology college status, the implementation of performance management and the recent agreement with the LEA to review the Bailiffgate annex. However, whilst middle management has improved since the last inspection, it is based on establishing and discharging responsibility to middle managers. The effectiveness of this approach has not yet eradicated inconsistencies because it depends on how well each manager takes this on.
80. The management of the school is administered through the leadership group of head teacher and senior staff. Recent changes to this team have begun to strengthen its role and effectiveness. The system is enhanced by a leadership group link to departments undertaken by identified senior staff. It is a significant element of the school management model. The leadership group link role is effective in checking with each head of department what developments are taking place, the progress made with plans, and undertaking some classroom observation when required. It provides an effective communication link from the leadership group to departments and the pastoral system. There is a variation in how well the full range of this role is undertaken and in its effectiveness. In some cases it is done very well. It has not worked well for monitoring ICT provision revealed by this inspection to have weaknesses but it has provided focussed monitoring of history teaching to identify weaknesses and to begin to bring about improvement.
81. Management has identified the need to have a better understanding of what is happening in classrooms. Rightly, it is addressing weak approaches to procedures and the implementation of policy. For example, there has been a focussed look at the use of homework in learning that has ensured a high degree of compliance with expectations. It also led to recommendations being made but these have not yet been followed through. A practical response to improve implementation of teaching developments has been the introduction of a weekly session focussed on this area. This is working well. To enhance his view of what is happening in classrooms the head teacher monitors samples of books and routinely conducts discussions with individual pupils through which he identifies possible areas of concern. The school annually undertakes an analysis of parents' views. Data on the school's performance is analysed in detail and in a number of ways to inform managers on the progress and achievement of its pupils.
82. The process used to produce the school improvement plan is clear. Priorities identified by the head teacher are considered within the leadership group and a refined early draft discussed with governors and heads of department. After this process, key groups produce action plans. Rightly, a small number of priorities are identified. However, a weakness is that, although the current plan is, relatively, not very expensive, it has not been fully costed so as to inform the budget setting process. In contrast, the technology status plan has clear, detailed costings.



83. The school improvement plan is monitored at half yearly intervals to judge the 'state of play' but evaluation of impact is not undertaken until the end of the year. The processes of self-evaluation and making judgements on cost-effectiveness based on the impact of actions taken have weaknesses. There needs to be a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation by both the leadership group and heads of departments of where the school is with the implementation of priorities and the classroom impact of these developments.
84. The chair of governors leads on matters of governance, whilst chairs of committees guide these well to ensure that their role in management is fulfilled. The finance committee keep a tight eye on the budget and aims to make use of the entire budget available in the year without falling into deficit. It successfully achieves this aim.
85. Financial management is good. Sound procedures are followed ensuring good value from purchases and contracts. The school uses ICT well to aid financial planning and monitoring. Principles of cost benefit analysis are understood and used in evaluation. Budget setting is based on reviewing and then adjusting the historic profile against income change and other known changes in the system, for example as a result of change to the teaching force. These variations are dealt with well within the school's ICT-based financial systems, enabling managers to have a clear and well informed picture of the current and future budget position to support decision-making and to demonstrate the impact of decisions. Department capitation is allocated on the basis of a number of relevant factors, including a fixed amount for resourcing new courses. However, funding is not linked well to financial requirements of department plans. This approach has not resulted in departments consistently addressing the issue of textbook provision for existing courses identified in the previous inspection report, or by their own audits. Expenditure is tracked within the finance departments electronic system, which makes available a monthly picture of the outturn. However, at the start of, and in the early stages of the last financial year, departments were not provided with an indicative figure.
86. Departmental leadership and management is at least satisfactory overall. There is very good leadership and management in art, citizenship, DT (for food technology) and music. There is good leadership evident in English, science, geography, MFL and RE. Otherwise leadership and management are satisfactory except in history, which is unsatisfactory. The arrangements for the subject leadership of PE as a whole, currently separated into boys and girls PE, lead to inconsistencies in provision and detract from the drive to raise standards. There are weaknesses in documentation, which guides the work of staff in some departments, as well as in their knowledge of classroom provision. Although systems are available for senior managers to conduct departmental monitoring there is not enough routine monitoring of classrooms for the school to be sure about what is happening unless the head of department is undertaking this role satisfactorily. This happens in RE, where it is particularly good, and in mathematics. Elsewhere, the monitoring of teaching and learning is inconsistent.
87. The school dedicates a significant proportion of its delegated SEN budget to the employment of experienced and capable learning support staff. This, in accordance with the school's clear educational priorities, successfully focuses upon enhancing the quality and range of learning opportunities for the pupils on the SEN register. This team is well led by the SENCO who promotes high expectations for these pupils and who manages the schools SEN identification, assessment and provision arrangements skilfully.

88. Consistent with the head teacher's approach to management, other aspects of the school's provision are appropriately delegated and responsibility for them given to staff who are not middle management. Some have only recently taken on this opportunity, whilst others are more established. One established and committed group is responsible for the development of teaching and learning in the school. Over a number of years it has provided a range of professional development opportunities and good information in this area. However, the impact on all classroom provision is not secure as there has not been enough challenge to departments and teachers within the monitoring process. The school has recognised that the development of teaching and learning has lost some momentum and is now planning to give it new impetus. To this end, the newly appointed deputy head teacher has recently conducted snap shot observations of teaching to provide an overview of the situation. Along with this, a weekly period of staff development introduced in September 2002 is providing effective support for improving teaching and learning.
89. Recent staff appointments have resulted in the management of numeracy, literacy and the Key Stage 3 strategy being satisfactory and progress being made. The Key Stage 3 manager effectively support its implementation and has plans to promote development activities to move this forward. Progress is being made with numeracy: there is a whole-school policy and a paper on approaches to mathematical techniques; some departments have been provided with equipment. Departments are producing documentation that identifies where their subject's curriculum could give opportunity for development of pupils' numeracy. There is a member of the mathematics department linked to other departments to give support, however there is a need to provide further training on the teaching methods that make these opportunities a reality in line with the school's policy of creating a numeracy-rich learning environment. There is a literacy co-ordinator and a literacy management group that has a representative from most departments. The use of key words and correct terminology has been addressed by departments. The literacy group has produced a whole-school 'marking for literacy' policy. The literacy group has made good progress and now needs to put monitoring in place to ensure the inclusion of literacy objectives in schemes of work across the curriculum and the consistent use of the 'marking for literacy' policy.
90. There are good systems for meeting the development and training needs of newly qualified teachers and ITT students. Sound systems are in place to give opportunities for staff and departments to access professional development. Training is linked to the needs within the school improvement plan as well as to performance management. The school has a well-organised performance management system that meets all requirements.

91. Although the accommodation is on two sites and the Bailiffgate buildings are particularly inappropriate, the quality of teaching provided is only adversely affected by the inadequate number of laboratories for science on the main site and the sound proofing of music practice rooms in the Bailiffgate annex. The changing accommodation for PE on both sites has inadequacies and the sports hall needs attention. There is no library provision on the Bailiffgate site and the irregular shape of many rooms restricts the range of teaching methods employed. Some teaching time is lost as a result of movement between sites. The school's accommodation does not currently provide good independent access for pupils with a physical disability and it is likely to prove very difficult to adapt the Bailiffgate annex to meet the minimum requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. The school is very aware of the problems created by the Bailiffgate buildings. The head teacher has strongly led negotiations with all interested parties, recently securing agreement for a major feasibility study of the different options. Resolving the alternatives regarding the future of this site is key to overcoming the various accommodation issues identified in this report.
92. The school has a well-qualified and appropriately deployed teaching force. It is successful in recruiting staff when vacancies occur. Resources are generally adequate, often supplemented by those produced by teachers. However, there are some shortages of textbooks to support science, geography and mathematics; RE lacks sufficient resources for independent learning; music has inadequate provision for sound sources. Access to ICT is limited for mathematics, geography, music, art, science and MFL.

## **The Sixth Form**

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

93. Arrangements for management of the sixth form are clear and effective within, and supported by, the management structures for the whole school. There is a strategic improvement plan which is written to the same format as other school plans with links to the school improvement plan usefully identified. There is a clear vision for the development of the sixth form through contriving to widen access by the provision of an increasing range of appropriate courses.
94. The individual sixth form courses are typically well led and managed. Mathematics, biology, history, health and social care, English and French are well led. The leadership and management of business studies, physics, geography and art and design are very good. Systems for supporting students and identifying underachievement or inappropriate work rate are clear and effective. This approach can also lead to the identification of weaknesses in courses but there is no routine monitoring of sixth form provision.

### ***Resources***

95. Arrangements for financing courses in the sixth form are the same as in the main school. Departments are responsible for resourcing provision. A small allocation of basic capitation is allocated to provide for maintenance of the sixth form with major developments being put to the head teacher and governing body. Resources are adequate overall though limited in health and social care, biology and geography. Courses are delivered by well-qualified teachers with very good subject knowledge. This has a positive impact on the learning of students. The library does not carry a wide range of supporting texts and journals for reference purposes.

96. Accommodation is generally suitable but adversely affects teaching and learning time of some business education lessons. Private study facilities for sixth form students within the Bailiffgate building are poor and improvements delayed by uncertainty over the value of long-term investment in the site. To support its students, as well as to alleviate this issue, a system for home study has been devised. On the main school site, sixth formers have access to the school library for this purpose.
97. The sixth form is cost-effective in terms of using the income received to provide a good curriculum, very good teaching and results.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. Improve the teaching of lower sets and mixed ability classes by:
- ensuring effective implementation of the school's teaching and learning development strategy in these groupings;
  - ensuring that pupils of all levels of prior attainment are sufficiently challenged and motivated.  
(Paragraphs 3, 19, 34)
99. Improve the effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning by:
- establishing a more systematic programme of monitoring;
  - ensuring consistent practice amongst the leadership team and middle managers.  
(Paragraphs 80, 83, 86, 88, 89)
100. Improve the provision and co-ordination of cross-curricular ICT in Years 10 and 11 by:
- completing and implementing the audit and planning for curriculum entitlement underway;
  - monitoring the quality of teaching and learning;
  - tracking pupils' progress in the subject.  
(Paragraphs 32, 42, 80, 181, 184)
101. Improve the provision of careers education by:
- planning a coherent scheme of work and ensuring sufficient time for it to be taught effectively;
  - establishing systems for assessing pupils' achievements;
  - provide training for the co-ordinator and tutors who teach the subject.  
(Paragraph 44)
102. Improve standards of attainment and achievement in history by:
- continuing to rigorously monitor teaching and learning and departmental management so that each becomes consistently satisfactory;
  - establishing effective arrangements for assessing pupils' work.  
(Paragraphs 2, 3, 27, 30, 169-175)
103. Improve the accommodation available by vigorously pursuing the ongoing review of the replacement or refurbishment of the Bailiffgate site.  
(Paragraphs 42, 91, 96, 114, 134, 152, 186, 201, 211, 223)

## Sixth form

104. In order to improve the provision of careers education the school should:

- plan a more detailed programme to enable students to acquire a good understanding of opportunities beyond the sixth form;
- ensure the programme is appropriately resourced and that teachers have relevant training and guidance.  
(Paragraphs 58, 71)

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

- ensure that sufficient space and access to ICT is made available for personal study to meet students' needs.  
(Paragraphs 54, 96)

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

- Opportunities for a daily act of collective worship;  
(Paragraph 50)
- Arrangements for the combined subject leadership of girls' and boys' PE;  
(Paragraphs 86, 210)
- Shortages of textbooks and access to ICT in some subjects;  
(Paragraphs 92, 95, 124, 134, 145, 168, 186, 192, 200, 221)
- Multicultural education;  
(Paragraph 53)
- The time allocation for ICT courses in Key Stage 4.  
(Paragraph 179)
- Provision of RE in the sixth form.  
(Paragraph 56)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	149
	Sixth form	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		67

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 9 – 11</b>							
Number	11	30	53	49	6	0	0
Percentage	7	20	36	33	4	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	21	26	10	0	0	0
Percentage	5	35	43	17	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### 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	821	260
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	78	7

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	39	4

<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	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.2
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	152	147	299

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	107	115	114
	Girls	131	122	120
	Total	238	237	234
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (72)	79 (72)	78 (64)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (37)	53 (47)	40 (31)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	107	121	101
	Girls	126	131	103
	Total	233	252	204
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (74)	85 (74)	68 (69)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (31)	61 (48)	36 (34)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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



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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	120	127	247

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	55	114	117
	Girls	67	112	114
	Total	122	226	231
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (46)	91 (90)	94 (95)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.9
	National	39.8

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	36	66	102
	Average point score per candidate	18.9	20.5	19.9
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	34	60	94	5	7	12
	Average point score per candidate	18.6	20.7	20	9.6	15.4	13
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

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

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

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

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
1073	59	3
0	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

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

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	431

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	21.9

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	2,971,838.00
Total expenditure	2,943,701.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,804.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,556.00
Balance carried forward to next year	43,647.00

Sixth form	19.6
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1000
Number of questionnaires returned	98

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38.1	50.5	7.2	4.1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48.5	45.4	4.1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	13.3	66.3	12.2	2	6.1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21.4	49	21.4	3.1	5.1
The teaching is good.	25	62.5	7.3	1	4.2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23.5	55.1	18.4	3.1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40.8	43.9	9.2	3.1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49.5	47.4	2.1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	17.3	49	25.5	4.1	4.1
The school is well led and managed.	21.9	42.7	17.7	5.2	12.5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28.9	59.8	7.2	2.1	2.1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32.7	41.8	9.2	3.1	13.3

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Results at Key Stage 3 are well above average, at GCSE above average.
- Committed, hard-working department.
- Well-prepared materials.
- In many lessons, a good mix of activities to engage pupils.

#### Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, pupils need more opportunities to participate fully.
- Improve differentiation, especially for borderline pupils at Key Stage 4.
- Make more systematic use of data on pupils' attainment.
- Develop a clear programme of monitoring.

108. Standards of attainment in English are above national averages. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2002, 80% of pupils gained Level 5 or better, which is well above the national figure. Pupils performed well in relation to their prior attainment, especially at higher levels. Their achievement is good. Attainment in GCSE English and English Literature was above the national average in 2002, but less good when compared with schools in similar circumstances. Pupils' achievement in this age group is satisfactory. The only results below national levels were those of boys in English Literature.

