

INSPECTION REPORT

LORD WILLIAMS'S SCHOOL

Thame

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123268

Headteacher: Mr M Spencer

Reporting inspector: W Keast
1522

Dates of inspection: 4 - 8 November 2002

Inspection number: 249631

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: | Voluntarily controlled |
| Age range of students: | 11 - 19 |
| Gender of students: | Mixed |
| School address: | Oxford Road Thame Oxon |
| Postcode: | OX9 2AQ |
| Telephone number: | 01844 210510 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Dr Anne Clark |
| Date of previous inspection: | 2 December 1996 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|--|--|
| 1522 | W Keast | Registered inspector | | The school's results and students' achievements. How well are students taught? |
| 9537 | C Marden | Lay inspector | | Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 28199 | P Lawley | Team inspector | English English as an additional language | |
| 22423 | J Lovgreen | Team inspector | Sixth form English language Drama | |
| 18178 | I Matthews | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| 1503 | T Browne | Team inspector | Sixth form mathematics | |
| 3242 | M Newman | Team inspector | Science | |
| 29742 | P Fyans | Team inspector | Chemistry | |
| 11240 | P Shallcross | Team inspector | Information and communication technology | |
| 2501 | R Allison-Smith | Team inspector | Art and design; citizenship Sixth form art and design | |
| 2495 | B Munden | Team inspector | Design and technology | How well does the school care for its students? |
| 13623 | J Waddington | Team inspector | Sixth form geography Psychology | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? |
| 10817 | G Rayner | Team inspector | Geography | How well is the school led and managed? |
| 15075 | B Stephens | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages Sixth form French | |
| 15208 | A Briggs | Team inspector | Music, sixth form music | |
| 22042 | J Challands | Team inspector | Physical education Travel and tourism Educational inclusion including race relations | |
| 31372 | B Hardwick | Team inspector | Religious education | |
| 10761 | P Willan | Team inspector | Sixth form history Sixth form religious studies | |
| 30563 | J Pentlow | Team inspector | Biology, dance | |
| 3080 | B Colley | Team inspector | Sixth form physical education Special educational needs | |

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 32231 | A Lyons | Team inspector | Government and politics | |
| 31139 | J Judson | Team inspector | | |
| 14633 | J Bannister | Team inspector | History | |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lord Williams's School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls, aged 11 to 19, and serves the market town of Thame and its surrounding area. This includes schools from Buckinghamshire. The school has recently achieved Sports College status and Training School status. The quality of its creative arts provision has received an Artsmark Gold award. With 2142 students, it is much bigger than the average secondary school. The school is on two sites nearly two miles apart. A well-below average proportion of students is entitled to a free school meal and students come from a comparatively favourable area although with some pockets of deprivation. Students come to the school with broadly average standards of attainment. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds (1.8 per cent) is low. The proportion for whom English is an additional language (0.7 per cent) is also low and none of these students is at an early stage of learning English. As part of its overall provision, the local education authority has provided a 30 place unit for students with autism, the Chinnor Resource Unit, based at the school. The proportion of students (12.8 per cent) with special education needs is below average although the proportion (3.5 per cent) who have a statement of need is above average. In addition to autism, the main needs for which students have a statement or are receiving external support are dyslexia, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and general learning difficulties. A small number of students have physical difficulties including several, on each site, who use wheel chairs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. The standards of attainment, as shown by examination results, are well above the national average in the main school and above average in the sixth form. Students have achieved very well in Years 7 to 11 and well in the sixth form, in relation to their attainment at the beginning of each stage. Teaching is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Leadership and management of the school are very good. The expenditure per student is higher than average due to the additional sports college grant but resources are used effectively and the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Well above average standards of attainment in examinations
- Very good achievement by the most recently examined students in Years 9 and 11
- Excellent extra-curricular activities, excellent contribution to students' experience through links with the community and excellent relationships with partner schools
- Very good care and welfare of students
- Very good leadership and management by key staff and very effective governors
- Good teaching, student attitudes, behaviour and attendance

What could be improved

- There are no key issues, but the school should maintain current high standards and quality of provision, continue to implement its strategic development plan and seek to incorporate the smaller points for improvement contained in the report

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 December 1996. The improvement since then has been very good. Results at all three stages have improved and are showing a rising trend. Overall, numbers have risen, particularly in the sixth form. The provision for information and communication technology has greatly improved and links with the community have increased significantly. The school has achieved Sports College and Training School status and achievements in creative arts have been acknowledged with an Artsmark Gold award. The

strengths in student care and in the quality of the teaching have been maintained. The three key issues raised in the previous report have been successfully tackled. The school day has been modified, the provision of religious education in the main school meets requirements and registration procedures are now good. The need to provide religious education for all sixth form students remains.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students 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 | A | A | C |
| A-levels/AS-levels | n/a | B | n/a | |

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Similar schools means those schools in which the proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is below 5 per cent.