109. The quality of pupils' work is good. By the end of Year 9, many pupils have carried out a range of writing to a high standard. They use language with an awareness of its impact on the reader. Lower-attaining pupils have also completed writing for various audiences and purposes, but they write simpler sentences with some errors in spelling and punctuation. An observation of an upper ability set showed that these pupils could read the Shakespeare text fluently and with expression. At Key Stage 4, pupils at all levels of ability show a good understanding of texts they have read. Reading skills are better than writing, because although higher attaining pupils show a good control of language, lower-attaining pupils have a weak grasp of sentence structure. Pupils who are likely to gain A\*-A grades have written coursework that is extremely accomplished, but tends to be over-long. Pupils at all grades have learned to use relevant terminology in their work on literacy, for example 'emotive language'. Spoken contributions in class show that many pupils are quick and articulate. This was well demonstrated in a role-play carried out by a Year 10 group exploring characters' actions and motives. In some other examples, answers were not so well expressed.

110. The quality of teaching overall is good. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory with almost half good and, in some cases, very good. This shows greater consistency than the last inspection when some unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Also in the last inspection, the department was criticised for giving too few opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas in pairs or groups and to gain confidence in classroom presentations. Teachers now plan their lessons to include such activities, and several examples were observed where pupils were learning through sharing their ideas in groups. A Year 9 class gave presentations on themes in Twelfth Night, which included their ideas in diagrammatic form using the overhead projector. Years 10 and 11 are often asked to discuss aspects of their set texts in pairs. Discussion of poetry from other cultures was particularly successful, drawing out the multicultural issues. Teachers have clear objectives for lessons and, at GCSE, link these to the assessment criteria. They remind pupils of specific techniques which can be used to make their examination answers clearer. Teachers also use techniques so that pupils can organise their ideas, and structure their written assignments. Occasionally there is too much teacher direction in the lesson, which allows some pupils to be passive. Sometimes, especially in middle-ability sets, there is not enough differentiation, and work is not sufficiently targeted for specific groups, for example the C/D borderline. However, support for pupils with SEN is good, and these pupils make good progress.
111. Teachers mark work carefully, with positive comments and sometimes suggestions for improvement. Staff have access to a considerable amount of data on their classes, including information from prior attainment and predictions from an external (commercial) scheme. These are used inconsistently. Some teachers have data readily available but some do not, and their mark books do not show a clear line of progression from predictions of future grades, to current level of attainment, to the target grade.
112. Pupils usually respond well to their lessons. They collaborate well in groups. There is good participation when the activity is set up for this, and pupils are willing to contribute to discussion. They work well individually when the task is well structured, as in a lesson preparing them for an assignment on media, when they were shown a model of an analysis of a news story and then analysed other examples themselves. Where pupil participation has been planned for and maximised, there is positive enjoyment in the lesson.
113. Liaison with middle schools, which was criticised in the last inspection, is now good. There is close discussion and moderation of written work between the schools before pupils are placed into sets in Year 9. The scheme of work for Year 9 has been prepared in line with the national strategy framework, following on from work in Years 7 and 8.
114. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Coverage of ICT is adequate. Drama is also covered, although some classes have more opportunities than others. Work on the moving image (required in the National Curriculum) is a positive feature of this department. It is unfortunate, however, that on the Bailiffgate site where English is taught, there is no access to a library. The accommodation is old-fashioned but adequate, as most rooms are a good size to allow for a range of activities.

115. The department extends the curriculum on offer. The head of department teaches media studies as a GCSE option and the second in department teaches drama. All staff contribute to extra-curricular activities such as theatre trips, debating and public speaking, a creative writing competition and drama productions. An admired school production of *The Crucible* has recently been performed at the playhouse in the town.
116. This is a hard-working and committed department. It is well led by the head of department who is enthusiastic and extremely supportive of his team. He has overseen improvements since the last inspection. Management is satisfactory. Clearer systems for the use of data, and a more defined programme for monitoring teaching in English need to be put in place in order to achieve even greater consistency.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Pupils' achievement at both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE is good.
- Teaching is good; teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge; relationships are very good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and they respond well to teachers' high expectations; pupils enjoy lessons.
- There are effective arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress leading to the identification of targets.

### Areas for improvement

- There is limited use of ICT to support mathematics teaching.
- Marking is of good quality but is limited in frequency.
- Management systems relating to department improvement planning and liaison with middle schools should be made more secure.

118. Standards attained in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2002 were well above those found nationally at Level 5 and above the national figures for higher levels. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C was significantly above the national figure. These results represent good achievement in both Key Stages 3 and 4.

119. Standards attained by pupils in lessons in Year 9 and as seen in the sample of work are above average and their achievement is good. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils can draw graphs of linear and quadratic functions and explore problems involving angles in a circle. In statistics, they can find measures of average in grouped frequency data and can use this to compare two distributions. Although high-attaining pupils demonstrate that they can work at the highest levels, no pupils attain Level 8 in Year 9 due to the department's entry policy for Key Stage 3 national tests. Middle-attaining pupils show an understanding of powers and factors and can express numbers in standard form. They can also apply Pythagoras' theorem to solve problems involving right-angled triangles. Lower attaining pupils solve simple linear equations and can find the area of composite rectilinear shapes. These pupils also demonstrate that they can pursue an investigative line of enquiry to establish linear rules. The three-part lesson structure of the Key Stage 3 strategy is in place and supports learning for pupils of all abilities.

120. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above the national average and achievement is good. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils confidently solve quadratic equations using a variety of algebraic methods and apply sine and cosine formulae to solve triangles. In statistics, they use stratified sampling techniques. Pupils of average attainment demonstrate the ability to do compass constructions and solve problems involving loci. Their algebraic skills have developed well to enable them to solve complex linear equations and they can find the general term in a linear sequence. Lower attaining pupils can simplify basic algebraic expressions and can transform shapes and find percentage.



121. 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 set high expectations when planning lessons. The climate that teachers establish in the classroom encourages pupils to participate and teachers' questioning extends and challenges them. Teachers give good quality notes 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. An example of the effective use of collaborative work was the paired discussion that higher attaining Year 9 pupils engaged in when agreeing the correct answers in a multi-choice set of questions. Behaviour management strategies used by teachers were successful in addressing the few occurrences of inattention seen. The quality of teachers' marking is good but the proportion of work marked in this way is quite small.
122. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and as a result of this, and the good quality teaching, they make good progress with their understanding of mathematics. Pupils present their work fully following the example set by teachers and they are prepared to demonstrate their reasoning to others. For example, a low-attaining pupil in Year 11 demonstrated transformations using plastic shapes and an overhead projector. In another class, a high-attaining Year 10 pupil matched sequences and algebraic expressions for the general term using an electronic whiteboard. Pupils are often enthusiastic in lessons and enjoy both practical work and activities such as an algebraic loop game.
123. All pupils are provided with the breadth of the National Curriculum for mathematics and a variety of learning opportunities although the use of ICT to support mathematics teaching is limited. Higher attaining pupils are provided with a number of enrichment activities such as mathematics challenges and master classes. The department supports literacy across the curriculum via its emphasis on vocabulary and the use of a writing frame for statistics coursework in Key Stage 4. The emphasis placed on giving pupils opportunities to explain their methods and reasoning supports the development of numeracy skills.
124. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the department. Good features are the effective arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress that lead to the identification of targets; the range of learning activities, and the shared commitment to improvement within the department. Responsibilities are clearly identified across the department and a monitoring system operates to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. The induction of newly qualified teachers is good. However, the departmental improvement plan identifies actions to be taken but not those responsible, nor the costings or the success criteria by which outcomes will be judged. Liaison with middle schools includes some good features such as joint teaching but this does not occur consistently with all middle schools. Since the last inspection liaison has improved, and although there are still gaps in the information received from middle schools, these do not impede setting arrangements in Year 9. Other improvements since the last inspection include the presentation of pupils' work, the quality of marking and the number of classrooms available for mathematics teaching although the ICT suite is too small for full classes. There are now sufficient textbooks for one between two pupils but this means that homework tends to be based on worksheets. Staff have received training relating to various aspects of ICT but this has not yet impacted widely across the department. Standards of attainment at both key stages have increased since the last inspection.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Above average attainment at the end of Key Stage 3.
- Some very good teaching, especially at Key Stage 4.
- Good leadership and teamwork.
- Good programme of extra-curricular activities.
- Good collaboration with middle schools.

### Areas for improvement

- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.
- Further improve teaching by sharing good practice, fully supporting teachers working outside their main specialism and ensuring that work is consistently well matched to pupils' prior attainment especially at the higher levels.
- The provision of textbooks and computers in laboratories.
- The number and quality of laboratories.

126. Standards in science are above average at the end of Key Stage 3 and average at the end of Key Stage 4. Achievement is satisfactory at both key stages. Attainment in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2002 were above average and are in line with those of similar schools. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were also high and so progress during Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, over the last few years, all pupils have taken double award science at GCSE and almost all gain an award. The percentage of A\*-C grades in 2002 was in line with the national average and pupils made satisfactory progress. In the current Years 10 and 11 a small number of pupils have opted to do a triple award course. The majority of these are expected to do well at GCSE and intend to continue their science education.

127. In lessons in Year 9, higher attaining pupils have good recall of previous work and good understanding of scientific ideas and processes. In a lesson about photosynthesis pupils were able to explain what the process does and how plants store food. In a lesson about burning, pupils showed good understanding of chemical reactions and the use of the term equations. Lower attaining pupils find abstract ideas, such as chemical reactions, more difficult to explain but make good progress in making observations and using correct terminology. All pupils are able to use scientific equipment with care and make accurate readings from instruments. They understand the principle of fair testing and higher attaining pupils are able to identify variables. Understanding and independence in experimental and investigative science generally needs further development. Work in pupils' books shows that the majority takes care with presentation and some is of a high standard. Higher attaining pupils have good understanding of pressure and speed and are able to do associated calculations. Good use is made of diagrams and block graphs, line graphs are only occasionally used. Work from lower attaining pupils is generally less detailed and with less quantitative work. In a few cases, work is incomplete and untidy.

128. Highest attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 have very good understanding of the abstract aspects of science such as atomic structure and chemical formulae. In a lesson about light, pupils had good understanding of reflection and refraction. Middle-attaining pupils generally have satisfactory knowledge but find it difficult to explain and apply their understanding. In a lesson about radiation, pupils knew of the three types of radiation but were struggling to explain the differences between them. Lower attaining pupils are working below national expectations and often have difficulty recalling previous work and interpreting their observations. For example, a class learning about electrolysis of copper sulphate could see the effect of the process but found it hard to work out where the copper came from.
129. In the few practical lessons seen, all pupils were able to handle equipment with care making appropriate observations and taking accurate readings from instruments. High-attaining pupils have very good skills for accurate quantitative work and are confident in working on their own. Pupils' books show a wide range of quality and quantity of work. High-attaining pupils produce a large quantity of good quality work including their own notes and records, calculations, answers to past examination questions and coursework. Middle and lower attaining pupils produce much less of their own work and rely quite heavily on teacher handouts for information and completion. For these pupils, the only extended writing they do is for their coursework.
130. Almost all pupils are well behaved and work hard. They listen to the teacher, follow instructions and co-operate with each other. Many, particularly the higher attaining, are interested in the subject, are keen to learn and plan to continue with their science education beyond GCSE. A minority of middle attaining pupils are poorly motivated, make little effort and require very firm teacher direction to complete the work.
131. Almost all teaching is satisfactory and around half is good or better. There is more good teaching at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. Teachers almost always have good subject knowledge and are well prepared for their lessons. Learning objectives are identified but are often general and are not referred to by the teacher. In all lessons instructions are clear and pupils know what they should be doing. However, pupils are given no overview of a topic and are therefore unable to see how lessons relate to each other or the topic as a whole. At the start of a topic, pupils' prior learning is usually not sufficiently explored. Where teaching is very good there is good range of activities that require 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 theory as well as develop practical skills. Often pre-prepared information and results tables save time and enable pupils to concentrate on the main purpose of the lesson. Explanations are clear and sometimes analogies are used very effectively. In one Year 11 lesson, very good use was made of an analogy and models to illustrate the uses of radioactivity. In good lessons, relationships are very positive, teachers are friendly but firm and pupils are praised and encouraged.

132. Where teaching is satisfactory, learning is satisfactory overall but some pupils do not learn as much as they should and this applies to half of lessons. This is sometimes because there is too much teacher talk and little time for pupils to think for themselves or for the teacher to know how their learning is progressing. Lessons with high-attaining groups are sometimes not challenging enough to stretch all pupils. Occasionally, poor motivation of some pupils hinders their learning and is not dealt with by the teacher. In a Year 11 lesson, a small number of pupils was allowed to dominate most of the lesson so other pupils took little part. In a Year 9 lesson about chemical reactions pace was slow and organisation of equipment made practical work difficult.
133. Teachers have good information about their pupils' progress. Written work is regularly marked using the school's grading system and providing comments of encouragement and advice. Test and examination results provide teachers and pupils with feedback about their standards and progress. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are involved in setting their target grade for GCSE and are usually aware of the grade descriptors for GCSE coursework. Year 9 pupils are less well informed. Assessment information is used to place pupils in appropriate sets and sometimes to move them. Good use is also made of the information to identify signs of under-achievement and to provide additional support for those pupils.
134. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear rationale for recent decisions and appropriate priorities are identified for development. 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. A good programme of after-school activities is provided. Collaborative working is well established with partner middle schools and makes a significant contribution to social and curriculum continuity in Key Stage 3. Arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are limited and insufficient for the dissemination of good practice and the improvement of teaching. A lack of textbooks, except for the triple award groups, limits the amount of learning beyond the lessons that these and other pupils can do. There are too few computers available in laboratories.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and often very good.
- The climate for learning in the department is very positive.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and make good progress.
- Leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching of observational drawing.
- Opportunities for three-dimensional work for all pupils.
- Use of National Curriculum levels for assessment.

136. Art and design is a popular subject in the school and almost half of the year group take the GCSE art and design examination, which is well above the national average. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectations. All those entered for GCSE examination in 2002 attained grades A\*-G. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-A has improved in recent years and in 2002 the number of pupils attaining grades A\*-C was slightly above the national average.

137. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above national expectations. Attainment on entry is good and pupils continue to make good progress throughout Year 9. Painting skills are good and most pupils are confident in mixing, blending and applying colour with control and sensitivity and can explain how they use blue and brown to mix a dark tone, as the Impressionists did. Knowledge and understanding about art and design are good and there are some very good examples of well presented studies of artists, where higher attaining pupils have combined scanned images and secondary source material in their work and explained what they think about the work.

138. Pupils learn about graphic design and layout, and image and identity in their magazine project, and how ideas are communicated when they research 'angels, devils and icons'. The quality of personal response is generally good, and this is encouraged by the way the subject is taught. Pupils organise their work well, noting their aims and completed work on their folders, and annotating sketchbooks with brief evaluations.