Results in the Year 9 tests in 2002 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with students, nationally, who had similar Year 6 test results, the English results were in the top five per cent of schools, mathematics results were well above and science results were above the average. Boys and girls performed equally well in mathematics and science and girls performed slightly better in English. Overall, the value added by the school was well above the national average and above the average for students from a similar starting point. Results at this age show a rising trend.

GCSE results in 2002 were well above average when compared with the results of students, nationally, with similar Year 9 test results. Students achieved very well. The performance of girls has been similar to that of boys, when averaged over the three years to 2001. Results in 2001, in all subjects, were above the national average and significantly so in many. Results at this age show a rising trend.

Within the overall, above average results at A-level in 2001, those in art, theatre studies, economics, and mathematics were well above average and those in business studies and religious studies below average, with French being well below. There are no national comparators for 2002 yet. In subjects where there were larger numbers of candidates, results rose significantly in mathematics, biology, chemistry, business studies, sports studies, art and history and fell significantly in design and technology, where the student group had lower attainment at the beginning of the course, and geography.

The school met its targets for the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C and for students' average total point score, but did not quite achieve its target for the proportion achieving five or more grades A* to G. Targets set for 2003 are suitably challenging.

The current standards, at this early stage in Year 9 and 11, are generally above those expected from students of these ages and in no subject are they below the expected level. Students are achieving well in the majority of subjects. They achieve very well in English in Years 7 to 9. In the yet to be examined GCSE physical education course, students are not making sufficient progress from their earlier attainment. Students' literacy standards are good overall. They are fluent in basic number skills and effectively use statistical and algebraic techniques. ICT skills are at expected levels and are rising in Years 7 and 8, where there is now a taught course.

Current standards in Year 13, in the subjects which were a focus of the inspection, are generally above expected levels at this stage. They are well above in mathematics and art. Students' achievement, in relation to each subject group's different standard, is generally good. It is very good in government and politics and satisfactory in geography and French.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. Students enjoy school and most want to work. There are a few students, usually boys, who disrupt the learning of others. In the sixth form attitudes are very good. Students are committed to their subjects and study hard. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good. Students behave well around site and the vast majority behave well in lessons. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Personal development is good with students readily taking on responsibilities. Relationships between staff and students are very good. Relationships between students are generally good and supportive. In the sixth form relationships and personal development are very good. |
| Attendance | Very good. It is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is in line with the national average. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of students: | Years 7 – 9 | Years 10 – 11 | Years 12 – 13 |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching | Good | Good | Very good |

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

Teaching in English and science is good throughout Years 7 to 11. It is good overall in mathematics, being good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In these early years, teaching in mathematics is good or better where teachers use the national strategy well. The strengths of teaching in the main school stem from teachers' good subject knowledge which allows them to plan lessons well and include a variety of well chosen activities, give clear explanations and match work to students' needs. There is a lot of consistency between subjects. A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed, linked to ineffectively managed student behaviour. Teaching in the sixth form is even better. The same strengths are evident but with teachers' enthusiasm for their subject being more apparent and students' attitudes allowing good subject discussion to take place.

Skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught in English and mathematics. They are used and consolidated within the subjects of the curriculum. Literacy skills are being well developed within several subjects, particularly science, but this is not yet consistently achieved in all subjects.

The school meets the needs of its students well. Students with special educational needs are very well supported through focused withdrawal-group teaching in Years 7 to 9, additionally through alternative curriculum opportunities in Years 10 and 11, and throughout the school by good support in class from teaching assistants. Students with autism are supported in main school teaching groups and experience tutor group work wherever it is appropriate for them. Talented and gifted students are supported in a number of ways and make good progress but there is inconsistency in the challenge they are given. Courses in the sixth form match students' needs and aspirations well.