139. There is limited evidence of skills in drawing from direct observation and this area should be further developed. The entitlement of all pupils in Key Stage 3 to experience three-dimensional work is not met through a specific project, although some pupils do choose to realise their ideas in relief and mixed media sculpture.

140. In Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are above average. There are examples of good work from pupils across the ability range and the higher attaining pupils attain very high standards. Pupils have a good understanding of the process of research and development of ideas towards a personal response. Across the ability range, they are able to select and use secondary and primary source material in their work, using a variety of methods such as drawing, photography, colour studies, mood boards, mind mapping and collage. Their sketchbooks are appropriately annotated with evaluative comments. Experimental work with a range of media and techniques is good: the majority of pupils show a mature and independent approach as they prepare for the GCSE controlled test. Knowledge and understanding about art and artists are sound.

Most pupils are familiar with movements such as Surrealism and Pop Art and are able to express and justify their opinions about other artists' work.

141. Many pupils use ICT well and can import and manipulate images using Photoshop to make their own original surreal compositions. There are examples of very high quality work, for example in the 'perfume' project, where pupils have taken photographs or scanned images of fabric which are combined with text and informed by their study of an artist or culture, to convey a product identity.
142. Achievement is good because pupils are well taught and enjoy their work. Progress across Key Stage 4 is good and pupils respond well to the carefully planned curriculum that includes stimulating projects, well matched to their interests and the course requirements.
143. Teaching is always good and often very good across both key stages. Lessons are very well planned, with clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils. A range of teaching approaches is used in well-structured lessons, including Powerpoint presentation, video, mind-mapping, demonstration, direct instruction, effective questioning and high quality one-to-one tutorial. Music is used well to extend understanding of the context of the artists who are studied. The use of 'response partners' encourages pupils to discuss and evaluate their own and others' work. There is a very positive climate for learning, and staff have very good relationships with pupils. All these good features contribute to the good progress and above average standards of work.
144. Although day-to-day formative assessment is good and pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work, the use of National Curriculum levels is not yet fully embedded into practice. Procedures to ensure that pupils understand the grade descriptions and know how to progress to a higher level should be developed.
145. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The staff work well as a team and are committed and enthusiastic. The resources available are just adequate for the present curriculum, but will need review in order to extend opportunities for three-dimensional work. At present access to digital technology for art and design is limited, although many pupils use ICT for their homework.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

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

### **Strengths**

- Very good teaching with some that is excellent.
- Very good subject leadership and management.
- Innovative curriculum developments.
- Well-developed community links.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Review where other subjects can contribute to citizenship education.
- Monitor and evaluate coverage, teaching and pupils' work.
- Further develop assessment.

147. Although citizenship was not required to be implemented until September 2002, the school has taught it since 2000. It was introduced in Year 9, a year later in Year 10 and last September in Year 11. Very good progress has been made following thorough, detailed preparation for this new subject. As well as discrete lessons in citizenship, the subject is closely integrated within PSHE. Well-planned programmes have been produced for each year group and some work has been done to identify where citizenship could feature in other subjects.
148. There are no external examinations in citizenship, but from lessons observed and scrutiny of pupils' work, overall standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils' achievement in lessons is good as a result of very good, effective teaching. All pupils learn about the importance of making informed choices. A good example of this was seen in a Year 11 lesson on fair trade, where pupils learned how they can have an impact on global issues. Some examples of pupils' written work show excellent, well-developed argument, for example on the war in Iraq and fox hunting. There is a well-established pupils' school council that meets monthly. Representatives are elected through a democratic ballot. In addition there are pupils' year group councils with representation from each class. Through these meetings pupils learn public speaking and to debate; covering issues which directly affect them such as school catering and out-of-school passes. Pupils speak positively about how successful the councils are and how they appreciate the opportunities to have a voice in the running of the school. The work of these councils contributes well to pupils' understanding of citizenship.
149. Pupils enjoy studying citizenship. Their attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are very good and sometimes excellent. They listen intently, sustain interest and are encouraged to contribute freely to discussions in groups or as a whole-class. Pupils appreciate the teaching styles deployed and demonstrate secure confidence and developing self-esteem, which enables them to share and develop their ideas and opinions on social, cultural and moral issues.
150. Teaching is very good in most discrete citizenship lessons and sometimes is excellent. Lessons are very thoroughly planned and teachers are always well prepared. Teachers work hard at developing very positive relationships with pupils, encouraging trust and enjoyment. There is good variety in activities and pupils' ideas and pre-conceptions often challenged. Stimulating resources are used with the emphasis on participative learning. There is a very close relationship with RE as the specialist citizenship teachers are all members of that department. Many of the themes covered in citizenship also feature in RE lessons and vice versa, therefore extending the range of pupils' experiences.
151. There have been some excellent curriculum developments since citizenship was introduced. The school has achieved Healthy School status reflecting the quality and range of work covered. Sex education and drugs awareness are strong features in the PSHE programme and linked to citizenship education. Drugs awareness training has been especially innovative, using young people as peer educators and peer mentors. This work has been recognised nationally and is used as a case study by the Department for Health. Community links have been extremely well developed with guest speakers a regular feature in school; examples include representatives from the police, politics, health service and religion. Assessment is an aspect to be developed, but the head of department already has some good ideas of strategies to use.

152. Leadership and management of citizenship are very good. The head of department is passionate about the subject and has worked extremely hard to ensure its importance is recognised throughout the school. Progress in introducing this new subject has been very good. A long-term plan is now required to plan further development. A full review of all subjects is required to clarify where citizenship aspects will be covered. These can then be planned and included in each subjects' programme. The head of department has established some very good links with middle schools, resulting in the agreement of a shared programme for Key Stage 3, avoiding duplication of work. Detailed subject documentation has been produced with programmes of work for each year group. There is very good quality guidance for teachers to help them in preparing their lessons. Teachers attend regular department meetings, but monitoring and evaluation procedures have not yet been established. Apart from one room, accommodation on the Bailiffgate site presents a problem for citizenship teachers, as the size of classrooms constrains the styles of teaching they can deploy. The successful introduction of citizenship is clearly due to the enthusiasm and drive of the head of department. He has the vision and commitment to further develop the very good work.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Standards in food and textiles at Key Stage 4.
- Teaching in the main school.
- Well-established use of ICT.
- Leadership and management of food and textiles.

### Areas for improvement

- Sharing of good practice across the whole department.
- Standards in product design at Key Stage 4.
- Differentiation of pupil guidance booklets.
- Ensuring curriculum entitlement in Year 9.
- The availability of technician support.

154. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national averages overall. Girls attain higher standards than boys. Teachers in the department are aware of these differences in attainment and are implementing strategies to improve boys' results. Pupils' achievements in DT are good. In the desk tidy project, for example, the product is made carefully and to a good quality, although the outcome does not usually match the pupils' design expectations. Their skills in ICT are developed quickly, an improvement from the previous report, to support and improve the quality of both designing and making. Pupils use computer-aided design and machinery (CAD/CAM) successfully on wood and fabrics, although computer control is underdeveloped. Although the department uses an effective set of project guidance booklets common to all material areas to provide pupils with a clear picture of their design work, some low attaining and SEN pupils have difficulty following the process.



155. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above national averages in food and textiles are above average in graphics products and in the subject overall. Standards in product design (resistant materials) are well below national averages. In part, this is because design portfolios do not record genuine development of design ideas, contain too much basic cut-and-paste presentational work, and demonstrate limited use of ICT, mainly word-processing. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress overall in designing and making. They can analyse products, develop their own design specifications, and evaluate their final outcomes against the specification criteria.
156. In textiles technology, pupils' in-depth research into Japanese culture was followed by clear design developments, and in food technology a planning technique was used to ensure that the client, as consumer, was central to the development of products. In graphics products pupils were applying their creative skills and abilities carefully to design and make the packaging of a 'Kinder Egg'.
157. The quality of teaching and learning is similar to the previous report. It is predominantly good with a few very good lessons. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Better teaching occurs where rigorous lesson planning is supported by well-prepared resources that provide the teacher with control and direction, but also encourage and enable individual pupil engagement and response. In a very good textiles lesson on hats in Year 9 with lower attaining pupils, the teacher planned and managed the lesson very skilfully. She kept pupils interested, by concentrating initially on hats familiar to them, and on-task, to complete the arranged activities within the time allowed. The level of achievement of pupils by the end of the lesson was very good. In a very good Year 11 graphics products lesson, pupils were supplied with criteria and organised into groups to discuss and evaluate individual progress with products, and to exchange suggestions and possible modifications for improvements. Pupils were demonstrating considerable insight into design issues and developing good progress with their evaluative skills.
158. In food technology, demonstrations on how to proceed with analysing cold dessert products worked well due to the use of appropriate resources and the skilful questioning and involvement of pupils by their teachers. Good relationships between teachers and pupils throughout the department were also evident and conducive to setting a climate whereby pupils enjoy, and are safe, conducting practical activities. The assessment of pupils' work is sound across the department, although sharing with them more direct reference to the National Curriculum attainment target levels at Key stage 3 would better inform them of the basis for setting and attaining targets and improving results.
159. Due to the absence of the head of DT during the inspection, the head of food and textiles department represents leadership and management in the report. The teachers in this department operate highly effectively within a supportive and co-operative team. Leadership and management are very good. Schemes of work are detailed, and are reviewed and updated regularly by all staff. Aspects of ethical and moral teaching are included where appropriate as are 'smart' materials in food technology. This dynamic department is keen to improve and develop. The vision and direction for the department are equally well documented and include a detailed development plan setting out future targets and staff responsibilities. The head of food and textiles monitors progress by examining pupils' work, marking and teaching.

160. Although teaching throughout the department is predominantly good, arrangements are urgently needed for sharing developments in teaching in food and textiles across the whole DT department. In Year 9, because of the rotation arrangements of projects, some pupils do not have the opportunity to work in all the resistant material areas, which include electronics and graphics, and are therefore not receiving their full National Curriculum entitlement. The school plans to remedy this situation in next year's timetable. The accommodation for food and textiles is good and has been refurbished since the previous inspection, although, being a popular department, there is no spare capacity and insufficient technician support.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching and teachers' very good knowledge of the subject and examinations.
- Teachers' good relationships with pupils.
- Good attitudes of pupils.
- Good leadership and management of the department.
- Good use of assessment to guide learning.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The match of work to the prior attainment of all groups of pupils in lessons.
- Boys' attainment in Year 9.
- The use of ICT.
- Textbooks for Year 9.

162. Attainment in Year 9, based on teachers' assessments, show standards to be close to the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2002. Results in recent years show attainment consistently at the national average. Girls consistently perform much better than boys and this was particularly marked in 2002 when the difference was over 20% points.

163. In Year 9, pupils enter the school with varied experience of geography. They make good progress and their achievement is good so that by the end of Key Stage 3 standards are consistent with expectation. Standards in GCSE examinations in recent years have been close to or above the national average. In 2002 attainment was below national average, with boys' performance slightly better than girls'. Compared to their results in other subjects, girls did less well in geography. The department has taken effective action to address the weak examination performance in 2002. The system for choosing subject options has been changed so that fewer pupils do geography, but of those who do select it, the subject is one of their first choices. Therefore the department recruits more committed pupils. In addition, mixed-ability teaching has been successfully introduced. From practice examination test results, the department is confident this year's results will show improvement. This is supported by standards observed in lessons.

164. In both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. SEN pupils make good progress, but the highest attaining pupils are not being sufficiently challenged. In Year 9, work focuses strongly on developing basic skills. Map work skills are improved and enquiry skills well developed through good quality, detailed local studies. Pupils learn to construct and interpret graphs of various types, for example, population pyramids when studying India. Inspection evidence from lessons shows current Year 11 pupils attaining in line with the national average and their achievement is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4, encouraged by teachers, pupils attempt to use the correct geographical terminology in written and verbal responses with a good degree of accuracy. They develop a good understanding of work they are doing and good note-taking skills. This was demonstrated in a Year 10 lesson when watching a video on the River Tees. In Years 10 and 11, pupils produce good annotated diagrams, for example, in work on their river studies. Some good quality coursework is produced which contributes well to the final GCSE grades.
165. Pupils have positive attitudes to their lessons, with only a few not being fully motivated and engaged in the learning activities. They show good commitment and interest at all levels. They work well independently and in collaborative groups. Good behaviour, positive attitudes and motivation are a direct consequence of good teaching. Teachers manage their classes well and gain the respect of their pupils through quality relationships.
166. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Teachers are always well prepared and provide good variety in their lessons. They use their very good subject and examination knowledge to good effect, helping pupils to improve the quality of their work and to understand the requirements of answering examination questions. Lessons are characterised by teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and good relationships with their pupils, which creates a good, pleasant learning atmosphere. Teachers produce detailed lesson plans, but sometimes when they decide what pupils will learn, it is too broad and lacking specific focus, resulting in them trying to cover too much in the lesson. In mixed-ability classes, there is sometimes insufficient match of tasks to the prior attainment of all pupils, so higher attainers are not challenged sufficiently and lower attainers struggle.
167. Pupils are well known by their teachers and a good assessment system has been introduced to track their progress. The use of National Curriculum levels for Year 9 and GCSE grades in Key Stage 4 are used in assessing some work and for setting individual targets for pupils. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.
168. Leadership and management of the department are good. Departmental documentation gives good guidance to all staff and programmes of work are planned and regularly reviewed. Topics have been identified where ICT can be used to supplement teaching, but have not yet been included in the programmes. Literacy and numeracy are developing well throughout the department with good use of key words lists and graph work, as examples. The use of ICT needs further development. Appropriate development priorities are identified for one year, but there is no longer term plan. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching beyond performance management requirements is an area for development. Overall, learning resources are adequate. Funding for the department is not generous and there are some shortages; textbooks are required for Year 9 and there is no practical equipment for fieldwork. Although there are ICT facilities in close proximity to the department, within geography they are limited. Good accommodation is enhanced with quality displays to interest pupils.

## HISTORY

169. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The subject knowledge of the specialist subject teachers is very good and this enriches lessons and makes them more interesting.
- Where they are used consistently, well planned speaking and writing tasks develop pupils' literacy skills as well as their historical understanding.
- Use of field trips in Years 9 and 10 give pupils good opportunities to develop insights into local and European history.
- The good relations built up between teachers and pupils provide a good basis for work in the sixth form.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in GCSE are well below the national average. Pupils are underachieving.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching has not achieved consistency or raised standards fast enough.
- Good teaching approaches used in the most successful lessons are not widely shared.
- Many areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have not been successfully addressed.
- National Curriculum requirements regarding use of computers in teaching and learning are not met.
- Assessment for learning.

170. Pupils come from a number of middle schools and their experience of history is varied. There is no systematic use of national curriculum levels by the department but overall standards of work seen in Year 9 are below the national average. Many pupils make unsatisfactory progress because the school has insufficient understanding about their attainment on entry and so work done in the first term is often undemanding. The combination of non-specialist accommodation and teaching experienced by a third of these pupils contributes to their below average rate of improvement. In contrast, progress by pupils with SEN is satisfactory and is good in those lessons where teachers set appropriate challenges and monitor their work in class.

171. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average. This, however, represents an improvement compared to the GCSE results in 2002, which were well below average, particularly at the highest grades. The difference between the performance of boys and girls was slightly less than that which is found nationally, both performing equally far below expectations. A big decline in GCSE results in 2001 and 2002 coincided with changes in the examination syllabus to which the department responded ineffectively. The position is now improving, though progress is slow and hesitant in some lessons. Current standards of work in Year 11 support forecasts of better results in 2003, although these are still likely to be below the national levels.

172. Pupils generally have a very positive attitude to history, although regular late arrivals to the Bailiffgate classrooms delay the start of many lessons. Most experience an interesting variety of teaching approaches that help the messages of history to make more sense to them. Recent local field trips for Year 9 pupils emphasise that Alnwick has an important history that includes the industrial revolution and the conflicts of the twentieth century. Year 10 pupils value the opportunity to visit the battlefields and cemeteries on the Somme. Pupils generally work well in groups but if this work is not closely monitored, there is a sizeable minority in all years that avoids making a real effort. Those who enter the GCSE course with lower standards in literacy are particularly likely to spend their time in non-writing activities, although they do contribute to class discussions. Homework is usually completed on time but there is a big variation in the quality and quantity of work done. Some pupils in upper sets in Year 9 produce detailed independent work but this is not sufficiently widespread. Home computers are little used and there is no class use for writing tasks. Because of this, there is insufficient support for pupils whose work needs redrafting or a more effective combination of words and illustrations. Course units have a strong appeal but those offered at the beginning of Year 10, for example, 'Jack the Ripper', can attract pupils who later find studies of the Cold War or the rise of Nazi Germany less to their taste.
173. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall but ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. In the best lessons, there is a clear structure. Pupils know what they are going to learn and why. Teaching moves them briskly through a series of carefully planned activities that culminate in good learning. In one lesson, pupils worked with coloured extracts from a real 1939-44 diary. Each had an individual responsibility to research and report findings to the group. All were able to use pages from the diary to come to a clearer understanding of conditions and attitudes in Britain in the war years. They analysed the language used to gauge the mood of the writer. The quality and pace of learning was particularly good because excellent teaching materials matched the differing needs of pupils who were each given an independent and challenging task. They all worked intensively, with regular time checks, and reached the end of the lesson with a real sense of achievement. Teachers try a variety of approaches but ineffective classroom management reduces the impact of some lessons. This results in many less motivated pupils spending too much time on undemanding cutting out or colouring tasks. They make unsatisfactory progress in writing and reading in such lessons and this contributes to the poor GCSE results in Year 11. Higher attaining pupils are well supported and the positive relationships they make with their teachers is a very good starting point for those who go on to study history for A Level. There is a good range of video programmes and films and these are used selectively but to great effect, as with 'Escape from Sobibor', which triggered a range of sensitive responses from Year 9 pupils.
174. The department does not share details of the skills described in the National Curriculum with pupils. Marking in Year 9 provides no individual progress targets and pupils have little idea how well they are doing. There is little use of written comment on work seen from Years 10 and 11. Overall, the quality of marking is unsatisfactory because it mostly fails to tell pupils how they can do better.

175. Leadership and management of the department is unsatisfactory. There has been limited improvement since the last inspection, although book and video resources are now satisfactory. The virtual absence of the use of computers is limiting the range of learning. New teaching styles are developing but, whilst these are generally effective, the spread of new approaches is not sufficiently fast or widespread. There is an overall lack of effective monitoring of teaching and marking, which is particularly damaging in Year 9. Analysis of the poor GCSE results in 2001 and 2002 is only just beginning to bring about improvements.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Well-prepared lessons that are supported by a wide range of resources.
- Good attitudes to ICT by most pupils and good pupil relationships and pupil, teacher relationships.
- Good access to high quality ICT resources in most areas of the main school.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Cross-curricular ICT in Years 10 and 11 needs mapping against the ICT programme of study and careful co-ordination and monitoring.
- Increase the breadth of learning activities provided in Year 9.
- The time allocation for GNVQ courses.

177. Attainment by the end of Year 9 in 2002, as measured by teacher assessment, was above the national average. The standards attained by pupils now in Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils attain well in some areas of the programme of study, but have restricted opportunities in others, leading to inconsistency in standards. The reason for this is the use of a vocational GCSE unit in Year 9, which is too narrow to provide the breadth of learning activities that the pupils should have to fully reflect National Curriculum requirements.

178. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment in the 2002 GCSE examinations was below the national average, but the current Year 11 is reaching higher standards, largely as a result of changes introduced to strengthen teaching.

179. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 are now following a vocational GCSE in ICT. The Year 11 pupils are following the discontinued part one GNVQ course. Both these courses are double awards, being the equivalent of two GCSEs, but the time allocation for them is low at 2.5 hours per week in Years 10 and 11, which restricts opportunity to develop and consolidate skills.

180. The achievement of pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. In Year 9, the higher attaining sets achieve a little better than the lower attaining ones. In one Year 9 lesson, a set of higher attaining pupils used simulation software to investigate the effects of changing environmental factors on rates of photosynthesis. Achievement in this lesson was good. The lower attaining sets, however, often receive exactly the same learning activities as the higher attaining ones. In one Year 9 lesson, a set of lower attaining pupils prepared a presentation in Powerpoint on the subject of 'Varndean' e-learning products. The target audience is head teachers and teachers. This activity did not motivate this group of pupils and achievement was not as good as with a higher attaining set where pupils were able to engage better with this learning activity. Pupils with SEN are generally well supported however, by learning assistants and a range of resources to help them with their independent work.
181. For pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow an examination course in ICT there is a cross-curricular approach to delivering the subject that was introduced in September 2002. Before then, the current Year 11 had been following a compulsory, discrete course. The current arrangements apply to well over half of the cohort across the two years. Although these pupils receive a wide range of ICT experiences, across many of the subjects, the delivery is not formally planned for or monitored. This results in a degree of uncertainty about the quality and breadth of experiences that are being provided and insecure progression in learning for both year groups.
182. Pupils enjoy their work in ICT and display good levels of engagement and application of effort in most cases. There are good relationships between pupils and with the teachers. Pupils show considerable respect for the resources with which they have been provided. The school uses a commercial ICT scheme for the applied GCSE course and pupils have been given these resources on a CD for use at home. The school also makes available a virtual learning environment that enables pupils to access stored work files anywhere on the school network and from home.
183. Teaching and learning in ICT is satisfactory overall. Only two unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The rest of the teaching is satisfactory or better with three out of ten lessons good. Lesson planning and preparation is good with a wide range of supporting resources provided including paper handouts and digital files. Many lessons featured a teacher-led powerpoint presentation to support the pupils through detailed explanations. Often supporting materials are placed in shared areas of the school network and pupils access these confidently. All lessons include learning objectives that are shared with the pupils. In some cases, these objectives are too broad and it is not clear exactly which ICT skills and techniques the lesson is intended to achieve.
184. Leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory but some areas require further development. The scheme of work for Year 9 lacks the necessary breadth to ensure that all aspects of the programme of study are covered. In Years 10 and 11 cross-curricular mapping of ICT activities against the ICT programme of study has not yet been formalised and those pupils who do not follow an examination course in ICT receive inconsistent experiences. Co-ordination and monitoring the ICT experiences of these pupils needs to be improved. Currently over half the pupils in Key Stage 4 receive no accreditation for their work in ICT although the department has plans to address this issue.

185. Liaison with the feeder middle schools has begun and improvements to the baseline assessment of ICT capability on entry have been made. The monitoring of teaching and learning in specialist ICT lessons in Year 9 needs further development, particularly for those non-specialist teachers of ICT who are delivering some of the specialist ICT lessons. The commercial scheme used in Years 9 and 10 includes a built-in assessment system. This gives a useful indicator of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The attainment data collected could be better used in some cases for structuring learning activities to match different needs.
186. Provision of ICT resources is good. The school has a computer to pupil ratio of 1:5.4. This is above national expectations and a renewal and replacement strategy is in place to ensure that national targets will be met and infrastructure maintained at a high level. Technical support for the school network is good with a network manager and technician in place. Funding from the National Grid for Learning project and the specialist technology college status has been used to achieve this level of resourcing. However, there are still issues of access to computers in a number of departments, particularly at the Bailiffgate annexe. In some subjects, the specialist software that is needed has not yet been provided.
187. The uptake of ICT training offered by the New Opportunities Fund has been limited with only a minority of teachers having successfully completed it. The school has therefore instituted its own training programme. The subject specialist teachers of ICT run frequent professional development events for colleagues, however, and this is beginning to impact on teaching across the curriculum, increasing the use of ICT in lessons.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Effective and sensible use of the target language.
- Good leadership of the subject area.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Make more use of reading in teaching to consolidate and vary learning.
- The teaching of grammar.
- The system of assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.
- Extend the use of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Develop strategies to enable more pupils to achieve high levels in German.
- Where appropriate, adapt the very good practice in sixth form lessons to the main school.



189. At the end of Year 9, attainment is below the national average and the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 is very low. However, many pupils enter the school with low attainment in French and so the department has to work hard to broaden the pupils' experience and deepen their understanding of the language. Until recently the department has found it difficult to meet this challenge, but there have been significant changes in the working of the department that, after a period of instability, is now improving rapidly and achievement is satisfactory overall. Nearly all pupils in Year 9 study two languages but most pupils do not continue with German in Year 10. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 do not study a language at all. Standards of attainment in GCSE in 2002 were just below the national average in French and significantly below in German, although the number of pupils gaining a GCSE pass in both languages was very high. Standards seen in this age group are a little higher and broadly in line with national averages. Achievement is satisfactory overall although there is some underachievement in middle and lower sets.
190. Many pupils in Year 9 are achieving higher standards than might be expected for their level of attainment at the beginning of the year, but there is still a negative attitude towards language learning which teachers are actively trying to change. Teachers are beginning to broaden their repertoire of methodology to engage learners more and to make learning accessible. However, in some cases, particularly in German lessons, there is an excessive emphasis on the teaching of grammar without reference to the context, instead of letting pupils infer rules for themselves, and many pupils find this daunting. Higher ability groups in Year 11 are not achieving as well as they might because their progress has been hampered by the experience of being taught by a succession of teachers. Nevertheless some pupils are showing promise of a good performance at GCSE and most are currently making broadly satisfactory progress in lessons. Progress of pupils in Year 10 is better, as they have experienced more stability.
191. The quality of pupils' work in Key Stage 4 is variable but is broadly in line with the national standard overall. Some pupils in the lower and middle sets do not always reach their potential, though in some classes they do well because their teachers are able to inspire them to achieve. The most able pupils handle present, past and future tenses well, mixing them accurately in longer pieces of writing. They are encouraged to construct complex sentences both in writing and speaking and this is helping them to develop independence. However, creative use of the language in French and German is still underdeveloped, since pupils have often not had enough opportunities to speak and write without support during Key Stage 3. This has prevented them from acquiring the confidence and independence they need in order to achieve well in Key Stage 4.

192. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is satisfactory overall. Lessons seen in Year 9 were satisfactory or good, and in Key Stage 4 most lessons were at least satisfactory with half of them judged to be good or very good. The most effective lessons are well orchestrated and no time is wasted. High expectations lead to very good outcomes. The teachers never make pupils feel inadequate when they make mistakes but correct them gently; they have high expectations that objectives will be met; they give pupils time to reflect before they answer and they check that they are comfortable with their progress in one activity before moving on to the next. 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. The overhead projector is used well by some teachers both to present language and for a variety of games. Access to ICT facilities is limited and consequently makes limited impact on the pupils' learning, and few pupils use ICT at home. There was very little evidence of celebration of pupils' written work in classrooms.
193. Currently there is no effective assessment policy that would enable the department to plan effectively for progression, but the department has rightly identified this as one of its priorities. In many lessons teachers introduce new language at too low a level and this makes pupils feel they are not making good enough progress. In general, pupils are not aware of what they can do in order to improve. Moreover planning does not currently incorporate strategies to enable pupils to re-use known language in different contexts and thus develop their ability to use the language as a tool. Schemes of work, already being improved, should incorporate rigorous planning for progression and practice of all four language skills, including reading, which is currently underdeveloped.
194. Since the last inspection the department has gone through a period of instability, which has had a negative impact on attitudes and achievement. Attitudes to language learning are not always positive and this has an effect on pupils' willingness to engage wholeheartedly in some lessons. However, the new teachers are giving a sense of direction and stability and their good teaching is beginning to have a positive impact. In particular the new subject leader has the vision and skills to take the department forward, particularly by developing a consistent approach to teaching and an extension of the teaching repertoire to include all learners. Teachers are learning from each other and team spirit is improving. Attitudes to learning languages are showing a perceptible change as pupils realise they are capable of achieving success.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Very good leadership and teaching by the head of department.
- Very good medium and short term planning.
- Very good relationships.
- A well organised, busy and high quality extra-curricular programme.

### Areas for improvement

- Long term curriculum planning at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Greater use of ICT and the availability of a wider range of sound sources for composition and performing.
- Sound-proofing of the practise rooms.

196. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Pupils' achievement is generally good given the variation in the skills and experience of music with which they enter from middle schools. By the end of Year 11, standards of attainment are above average and GCSE results in recent years have shown over 70% of the pupils gaining A\*-C grades. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is variable but at least satisfactory overall.
197. In Year 9, the pupils work well in groups although they have access to limited sound sources and have to rely almost solely on keyboards. However, many are adept at using this resource, for instance, with the use of layering and compositional devices such as sequence, ostinato and repetition. They generally make good progress. They listen intently and are able to talk in an informed manner. Their compositions are often imaginative. For instance, the dual themes 'haunted' and 'car chase' produced well structured work that made creative use of the range of sounds available from the keyboard menu.
198. The numbers of pupils opting to take music at GCSE are rising steadily and a large proportion of those in the present year groups display good instrumental and vocal performing skills. Higher attainment in composition will only be possible when ICT facilities are improved, both in terms of the amount of hardware and the quality of software. In a Year 11 group, pupils were challenged to think analytically about music and several were able to perform fluently on the keyboard. In a Year 10 group, whilst there were very imaginative group compositions being produced, for instance an arrangement with jazz improvisation of the 'Funeral March' by Chopin, it was noticeable that some members of the group, largely girls, found it difficult to work together to produce satisfying compositions. There is a need to address the performing skills of a significant minority of pupils in both year groups at Key Stage 4. It would also be beneficial to improve the balance of skills within small groupings during lesson time. There is clear evidence of high attainment in extra-curricular activities. The choir sings very musically in four parts and there is a wide range of opportunity ranging from jazz to folk music available. Standards of string playing require attention. The school 'orchestra' is actually an emerging Symphonic Wind Band with a small number of strings. The string players should be given their own identity as a string ensemble, with the eventual aim of becoming a string orchestra. This would allow the wind band to develop a more appropriate repertoire and for the strings, in time, possibly to become the basis of an orchestra with added woodwind and brass.

199. The head of department, who has been in post for two years, is a very good teacher. He taught some outstanding lessons during the inspection. His work is characterised by good preparation and planning. He demonstrates great musicality and keyboard skills of a high order, has high expectations and a pace of working that challenges and engages the pupils. His lessons are coloured by a keen sense of humour. In those lessons, pupils remained on task and were appreciative of the work of others. They made coherent observations, using appropriate musical terminology. At the time of the inspection, had a temporary teacher, covering for the maternity leave of the assistant music teacher. The temporary teacher, who was a suitably qualified teacher and musician, supported the work of the head of department in a professional and satisfactory manner. The department should look at ways of offering some of the head of department's teaching time, particularly to the GCSE Year 10 group. This would help the department make the transition between teachers easier when the temporary teaching arrangement comes to an end. The department is well organised and there is a clear sense of purpose, particularly in the development planning. However, there is now a need to review the development plan, particularly in light of the fact that the department is engendering great enthusiasm amongst the pupils. There are a number of issues to be considered that include the development of higher order performance skills in order to produce greater numbers of pupils with the ability to study at A Level, the development of the progression of skills within the Key Stages 3 and 4 curriculum and improving extra-curricular access to more pupils and post-16 students.
200. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, particularly now that the ICT equipment is ready to come on line. There is a well constructed scheme of work that relates well to the National Curriculum and accommodates a wide range of aspects. The basic keyboard skills course at the beginning of Year 9 is proving effective although the rhythmic unit, which at present is placed at the end of that year, would be better placed at the outset of the course. Listening skills are given a high priority and all pupils are catered for, no matter what their ability. Indeed, there is an example of an accelerated learning course, where a Year 11 pupil is studying at AS level. Pupils are encouraged to keep lesson planners and homework is given and marked regularly. Vocal work, however, is neglected at Key Stages 3 and 4. This is a matter that requires attention. At Key Stages 3 and 4 a wider range of sound sources, for instance, tuned and un-tuned percussion, the use of guitars and a more regular and proactive use of the voice in the classroom would improve learning opportunities enormously. The initial target, set by the head teacher, of at least 10% of the school population to be engaged in musical activities outside the classroom within five years, has already been met. The instrumental teachers pay tribute to the effectiveness of the organisation of the department and several give their time to run rehearsals for various ensembles. This is a clear indication of success. The recent initiatives of a visit to the West End production of 'Grease' and the projected Austrian concert tour of the choir are imaginative additions to the music department calendar.

201. The department has improved since the last inspection. At that time the majority of work focused on singing. Now, however, instrumental opportunity complements the continuing vocal and choral activity. There is also a wide range of performing opportunity within the school and the local community. An important feature of the department is the positive liaison being established with the feeder middle schools. This takes the form of joint concerts as well as curriculum and planning meetings and is proving beneficial because the department is able to make a good baseline assessment of the pupils' abilities when they arrive at the school. The accommodation is generally very good, with sizeable music rooms that allow ample space for teaching and rehearsal. However, the noise spillage from the practise rooms is impairing the learning opportunities of pupils and students during lessons. There is an increasing number of instrumental teachers who work throughout the day. Their work is vitally important but the poor sound-proofing means that both class teacher and instrumental teacher have to work in an environment of pervasive noise. It is essential that this is rectified as soon as possible because the teaching of both peripatetic instrumental/vocal teachers and the work of the class teachers is being affected detrimentally. This problem is particularly acute when aural work or listening skills are being addressed.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good or very good in the majority of lessons.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons and achievement is good, particularly in Key Stage 4.
- Standards in GCSE PE are consistently high.
- Pupils enjoy PE lessons; participation rates in lessons are very high.
- Standards in a wide range of extra-curricular activities are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve subject leadership by combining girls' PE and boys' PE into a single department.
- Review PE documentation and introduce an up-to-date scheme of work.
- Agree procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.
- Adopt the whole-school marking policy to provide pupils with feedback on how to improve their work in GCSE and A Level PE.

203. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are average. Pupils arrive from different middle schools with varying experiences in PE and sport, however they make good progress in lessons and the majority meet the standards expected by the end of Year 9. Good achievement in lessons continues in Key Stage 4 and attainment is well above average overall.

204. In Key Stage 3, a broad, balanced curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to acquire a range of physical skills, knowledge and understanding of PE. Information transferred from the middle schools and some initial testing on arrival in Year 9 means pupils are taught in classes of similar ability, allowing pupils to consolidate their learning in a range of games, gymnastics, dance and athletic activities. In football and rugby Year 9 boys develop a range of sending and receiving skills and can apply them to different games and activities. However, their understanding of attacking and defending in small games is less well developed, movement and decision-making skills are limited and pupils show a lack of understanding when planning moves and strategies to help them score. In dance, Year 9 girls display a wide range of performance skills and compositional ideas to create good quality performance, and identify key points to help them improve their work.
205. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. Pupils choose to follow a range of different activities, games are very popular and standards of attainment in football, rugby, hockey and netball are particularly high. Many pupils display good leadership qualities and knowledge of coaching specific skills in football. In a few lessons, such as badminton and volleyball, standards were not as high simply because pupils had not experienced these games in the same depth as other more traditional ball games. Athletics is a particular strength of the school. GCSE PE is very popular and high standards are achieved. In 2002, 73% of pupils achieved A\*–C grades, the best subject results in the school and well above the national average. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
206. Teaching is usually good and often very good. The majority of lessons begin with a vigorous warm up to prepare pupils for physical activity and end with a summary to review what learning has taken place and how it links with future work. Lessons are usually well planned with learning objectives shared with pupils at the start of lessons and reviewed towards the end to help clarify learning. This is particularly effective when presented on a whiteboard and discussed with pupils prior to commencing activity. Teachers have high expectations; they insist on high standards of dress and behaviour and demand good quality responses from pupils during questioning. This, coupled with good subject knowledge and very strong teacher–pupil relationships, results in a highly effective learning environment in which pupils are encouraged to work hard and do their very best.
207. Results at GCSE PE are very good as a direct result of effective teaching that consistently encourages pupils to work with a partner, by themselves and in teams to plan moves, design practices and evaluate their work and that of others to improve performance. Practical demonstrations are used well to illustrate the standards expected, and pupils are given long periods of time to practice and refine skills, and to perform different roles including coach and referee. Whilst there is a heavy reliance on worksheets in GCSE PE theory lessons, teaching is good and sometimes very good, with some innovative approaches to lesson beginnings to set the tone for learning. Marking of coursework and homework tasks is insufficient and does not always inform pupils how to improve their work and achieve higher examination grades. More frequent monitoring of coursework files and adoption of the whole-school marking policy would improve marking procedures and raise further achievement.

208. Learning is usually good and often very good. Pupils enjoy PE, participation rates are very high and all pupils, even if they are excused physical activity for medical reasons, take an active part in learning. Positive attitudes and very good behaviour are common features of most lessons. Pupils get changed quickly to ensure lessons start promptly and they work hard with interest and enthusiasm. They respond positively to teachers' questions and are always willing to co-operate with others and assist teaching staff. Participation in extra-curricular activities is a real strength of the school. Standards are very high and school teams, at all age groups, and individual pupils achieve considerable sporting success. Good sporting links have been forged with local sports clubs, allowing pupils to participate in sport beyond school hours, and non-specialist teachers contribute to the development and recent success achieved in rugby, badminton and athletics.
209. In a small minority of lessons, learning is less effective because planning is under-prepared, learning objectives are too broad and what pupils are expected to learn is not made clear to them. This is particularly noticeable in boys' PE lessons where the lack of a suitable scheme of work affects the development of skills; this is a significant weakness. The high standards of PE kit, safety procedures such as removal of jewellery and chewing gum prior to activity, common in all girls' lessons, are not always seen in boys' lessons. These procedures should be standardised and applied in all PE lessons. A few lessons do not have activities planned for pupils of different levels of attainment, particularly the higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4.
210. Leadership and management are generally satisfactory, but are undermined by the lack of an overall head of department to lead the subject. Girls' and boys' PE are managed separately and whilst both teachers contribute to organisational and management duties, the appointment of an overall subject leader would enhance standards. The department lacks an up-to-date scheme of work for PE and agreed procedures for monitoring teaching and learning. Some improvement has been made with statutory assessment in Key Stage 3, particularly through liaison with the feeder middle schools. However, there is scope to further develop recording procedures in both key stages and use this information to inform future lesson planning. GCSE A Level PE and sports leadership courses have been developed without a recognised teaching base for theory lessons. The development of a dedicated classroom would help to maintain very good results achieved in examination courses and secure the profile and position of PE as a high achieving subject in the school. A dedicated teaching base would help to support the good progress in developing the use of ICT to improve lesson delivery, aid pupil learning and manage administration tasks. Knowledgeable and experienced specialist staff are complimented by a few non-specialist teachers who teach a small number of lessons and support the extra-curricular programme.
211. On the main school site, the gymnasium is a good teaching facility, providing a clean, safe teaching area for a range of curricular activities, although changing accommodation for girls is too small. The sports hall is a cold, austere environment for learning which requires a regular cleaning schedule and care and attention from PE staff to ensure the internal fabric of the building is maintained. The heating system affects the quality of teaching due to the level of noise it generates when activated. The storage area in the hall is in need of cleaning and a system of safe storage of loose equipment. Changing accommodation for boys is also too small and in need of refurbishment. Outdoors, the playing fields and tennis courts are in good condition and provide ideal areas for teaching games. Accommodation for PE on the Bailiffgate site is used only periodically. The gym is satisfactory but changing rooms are inadequate.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

212. Provision for religious education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching by a team of specialist teachers.
- Strong leadership and effective management.
- The use of visitors to enrich the curriculum.
- Challenging climate for learning with a clear focus on developing the pupils' skills of evaluation and reflection.
- Strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.
- The pupils' excellent attitudes, interest, powers of concentration and enjoyment of their learning.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- The range of resources to support independent learning.
- Specialist accommodation for larger teaching groups.
- Curriculum and accreditation for lower attaining pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 to match their needs.

213. Standards are above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils achieve well and learn at a good, often rapid rate. This is in response to very good teaching that is typically knowledgeable, engaging and challenging.

214. Pupils in Year 9 attain above the average expected in the local Northumberland Agreed Syllabus. They have a clear knowledge and understanding of important features that underpin the Buddhist and Christian traditions. The majority of pupils are able to apply their knowledge effectively, for example when comparing and contrasting differing responses to suffering in the two belief systems. Almost all pupils have a high level of understanding of religious principles and terms and can give fluent and accurate explanations in discussion and in their writing.

215. Pupils make a very good start to their learning and this momentum is maintained throughout Year 9. They make very good progress, therefore, in particular in their awareness of the important influence that beliefs have on values, thoughts and actions. A group of lower attaining pupils, for example, showed a good grasp of the notion of a code for living in the Buddhist Eight Fold Path. Following some very good reflective and evaluative work, they were able to engage in a lively discussion about their own principles for living as an individual in society. This was conducted at a level higher than might be expected given their prior attainment. Equally, a group of higher attaining pupils talked perceptively, for example, about the nature of religious conversion and the centrality of forgiveness in leading a Christian life.

216. Standards in the GCSE short course have risen steadily over the past three years with a marked improvement in results in 2002. Well over half the pupils gained within the higher grades placing their performance above the national average. This is all the more commendable, given the high number of pupils entered for the examination, reflecting a wide range of attainment. Many pupils exceeded their targets representing good achievement. Few pupils failed to achieve a grade. Even so, those who do, mainly those whose prior attainment is low, may benefit from an alternative curriculum that is more appropriately matched to their needs.



217. Teaching is never less than good and is frequently excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding, communicate effectively with pupils, prepare and plan well. They set out clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils and they move lessons along at a brisk but measured pace.
218. Teachers prepare the pupils well for examination work through the provision of structured and demanding tasks that increasingly develop skills of evaluation, argument and perspective. This accounts for the attainment of Year 11 pupils being generally above expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. For example, pupils have a very good understanding of important aspects of the Islamic tradition. This was clearly demonstrated in a letter they were asked to write to the head teacher suggesting arrangements that would need to be made to accommodate twenty-four Muslim pupils of mixed gender in their school. This work was of high quality, not just in their awareness of Islamic custom and ritual, but in their sensitivity to cultural difference and diversity. Throughout Year 10 and Year 11, pupils make very good gains in their recognition of the relationship between belief and behaviour. Year 11 pupils demonstrated this clearly in their written pieces on, for example, the sanctity of life and medical ethnics. In Year 10, pupils responded with equal clarity when discussing the changing roles and responsibilities in family life and the characteristics of Christian marriage.
219. Teaching and learning are enriched by the use of visitors to the classroom. In a lesson with Year 11, for example, a visitor talked about her experiences of being a Muslim woman in the City of Newcastle. This first-hand experience made a significant contribution to their learning about the role of women in Islam and to their understanding of aspects that uphold the 'ummah' (Islamic community) both globally and locally. The lively but sensitive question and answer session that followed was particularly informative. Similarly, pupils in Year 9 were intrigued by a young visitor from a church group whose personal account considerably enhanced the pupils' awareness of the power invested in prayer in leading a Christian life.
220. In many lessons, in particular those with lower attaining pupils, teachers make excellent use of activity-based approaches to learning. A small group of Year 10 pupils, for example, interacted effectively with each other and with their teacher in a succession of pairs work, group tasks and brainstorming activities. This added considerably to their motivation and eagerness to collaborate. They made very good gains in assimilating the impact of the breakdown in a relationship, for example, at a time of divorce.
221. Care is taken through use of praise and informative marking to build the pupils' confidence and to inspire further effort and improvement. Pupils know what is expected of them and how they may achieve their targets. Teachers help the students to take stock of their achievement in plenary sessions or through timely support. Homework tasks are frequently set. They are well constructed to probe further thinking and learning. Pupils are encouraged to think independently and their contributions in lessons are valued. Resources, however, are currently limited to fully develop the level of independent study envisioned in the departmental action plan. This shows little change from the time of the previous inspection. The use of ICT is well planned in the RE curriculum and the contribution that RE teaching makes to literacy is commendable. A lesson with Year 10 pupils on symbolism in Christian marriage, for example, was effectively enhanced through the use of the poem 'Bredon Hill'.

222. Teachers create a supportive climate for learning based on mutual trust and respect. The quality of relationships in lessons contributes significantly to the pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and eagerness to learn. They gain confidence from lively opportunities to discuss, form opinions and reflect on a range of social, religious and moral issues both in their own and other cultures. This underpins the pupils' very good personal as well as spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Frequent contact with the spiritual dimension in the topics explored is a strong feature and indicates the considerable improvement made in this aspect of provision since the time of the last inspection. The subject is now highly regarded by many pupils. In all teaching groups the majority of the pupils show a real enthusiasm for the subject exemplified in their enjoyment of their learning.
223. The department is efficiently led and managed by a recently appointed head of department. He is building effectively on the good work of his predecessor, setting out a clear vision for further improvement. All procedures with regard to monitoring and review of pupils' performance and departmental practice are firmly in place and outcomes are conscientiously acted upon. Specialist teaching areas are not always suitable for large teaching groups in particular where space limits the range of teaching approaches possible. Nevertheless, there has been significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection not least in the enhanced allocation of curriculum time and commensurate rise in standards.

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

224. In the inspection, 13 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.

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

***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	77	0	19	2.0	1.9
Chemistry	1	100	43	0	5	2.0	0.8
Biology	3	67	52	0	2	0.7	0.8
Religious Studies	3	100	85	33	26	3.0	2.4
General Studies	1	100	77	0	19	2.0	1.9

### ***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	37	89	87	59	43	6.70	5.80
Chemistry	27	100	90	44	43	6.74	5.90
Biology	17	100	88	53	34	6.94	5.25
Physics	25	100	88	52	40	7.04	5.67
Other Sciences	1	100	90	0	30	6.00	5.16
Full Design and Technology	8	100	91	25	30	6.00	5.38
Home Economics	10	90	83	30	28	4.60	4.73
Business	7	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	11.14	10.45
Sports/PE Studies	9	100	92	33	25	6.00	5.09
Health and Social Care	5	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	15.60	10.79
Art and Design	10	100	96	100	46	9.60	6.57
Music	4	75	93	50	35	5.00	5.74
Classical Studies	12	100	95	67	49	7.50	6.51
Geography	26	100	92	50	38	6.77	5.74
History	14	100	88	36	35	5.57	5.45
Religious Studies	10	100	92	40	38	6.20	5.84
English Literature	24	100	95	29	37	5.42	5.91
English Language	9	100	91	0	30	5.11	5.27
French	6	67	89	50	38	5.33	5.59
German	2	100	91	0	40	4.00	5.81
General Studies	30	100	85	43	30	6.73	4.91

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

226. In this curriculum area, the school provides courses for AS and A2 level in mathematics and further mathematics and three sciences. Of the latter, only biology and physics were inspected in detail. In chemistry, results were above average in 2001 and students achieved well.

### MATHEMATICS

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

#### Strengths

- Standards at A Level in mathematics and at both A Level and AS Level in further mathematics are above national averages.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have very good subject knowledge and support students with high quality notes.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning; relationships are very good.
- The breadth of curriculum offered in mathematics is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The amount of detailed marking is not consistent across all modules.

228. The inspection covered the two A Level courses offered by the school; mathematics and further mathematics plus the AS Level options in those subjects and the GCSE course for students who did not gain grade C in Year 11.

229. Standards achieved at A Level in mathematics in each of the last two years are above the national averages. In 2002, the pass rate at A Level was 93.3% with 46.7% of the students achieving grades A or B. Students achieve in line with their prior attainment that is often high. There is some good achievement by students who begin advanced courses having achieved lower average point scores at GCSE.

230. Standards in further mathematics in 2002 were very high with all candidates gaining A grades at either AS or A Level.

231. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' books and files is high. Mathematical arguments are well presented with full working supported by appropriate diagrams. As part of course work, students write detailed reports that define a problem, identify the assumptions to be made and explore different possibilities of solution which are then related back to the original assumptions made. In compiling these reports students demonstrate high levels of ICT skills. Higher attaining students confidently use complex trigonometric results and apply their knowledge of calculus in a variety of contexts. Students of average and above average ability use algebra confidently, for example when solving differential equations relating to growth and decay. Students whose previous experience was of intermediate level GCSE find algebraic manipulation more difficult but value the help given to them by teachers.

232. The small number of students re-sitting their GCSE course in the sixth form achieves good pass rates. In summer 2002, 60% achieved C grades.

233. Teaching and learning in the sixth form 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. Teachers' questioning invites an interactive style of lesson to which students usually respond. In lessons in which there is more discussion, learning progresses at a good pace with teachers mindful of the weaker students in the group, giving them support when necessary. Relationships are very good. Teachers' marking of students' work includes some detailed comments and exemplar solutions and corrections to help move learning on. This good quality marking is consistently applied across all modules although the amount varies and is generally limited. As a result of the very good quality teaching students are motivated and demonstrate positive attitudes towards their work. Students express enjoyment with the subject and some intend to continue to study mathematics beyond school. In a Year 12 further mathematics lesson students debated the issues surrounding the setting up of models for simulations, for example, passing or failing a driving test. Occasionally there is an imbalance in the proportion of teacher and student contributions in a lesson that in turn leads to some passivity amongst students.
234. 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, although the time allocation is only two-thirds of the equivalent time for other A Level subjects. Sixth form students have the opportunity to take part in the Senior Maths Challenge and one student in recent years has been successful in progressing to the British Maths Olympiad.
235. Mathematics in the sixth form is well led with clear schemes of work and supportive materials such as booklets of examination questions. There are effective arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress. Teachers' enthusiasm for mathematics has a positive impact on students' learning and interest.

## A LEVEL BIOLOGY

236. Provision for biology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Results are consistently well above the national average.
- Teaching is good and uses an appropriate balance of theoretical and practical activities.
- The team of teachers co-ordinate their work well.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and teachers are very supportive.
- Students get good feedback about how well they are doing and how to improve.
- There is a good programme of visits and visitors and good fieldwork for A2 students.

### Areas for improvement

- A more systematic approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and developments within the subject.
- Provide students with textbooks relevant to the course and a wider range of contemporary material for independent research.
- The number and quality of laboratories.

237. Biology always attracts a good number of students. Numbers have declined over the past few years but are expected to rise next year. The majority of students complete the two-year course and gain an A2, previously 'A' Level, pass. The percentage of high grades and the overall average score has been consistently well above the national average. Student attainment in biology is usually better than in the other subjects they take.
238. In lessons, most students have a good understanding of lesson content and good recall of recent work. The range of attainment is quite wide and in most lessons there are a few students whose understanding is below national expectation and typically find it difficult to express their thoughts in words. In a Year 13 lesson about the functioning of the eye, students had good recall of previous work about receptors and nerve transmission whilst in a Year 12 lesson about cereal crops many students had difficulty explaining the difference between species and varieties. Students are confident and careful in carrying out precise practical activities, such as the preparation of slides to see chromosomes in cell division.
239. All teaching is at least satisfactory and most is good or very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare their lessons well. Instructions are clear so students know what the lesson is about and what they are to do. Explanations are usually good so students learn directly from the teacher or from activities provided. Visual presentations using a commercial resource of computer-based slides are particularly effective in showing students photographs taken from around the world and down microscopes, as well summarising information. Teachers make good use of prepared handouts of diagrams and information as, for example, in a lesson about the functioning of the eye. Occasionally too much or too little teacher talk makes the teaching no better than satisfactory. Relationships are very good, usually with friendly yet rigorous interactions between teacher and students. Teacher expectations are high, students feel well supported by them and teachers often provide additional tutoring outside of normal lesson time. Good use is made of visits, such as to the Centre for Life to do some genetic fingerprinting, to augment work in school.
240. Students' files are generally well kept and of a good standard. They contain accurate notes from lessons and handouts from teachers. Practical activities are written up in report style usually with good diagrams and graphs where there are quantitative results. Other written work takes the form of answers to questions set by the teacher and past examination questions. These give students plenty of practice, are thoroughly marked with grades, comments and advice for improvement. Coursework reports are mostly of a good standard and are marked in the same way. Students are clear about the demands of the syllabus, they know the level they are working at and their target grade.
241. 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 on their own as well as in groups. They answer questions put by the teacher, though usually a minority offers answers. Students put effort into their independent study and nearly always complete it to the standard appropriate for their attainment level. Many students are very interested in the subject and intend to continue biologically-related study at university.

242. The good teaching and learning result from there being a well-led team of committed teachers. They co-ordinate their work well, sometimes working as small teams sharing the teaching of units. The scheme of work provides good guidance to resources, although the lack of relevant textbooks creates considerable additional work. Good leadership is provided for the organisation of a residential fieldwork week. Teachers share knowledge about students and their progress, as well as a lot of information and ideas about teaching. Team teaching contributes to evaluating and supporting the quality of teaching but is insufficiently systematic. Overall the leadership and management are good.

## PHYSICS

243. Overall the quality of provision in physics is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and use their expertise to plan and teach well-structured lessons.
- Students are successfully encouraged to develop personal responsibility for enhancing their learning.
- Thorough arrangements link meticulous assessment of students' attainments with advice and support given to foster their learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Some lesson activities where text-based tasks are used do not have sufficient direction to help students derive most benefit from them.

244. Standards in examinations and in work seen are above average. Good to very good teaching, coupled with meticulous assessment, results in effective learning that sustains students' high levels of attainment throughout the sixth form course. Some students who embark on the course with relatively low prior attainments are being helped to achieve well.
245. Standards in GCE A level in 2001 were well above national average with 40% gaining A or B grades. There is no information about national averages available for 2002. In 2000, students joined the course in Year 12 with above average GCSE attainments in science and a third gained grades A or B in 2002, reflecting a consistently high level of success. The school analyses results carefully and identifies reasons for differences in performance.
246. Standards of coursework and in lessons are above average. By Year 13, a clear majority of students has well developed personal research and investigative skills. They reach a clear understanding of complex principles by using skills of analysis, inference and evaluation. A small minority of students do not show sufficient perception in their work for high attainment at A level. For example, their written work shows a lack of methodical organisation leading to gaps in their basic knowledge. Their results of investigations are not adequately supported by appropriate mathematical skills and evaluations lack the incisiveness needed for above average attainment.



247. Teaching quality in both Years 12 and 13 is good overall. Teachers' expert knowledge and effective management of a range of well-structured activities successfully realise the purpose of the lesson. Clear exposition, exceptionally well presented demonstrations, considerate support and good use of questioning and homework reinforce learning. However, some text-based tasks do not provide sufficient directed activity to help students exploit the information available and get most benefit from them. Students have very positive attitudes towards their work that are fostered by excellent teacher-student relationships. They become fully involved in lessons, are diligent and industrious. In turn, they make clear progress, for example in a Year 12 lesson predicting interference patterns in wave motion, and in Year 13 work on fundamental particles and energy release during nuclear fission. Some aspects of teaching make a clear contribution to students' social development, as seen in a Year 13 lesson about applications of nuclear reactions.
248. Students' work is rigorously assessed using examination criteria meticulously. In turn, their teachers know their abilities well and give effective support, including strong encouragement to develop and use personal learning skills to enhance class work. Students themselves place a very high value on knowing their target grades. They regard their teachers' support very highly, both in the help given in lessons and when they seek it independently. "You know where you are, more than in other subjects" summarises the consensus view of students in both Years 12 and 13. Physics is a popular subject with a high proportion of students continuing to study from Year 12 into Year 13.
249. The subject is led and managed very effectively. The advanced level GCE course has been appropriately chosen after careful consideration and familiarity with assessment criteria. Teachers working with the same group collaborate well and jointly evaluate the attainment of their students, reflecting the strong team spirit in the department. Arrangements for monitoring teaching are firmly established and have contributed to high levels of learning and attainment maintained since the previous inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

250. In this curriculum area, the school provides AS/A2 courses in food technology, textiles, product design (AS only). It also has introduced GNVQ courses in engineering. Of these, only courses in product design and engineering were inspected in detail. Standards in the other courses are above average in recent examination results.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Well-established use of ICT.
- Support and advice from teachers.
- Students' attitudes.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Expectations for students on GNVQ.
- Outside contacts.
- Technician support.
- Quality of portfolios.

252. This report on AS/A Level product design includes both the resistant materials and the graphics options. It also includes the GNVQ intermediate and foundation engineering courses.
253. Standards overall for AS/A Level product design and GNVQ intermediate/foundation engineering courses are in line with national averages. They are higher, however, in AS/A Level product design because students' previous attainment on entry to this course is usually higher. Work seen for Year 12 GNVQ engineering indicated that several units had been completed successfully and the majority of students were keeping to deadlines. ICT was used effectively to complete working drawings, for example of a minor project, a CD rack, which was subsequently machined accurately using computer aided machinery (CAM). Students were also capable of using manual machines to turn and measure round metal accurately to the correct size for making a screw thread.
254. Year 13 A Level students' achievements are satisfactory. The class were working on their major examination projects and fabricating pieces of furniture predominantly from wood. In one case, there was limited success with bending wood for making a chair back because the investigation into the material and the process was not completed sufficiently thoroughly. In Year 12, AS students were completing a minor project, an adjustable lamp, with some success, although some were not sufficiently aware of the properties of the material they were using to achieve a good surface finish and subsequently an accurate screw thread.
255. Teaching is satisfactory overall for both the A Level and the GNVQ courses. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers give good individual support and advice to their students, ably assisted by the technician when available, to help them overcome problems encountered in making. Teacher expectations for the foundation students are not as high as for the intermediate students in the same GNVQ class. The start of lessons and subsequent pace of the engineering class was not as brisk as lessons for the A Level course. Further developments are also needed to exploit the use of outside support for engineering students generally. Students in the engineering class are adept at using ICT to assist them with their independent learning. In one lesson they were successfully investigating the working parts of a mobile phone using the Internet. The teacher provided the class with a question sheet to complete, although the different ability levels between foundation and intermediate students were not catered for.
256. Students on the A Level course are usually self-motivated, settle into their work quickly, and are keen to utilise time available well to make progress. Some take pride in their achievements and spend time outside normal lessons continuing with their practical project work. Design portfolios are generally kept up-to-date but sometimes lack the rigour expected in the development of design ideas for this level of work.
257. Although the head of department was absent during the inspection, the combined strength of the team of teachers maintained the smooth running of the department.

258. Availability of ICT resources has improved since the previous report, and are now well embedded as a tool for supporting and enhancing designing and making. With the exception of ICT use, there is little other visible evidence to suggest a school with specialist status in technology. The technician is an asset for the department, but is only available part-time, due to other commitments in the food and textiles department. The workshop accommodation is adequate, although floors need resurfacing with lines added where machines are sited, and a different surface colour for the heat treatment areas. Some benching in the workshops needs replacing. An effective 'global' dust extraction system has been installed in the workshop since the previous inspection.

## **BUSINESS**

259. The school offers several vocational courses in business.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teachers provide a good variety of activities in lessons that enhance learning.
- Students are able to make very good use of prior knowledge from both their own observations and previous lessons to support present learning.
- Students have very good attitudes towards learning and are very responsive to questioning and group activities. Many students choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good. This ensures consistent implementation of target setting that is designed to help students' progress.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Marking and the awarding of assessment levels are inconsistent, making it difficult for students to judge their standard of achievement.

261. Since the previous inspection the department no longer offers economics or double award advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE). It now offers courses in AVCE business and GNVQ business at both intermediate and foundation levels. It has recently introduced AS and A2 government and politics. AVCE business is a very popular course. Nearly all of those who begin the AS course, complete the year and take the examination. The number of students continuing with A Level business studies in Year 13 is very high. Intermediate business is also popular and has a high retention rate. Foundation business is offered for those who it is felt would benefit from post-16 education, but could not achieve at intermediate level. At present this is one student who is offered learning support for the majority of lessons.

262. With the change in courses offered by the department at post-16 it is impossible to make any direct comparison with past results. The single award AVCE business results for 2002 are above the national average for A-B, A-C and A-E, although the department did not get any A grades. In its last year of operation, none of the double award candidates finally sat the examination. Results at intermediate GNVQ are in line with those predicted from the GCSE results.

263. Standards of work seen during the inspection are at or above the national average in both the current Years 12 and 13. Students are able to make very good use of previous work to help them gain understanding of new concepts and ideas and to apply these in new situations. Understanding of how to analyse and evaluate ideas is well above the expected level, as is the ability to recognise errors and to learn from them.
264. Students on the intermediate course are able to make very good use of prior knowledge from both their own observations and previous lessons to support present learning. In one lesson they were able to use the knowledge gained from a visit by a local business person in a brainstorming session on performance management. Learning support was provided and used sensibly to support the work of a foundation level student so that he could make good progress.
265. Teaching and learning are both very good. 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 intermediate GNVQ business lesson on personal finance. Students worked in small groups to identify different aspects of income and expenditure, and then exchanged ideas during a feedback 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. Students working on their assignments in marketing had a very clear idea of how their research would enable them to formulate a promotion policy. The department has a satisfactory level of resources with very good access to, and use made of, ICT both in lessons and as a research tool. It is working to advance the use of ICT as a learning tool through the placement of its shared resources file on the school's web-site and the use of Powerpoint presentations through a ceiling mounted projector. All of this ensures that standards in lessons are at least good and mainly very good. This has been achieved, despite the fact that the accommodation on the Bailiffgate site available to the department is not entirely satisfactory. Indeed, in one room it causes time to be lost in lessons as students have to move in order to take part in different activities, while the shape of the other room and the lack of an adequate whiteboard detracts from the learning experience.
266. Leadership and management of the department are very good. This has ensured the successful transition from one range of course to the present selection. It also ensures consistent implementation of target setting that is designed to help students' progress. This is helped by the good teamwork that the leadership has fostered. One result is that the number of students continuing with the subject in Year 13 is high. Whilst work is assessed using grades and marks, with helpful comments provided, especially in the case of assignments, the inconsistencies in approaches to the awarding of marks or assessment levels to other work make it difficult for students to judge their standard of achievement and the progress they are making. The students would benefit from a more thorough approach in this area, throughout modules and units.
267. The department has made good progress since the time of the previous inspection. Standards are similar to those described in the previous report. Teaching is better than it was at that time. The department has made good progress at intermediate level, helped by the introduction of foundation level, which was identified as a weakness in the previous report.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

268. The school offers several different courses in ICT to post-16 students.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Well-prepared lessons with a wide range of supporting resources.
- Good subject specific knowledge of the teachers who are delivering the courses.
- Good application of effort from students and good relationships with each other and with teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Learning objectives are sometimes too broad and need a clear focus on the development of ICT skills and capability.

270. Students in the sixth form are either studying ICT courses at A Level, AVCE (advanced vocational certificate in education) or ICT key skills at Levels 1 and 2.

271. In 2002 small groups of students sat information technology A/S Level and A2 Level examinations. Almost all students attained a graded result. The national results for sixth form students in 2002 have not been published at the time of inspection and small numbers make value added analysis of these results unreliable. However, compared with results in other subjects and with these students' prior attainment, this level of attainment represents good achievement.

272. Students in the current A Level and AVCE courses are above the national averages and this represents good achievement for these students. They display good ICT skills when working with relational databases. They are able to design efficient systems linking tables effectively and creating control 'switchboards' to organise user access to the database and a range of forms to print out the results of various queries.

273. Standards in ICT key skills, which is also offered to sixth form students taking vocational courses, is at least in line with national standards representing satisfactory achievement.

274. All the teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory or better with around two-thirds good and relationships with students are good. Sixth form teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well prepared and a range of supporting resources are available to help students during their independent work in ICT. Planning is thorough with learning objectives that are shared with the students. As in the main school, students could measure success more easily if the learning objectives had a tighter focus relating to the acquisition of ICT capability. Assignments are well marked giving students effective feedback to refine and improve their work in ICT. Students apply considerable effort during their work in ICT.

275. Sixth form students have access to computers in various parts of the school, including the library and spare machines in other lessons. The sixth form private study area has not yet been adequately resourced as the school is anticipating a move from the Bailiffgate annexe in the near future.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

276. The school offers a course in sports studies to AS/A2 Level. This course was inspected in detail.

### PE/SPORTS STUDIES

277. Overall, the quality of provision in PE/sports studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching and learning is at least good and sometimes very good.
- Students make good progress in lessons.
- An enrichment programme offers a good range of sporting activity.
- Students display positive attitudes towards PE and sport.

#### Areas for improvement

- Improve monitoring of students' progress and marking of coursework.
- No recognised A Level PE teaching base.

278. Standards in the sixth form are above average. Students on the A Level course make good progress in lessons and many achieve high standards in extra-curricular sport. All have access to a wide range of sports activities, including sports leadership awards through an enrichment programme delivered in school and at clubs in the local community. Student attitudes towards the subject are very positive and the standard of behaviour is excellent. They are eager to learn, willing to contribute in lessons and make every effort to improve their performance in sport. The course is relatively new and is still establishing itself; the PE improvement plan has identified the need for further professional development of staff teaching the A Level course to help raise standards.

279. Attainment on the AS/A2 Level course, introduced since the last inspection, has been above average with students achieving high standards in recent years. In 2000 all students achieved a pass, with half at A–C grades. Equally good results were achieved in the following year with all students achieving a pass and a third achieving A and B grades. Average points score has been well above national averages. However, this year's results were much lower with only a single student achieving a pass grade. The department has carefully analysed the reasons for this. This year's AS course has regained its popularity with more students opting for it. Students make good progress in both practical and theoretical aspects of the course. Many students perform at a high level in their chosen sports and all are encouraged to participate in school teams and get involved in sport outside of school hours. In theory lessons, students apply themselves well to their studies. Good teacher/student relationships help to create a positive and interactive working environment where students are fully engaged in learning. They contribute to high quality debate and discussion, providing their own examples of particular sports and sports personalities to illustrate key issues in sport. They can relate their own sporting experiences and performances to information researched from various texts and present information to others using ICT resources.

280. Teaching is at least good and sometimes very good. Lessons are very well planned to incorporate a range of different teaching methods and make maximum use of the time available. Lessons begin with a mental warm-up, sometimes using brain gym activities to stimulate learning, at other times involving a quick research task to complete whilst waiting for others to arrive. All lessons have good plenary sessions in which learning is reviewed to ensure learning is secure. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, shown by detailed planning and confident, structured questioning to test understanding and facilitate learning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson investigating motivational theory the teacher encouraged students to summarise a range of information from different texts and prepare a concise statement to express what motivates them in sport. This was shared with each other using ICT resources and followed up with detailed questioning to confirm understanding of each student's response. Teachers set high expectations, demanding quality responses from students and delivering aspects of the course with enthusiasm and humour which helps to reinforce working relationships with students and develop positive attitudes towards learning in the subject.
281. Learning is at least good and often very good, students make good progress in lessons as a direct result of high quality teaching approaches that stimulate and generate interest in PE and sport. Students are trusted to use time effectively and work independently on set tasks, debate with others and research topics selecting information from texts and published articles. For example, Year 13 students investigated popular recreation by searching documents for similarities in two local sporting events held annually in the area and by visiting both venues to observe the events in action, thus gaining a valuable insight into the origins of modern day sporting events. Learning was particularly effective when student responses were related to examination questions and marks allocated for model answers. Learning was less effective in a small number of lessons because learning objectives were not clarified with students at the very start of lessons and revisited to remind them of the focus of learning. Marking of coursework is not done on a frequent basis. Coursework files are not checked frequently to ensure students produce a valuable revision resource and marking of coursework and homework does not always give students sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers are currently converting lesson notes using ICT to produce resources that enhance learning. A dedicated teaching base with adequate ICT resources would facilitate this development and help to raise standards in the subject.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

282. The school offers courses in health and social care to A Level and GNVQ. Both courses were inspected in detail.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

283. Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is generally good. Lessons make good use of a variety of interesting activities.
- Most students achieve well in relation to their GCSE attainment.
- Students are positive about their work.
- There are good levels of support for students.
- The subject is well managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Some students have limited opportunities to apply their learning in real care settings.
- Expectations and pace of work for some GNVQ students are not well matched to their prior learning.
- Resources are insufficient for the numbers of students currently on the courses.

284. The standards attained by students studying the advanced health and social care courses are broadly in line with national averages and their achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE Level. Standards at intermediate GNVQ Level are below the national average but overall students achieve well, taking account of their GCSE results.

285. In recent years the majority of students on the intermediate course have attained at least a pass grade, although few have attained the highest grades and a small percentage have left before completing the course. Students currently on the course have below average prior attainment for this course. Most of them are on track to attain pass or merit grades and portfolios of work indicate that some higher attaining students are working at the highest grade in some units of their course work. This represents good progress for the majority of students. Their portfolios of work for the units already completed are well organised and well presented. Those that have been completed as a result of visits to care settings, such as residential homes for the elderly and a variety of pre-school provision, show that students are able to apply theory to practice, for example they can evaluate how care values and codes of practice are implemented in different settings. In some units students have not had the same opportunity to apply their learning in real situations and some students would benefit from more regular opportunities for contact with examples of care settings. A minority of students on this course find it difficult to meet deadlines even though the pace of the course is relaxed.



286. Students on both the single and double options of the advanced course are making good progress. They have a broad knowledge and understanding of health and social care services. They are able to present their work in a variety of ways, often using ICT effectively. For example, in one very good lesson students presented a range of challenging topics they had chosen for their individual research assignments to the rest of the group using Powerpoint presentations. Their course work portfolios are of good quality and indicate that they are able to use ICT effectively to present their work. In lessons, higher attaining students demonstrate a thorough understanding of the subject matter and confidently question and challenge the information that is given to them. This was evident in a lesson to consider how hormones influence reproduction in which students asked challenging questions to clarify their understanding of the topic. In some units of work lower attaining students are finding it more difficult to relate their learning to real health and care settings and to reflect on how they would respond as carers. The school could help them to improve this aspect of their work by enhancing opportunities to experience a variety of care settings either by placements or visits.
287. Overall the teaching is good and helps students to make good progress. Relationships between staff and students are very good. The small team that delivers the course is hard working and has a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject matter appropriate to the units taught. Teachers use a good range of teaching styles that help to maintain students' interest. The best teaching encourages students to be independent and to be creative and innovative in the way in which they present their work. Students are given regular feedback in lessons about how they are doing, sometimes by teachers and sometimes using their peers, to evaluate their work. Written assessments are detailed and helpful in identifying how work can be improved. Occasionally students' existing knowledge and understanding is not taken into account and work is insufficiently challenging for them. For example, some students on the intermediate course have previously studied GCSE child development and work could have been better matched and taught at a more appropriate pace to take account of their previous experience.
288. Students are enthusiastic about the provision and they report that they are finding the courses relevant to their needs. Many of them are planning to use their qualifications for higher study or to enter the care professions. Most have good attitudes to their work and are growing in confidence as a result of the good opportunities given to them by their teachers to participate fully in lessons. Many students are able to organise their non-contact time efficiently and to take full advantage of the facilities for individual research.
289. The subject is well led and managed. The systems for monitoring, evaluating and verifying standards are well understood by the team and are consistently applied. Although the team leader is not presently teaching the subject, she has a good overview of standards across the department and provides good opportunities for the team to meet and discuss students' progress. The decision this year to limit the size of the team teaching the units is resulting in a more coherent experience for students and they report that they are finding the arrangements more supportive than last year. Resources are well managed and up-to-date, however there are insufficient textbooks for each student to have a copy. The monitoring of the teaching of the course needs to be enhanced to evaluate the effectiveness of the new teaching team. The small number of areas for development are recognised and there is every indication that the department will continue to meet the needs of the wide ability range of its students as it implements its priorities for improvement.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

290. The school offers a number of courses in this curriculum area, including art, music, media studies and performing arts. The latter course is provided at Coquet High School. Art was inspected in detail.

### ART

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and often very good.
- Staff are enthusiastic and committed and have excellent relationships with students.
- The carefully planned curriculum and good formative assessment help all students achieve well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to develop skills in drawing, particularly from direct observation.

292. The school offers courses at AS and A2 Level in art and design. In recent years, attainment in A Level art and design has improved, and is now above the national average. In 2002 attainment in A Level art and design was very good. Over three quarters of students achieved the highest grades (A-B) in the A2 examination. All students passed the AS examination and two-thirds of these achieved high grades. Students' achievement in relation to prior attainment was good as a result of the consistently good teaching in the department.

293. In Year 13, students' attainment is above average. They make good progress during the course and there are many examples of well-realised final pieces of work, developed in mixed media, textiles, painting and three-dimensional, on a variety of scales. There is some exciting sculpture in scrap metal and mixed media forms based on body casts. Contextual studies are of a high standard and include good primary research. For example, a student worked with a locally based, nationally known artist to research his methods and ideas, which developed into excellent in-depth written study. Another student has produced a website to present his research about contemporary graphic design in an appropriate and visually interesting form. Digital technology is used well, for example where an original life drawing was scanned and manipulated using Photoshop software to extend and develop a new image. A high proportion of this year's cohort intends to continue to study art and design in higher education.

294. In Year 12, the majority of students confidently use a range of media and processes, building on the solid grounding during Key Stage 4. However, the standard of direct observational work is weak in comparison with other practical skills because this area receives insufficient attention in all key stages. Students make good use of both primary and secondary source material and experimental work to develop a personal response, the importance of which is emphasised through interesting projects, such as 'Zigzag' where they are encouraged to respond to seminal moments in their own lives. Students have a mature attitude towards their work and can articulate views about their own and others' work with developing independence.

295. Teaching is always good and very good in a majority of lessons. The curriculum is well structured with a clear timescale and appropriate deadlines that ensure that all students make good progress. The teachers know their students well and give high quality one-to-one guidance on specific points that help them improve. The assessment objectives are central to teaching and shared with students, so they understand the course requirements very well. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students enjoy their work and are well motivated as a result of the commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers and the very good leadership and management of their sixth form students. Students extend their knowledge and understanding of art and design through visits to galleries, organised both by the school and independently.

## HUMANITIES

296. A number of courses are offered by the school in this area. These include classical civilization, geography, history, religious studies, government and politics, sociology (AS) and psychology (AS). Of these, geography and history were inspected in detail. Lessons in several others were sampled and teaching found to be good.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Very good subject leadership and management.
- Teachers' very good subject and examinations' knowledge.
- Very good attitudes of students.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop the use of ICT and include identified topics in programmes of work.

298. Geography is a popular subject with many students choosing to study it in the sixth form. A Level examination results in 2001, the last year for which national comparative data is available, were well above national average. Half of the students gained A–B grades and all gained a pass grade. In 2002 A–B grades were lower and one student failed to gain a pass grade. AS Level examination results were below average in 2001, but in 2003 half of the students gained A–B grades and again only one failed to gain a pass grade.

299. The observation of lessons and analysis of students' work show standards are average in Year 12 and above average in Year 13. Students make good progress in lessons and achievement is good. This reflects thorough specialist teaching and good working relationships between staff and students. Students have well organised folders of notes and essays that show good understanding of the topics covered and form a useful structure for revision. They gather information from a wide range of sources and use geographical terminology confidently. This was evident in a Year 13 lesson where two groups were debating the consequences of intensification of agricultural systems. Students used ICT confidently via Powerpoint presentations to introduce the debate.

300. Students are well motivated and their attitudes to learning are very good. During question and answer sessions they can be passive, but they appreciate the efforts their teachers make to support them. Students are encouraged to be actively involved in their learning and collaborative work is good. They respond positively to the opportunity to research and discuss topics, supporting each other well. Throughout lessons, students are well focussed, concentrate and work hard in recording useful notes. This was evident in a Year 12 lesson on human impact on woodland and the effects of acid rain. Students learn well because they enjoy geography and the way it is presented. The good, supportive relationships and diligent attitudes underpin the good achievement in lessons.
301. Teaching is good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Teachers use a variety of approaches and are always well prepared for lessons. They plan in good detail and share the aims of lessons with students so that they know what is expected of them. A main strength of teaching is the very good subject knowledge of teachers. They explain clearly geographical patterns and processes to build new learning on what students already know. Very good knowledge of the examinations' requirements is used in lessons to explain how students should answer examination questions, and also to guide them in producing good quality coursework. Teachers know their students well and good supportive relationships create a solid foundation for good learning. A good system for assessment has been introduced. This includes target setting for examinations and careful tracking of the progress of individuals. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.
302. Leadership and management by the head of geography are very good. She is a very good, well-organised manager and leads the team well. Structures and procedures are well established in the department. Good quality, regular subject planning meetings are used effectively and contribute significantly to the success of the department. Programmes of work are regularly reviewed and updated. There is a one-year development plan with appropriate targets, but costings and timescales lack detail. Fieldwork has been identified correctly as a target for development in the current plan. There is no long-term plan for developing the department. Accommodation is of good quality with geography rooms located in one area, enabling efficient use of resources. The teaching rooms are enhanced by good quality displays creating an interesting learning environment. Resources are adequate, but there are shortages in some areas, for example, practical equipment and reference books and periodicals in the library/resource centre. ICT is another area where additional facilities would contribute to enhance teaching styles and research facilities. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. With very good leadership and team commitment the department is well placed to improve further.

## HISTORY

303. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The extremely good specialist knowledge of the teachers enriches lessons and supports rigorous discussion.
- Students are highly appreciative of the dedication of their teachers and the high quality of tutorial support and guidance provided.
- Students in Year 12 make a smooth transition from GCSE to A Level studies and make good progress throughout the year.

### Areas for improvement

- The proportion of students attaining higher grades.
- Securing a better match between teaching styles and the learning preferences of students.
- Consistency and quality of the marking of assignments.

304. The last year for which there is national data is 2001 when attainment was similar to the national average. Overall, the points' score indicated the performance was satisfactory when compared with other schools. Results reported by the school in 2002 were lower with fewer students achieving A-B grades although all students attained an A-E pass grade. In the same year, over half of a much larger group of AS students secured the higher grades representing the best results for several years. Standards at GCSE were poor in 2001 and 2002 so that students entered A Level courses with below average attainment. In lessons, they make good, and sometimes very good, progress by the end of Year 12. They continue to progress in Year 13 at a satisfactory rate with the higher attainers motivated by their determination to earn sufficient points for their chosen university courses. Work seen suggests that the better AS results achieved in 2002 will be reflected in the A Level grades.

305. Teaching and learning in history are satisfactory. There is much good classroom teaching by the specialist staff whose detailed subject knowledge adds significantly to the quality of learning. Lessons have a clear structure and students understand what is required of them. They contribute to their own learning by completing preparation and follow-up tasks assiduously. The lessons are closely linked to course assessment requirements and there is heavy use of teacher-edited resources. Whilst these materials are well chosen, there is a limit to the range of reading undertaken by many students. The school provides basic textbooks but their quality should be improved. As well as being on a different site, the school library does not have a stock of specialist texts or history journals and students prefer to work in the study rooms or at home. There is no use of computers in the teaching of history but students have no difficulty in booking a computer. Restrictions on using floppy discs mean that it is not always easy to transfer computer-generated work from home to school and prevents teachers from working on screen. Marking is satisfactory and much support and guidance is given verbally. Students have a clear idea of their predicted grades and know what they need to do to meet or exceed them.

306. The students display good retrieval skills and the higher attainers are able to conduct discussion both orally and in writing. They are less confident in evaluative writing, especially when dealing with times or societies far removed from our own. They work hard and have a good memory of previous work. This allows them to make comparisons and to recognise patterns and trends. Their developing historical perspective is not always successfully captured in writing because there are limited opportunities to debate issues formally and so develop the appropriate vocabulary and language structures. They experience quite different styles of teaching but have adapted to these and appreciate the changes in pace and intensity that result.
307. Leadership of sixth form provision in the department is good. The head of department has a genuine enthusiasm for history and this is shared across the staff. Although each teacher has distinct specialist areas, they work together very effectively as a team and deliver a well-balanced course. Through regular discussion, the teaching of the relatively new course units is becoming more refined, while the differing styles and pace of working add to students' breadth of experience. The small suite of specialist rooms with its subject office provides a focus for students who have a well-placed confidence in the dedication of their teachers.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

308. The school offers courses to AS/A level in English Language, English Literature, French and German. Both English courses and French were inspected in detail.

### **ENGLISH**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teacher knowledge is good.
- Students are making progress in line with prior attainment, sometimes better.
- Students' independence is well developed, especially through individual and group presentations.
- Staff promote enjoyment of the subject and students' response is very good.
- Quality of teaching is consistently good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Student participation in lessons could be increased.

310. In 2001 (the most recent results for which there are national comparisons), A Level results in English Literature and English Language were at the national average. Results in English Literature at A2 were less good in 2002, especially in the number of A-B grades, and these results were below predictions. The English Language group last year was very small, but results were good.
311. At AS Level in 2002, a quarter of students gained A grades. The department takes in a wide range of ability onto AS courses, based on prior attainment. In the current Year 12 and Year 13 students are making progress in line with their prior attainment, and some are working above predictions. Standards overall are average and achievement is satisfactory.

312. In Year 12, students taking English Literature compile relevant notes on background information to writers. Higher attaining students can already develop a well-structured argument with reference to, for example, religious imagery and links with classical mythology. All students have a good knowledge of texts, but some need to explore points in greater depth. Students' ability to respond to texts critically, in writing and in speech, improves during the course. They can make use of other interpretations to form their own opinions. In Year 13, students are particularly strong in commenting on the cultural, historical and contextual influences on texts, but slightly less so on form, language and structure. Students on the English Language course in Year 12 learn to deconstruct texts in various genres, and then construct their own. They are also learning to analyse spoken language. They are developing a good grasp of technical vocabulary, for example lexis, lexicon. Students in Year 13 build well on their work in Year 12 and are able to carry out their own projects. Some of these are very good, showing the use of original evidence and detailed stylistic analysis.
313. The quality of teaching is consistently good and sometimes inspiring. Whole-class discussion observed was most successful when students sat facing each other and the teacher ensured that everyone participated. Questioning is used well to draw out students' own views. It is a strength of the department's work that students are regularly asked to make presentations to the whole class, either individually or in groups. This encourages independence and helps to build confidence. In an AS language lesson, groups had prepared conversations which they performed illustrating gender differences in speech. These introduced humour, but also made relevant points linked directly to lesson objectives. In an AS literature lesson, the teacher created groups that were mixed ability and students worked on different strands of symbolism used by Tennessee Williams. In both these examples, transcripts or notes of the presentations were prepared and distributed afterwards, so maximum use was made of students' own ideas. Some teachers set creative tasks to extend pupils' understanding, especially of style. A Year 13 class had been asked to write their own metaphysical poems using modern concepts and they produced, for example, 'Love's Bicycle' and 'Love's Chocolate Egg'. The outcomes showed that students had grasped the features of John Donne's poetry very well.
314. Students respond positively to their lessons, sometimes with enthusiasm. A few are passive if the discussion is not organised to achieve full participation. Students themselves say that they enjoy the opportunity to make presentations and to take part in drama activities. They feel they make progress in structuring their essays and that they are growing in confidence.
315. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand the requirements of the AS and A2 courses. They mark students' work according to separate assessment objectives. They advise their classes on further reading in literary criticism or language theory, and encourage them to find relevant material on the Internet.
316. The courses are well managed. Two teachers share each group and collaborate well together. The newly qualified teacher has been supported and integrated into the team. Staff hold data on their students, updated in the case of AS re-marks, and are aware whether current work is in line with predictions. As well as offering AS and A2 English Literature and English Language, there is also the opportunity to take media studies as part of the community education provision, taught by the head of department. This course will be provided in the school timetable from September 2003. The department is energetic in offering extra-curricular activities such as theatre trips, and several sixth formers took part in the recent performance of *The Crucible*, produced by the second in department.

## FRENCH

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

### Strengths

- Excellent relationships with the students.
- Very good teaching.
- Excellent subject knowledge and ability to help students grasp difficult concepts.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop students' ability to think and write in French.

318. Results at AS and A2 reflect the prior attainment of students embarking on the course. All students passed the A2 course in 2002 and in 2001 although attainment in the higher grades was below the national average. The three candidates at AS in 2002 have continued into the A2 course. Such a small group does not allow comparison with the national average. Overall, the attainment of students in the AS group is higher, taking into account the time both groups have been learning the language. The current AS group is making very good progress, and has made a successful transition from GCSE. The topics they have studied in the first term have helped them to cope well with the demands and rigours of the course.

319. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is always at least very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers' use of the target language is excellent and they have very good strategies for ensuring that students understand what is often very difficult language, and for maintaining high levels of concentration. Although classes are shared, good planning and management ensure that there is an efficient deployment of staff, making best use of their strengths. All teachers have very good subject knowledge. They keep up-to-date with current affairs and their knowledge of the French-speaking world enables them to call on an impressive range of resources. For example, in a lesson about prejudice and face value judgments, students examined paintings of René Magritte. The teacher skilfully introduced vocabulary, much of which was cognate with its English equivalent, and students were very soon able to deal with high levels of abstraction and express their ideas about appearances and reality.

320. Teachers use a wide range of strategies, including the overhead projector and flashcards. Warm-up activities are challenging but fun, and help to develop students' vocabulary and their ability to express ideas by paraphrasing. The data projector is used very effectively to present and explore language and slides incorporate grammatical and syntactical clues to help students understand and respond to complex, challenging sentences. Mind-mapping is an effective way of helping students to conceptualise their ideas and express their thoughts coherently. Teachers find useful and thought-provoking websites to interest and challenge the students' pre-conceived ideas, and the discussions develop the students' moral and spiritual awareness. Relationships are excellent, and teachers are able to get the best out of each student.



321. Attitudes are very good. Students are confident and keen to do well. They are able to speak fluently, although sometimes at the expense of accuracy. In particular the boys in the AS group showed an impressive fluency and willingness to re-use new language that was pleasing to witness. Students respond positively to correction and quickly take the opportunity to show that they have learned from their mistakes. They are beginning to use French as a natural means of communicating with their teachers. In written work the choice of topics at the beginning of the AS course helps students to develop the argumentative style of writing that they need when they move into more abstract and challenging subjects. However, some of the weaker students rely too much on translation in their written work, trying to translate into French what they have already thought of in English, with a consequent lack of accuracy and authenticity. By contrast, the work of more able students shows an impressive grasp of complex grammar and a very high level of accuracy.
322. Marking and reporting are very good. Students are involved in their assessment and their response to reports is reflective and positive, whilst teachers' comments are full, helpful and insightful. One student commented that, after having been taught by a number of different teachers, she is now benefiting from a high standard of teaching. The students are conscious of having made very good progress in a short time. Teachers clearly analyse the strengths and weaknesses of their students. For example the written work of the weaker students is sometimes simplistic, but ambition has, quite rightly, been substituted by accuracy and this boosts the students' confidence.
323. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to use their languages outside of the classroom, with links to local business, and work experience in France is available to those who wish. They are also encouraged to attend A Level master classes at a regional university.