Students generally learn well. They work hard, concentrate well and complete homework conscientiously. Most main school students have good attitudes to their work and this supports their learning. Students' attitudes in the sixth form are very good and these, together with very good relationships with their teachers, create an atmosphere in which learning flourishes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Very good. An excellent extra-curricular programme enhances the taught curriculum. A wide range of choice exists in the sixth form. Excellent community links and curriculum links with partner institutions support learning. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | Very good. Identified needs, particularly of younger students, are effectively tackled through short periods of focused support. Alternative curriculum provision is made for an identified group of older students. Good classroom support is provided. |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language | A very small number of students speak English as an additional language. No students are in the early stages of acquiring English, and they make progress in line with their peers. |
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good. Very good provision for social development, especially through links with the local community. Moral and cultural provision are good, with opportunities across the curriculum. |
| How well the school cares for its students | The educational and personal support and guidance for students is good. The quality of information and advice to students and their families is good and very good procedures support their safety, care and welfare. Assessment arrangements are very good. Teachers use assessment information effectively to raise students' achievement by setting targets, tracking progress and providing support and guidance. |

The school works closely with parents, keeping them informed and seeking their views through questionnaires.

The school does not meet the statutory requirement for providing religious education for all sixth form students. Greater flexibility is being introduced in the 14 to 19 curriculum and the school is taking advantage of this. However, it does not meet the current requirement for all students to study a design and technology option. The opportunity for vocational education in Years 10 and 11 is minimal but plans to tackle this weakness are being developed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The leadership and management of the head teacher and key staff are very good. The head teacher has a clear view of the direction in which the school should be moving forward as an effective sports and community college. This is based upon a realistic and sensitive understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved. There have been recent additions to the senior management team, to provide a good blend of managers with long standing experience of the school and fresh perspectives. Although at an early stage in establishing itself, the team is quickly becoming effective. |

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governing body is very effective. Governors are highly supportive of the head teacher, staff and students and strongly committed to carrying out their role in shaping the direction of the school, which they carry out very effectively. They have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved. They succeed in ensuring that the school meets its statutory obligations in all but daily collective worship and sixth form religious education. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school has potentially good systems for evaluating its performance. It acknowledges that these are not yet applied consistently, throughout the school and recognises the need to improve the way in which it monitors and guides this. |
| The strategic use of resources | The quality of financial management and planning is very good. The governing body exercises effective financial control. Designated grants are used properly for their specific purposes. Resources are effectively used to implement the agreed development plan. |

The staffing is well matched to the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation and learning resources available are satisfactory, with a balance of strengths and weaknesses.

The school is keen to do its best for its students and is continually monitoring their performance, using a variety of indicators. Provision is reviewed and proposed changes are carefully costed before final decisions are taken. Best value for money is sought. Budgetary monitoring and control are stringent. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy at school • The good teaching and progress • Teachers' high expectations • That staff are approachable if they have a concern • The school is well led and managed • The good range of activities outside lessons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their children's progress • The school to work more closely with them. • Homework: more challenge for higher-attaining students and set in accordance with homework timetable. |

The inspection team agrees with all the parents' positive views. Information about students' progress is satisfactory in that it is clear and meets the minimum required of schools. Nevertheless, the school is looking at ways to provide additional, interim reports on progress. The school seeks to work closely with parents. Homework makes a satisfactory contribution to students' learning but it is not always set in accordance with the homework timetable.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of 445 students is much larger than other sixth forms. It is popular and has been increasing in numbers over recent years. There is an overall balance of boys and girls, although not in each year group. Detailed requirements for entry to specific courses are occasionally interpreted flexibly, as the school is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of individual students. The emphasis is upon students making informed choices and understanding the importance of the work ethos in the sixth form. About 65 per cent of each Year 11 group continues into the sixth form and a further twenty students (10 per cent of each year group) join each year from other schools. The students from outside are fully integrated within a short space of time. All students sign a contract with the school which details their rights and responsibilities. Most students follow A-level courses with about 10 per cent studying a mix of A-level and AVCE courses. A smaller proportion study a one year Intermediate GNVQ course and nearly half of these continue onto an advanced course at the end of Year 12. Retention rates for all courses are high. More than half the students continue into higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very effective sixth form. Results are above the national average and are rising. This represents good achievement by the students. These are the outcomes of very good teaching and the very good attitudes of the students. The sixth form is very well led and managed and offers very good learning opportunities, which match the needs and aspirations of the students well. This is achieved within the resources generated by the student numbers, making the sixth form very cost effective.

Strengths

- Good achievement
- Very good teaching and students' attitudes
- Good support and guidance
- Very good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum
- Very good leadership and management
- Very good curriculum provision with excellent enhancement

What could be improved

- There are no key issues, but the school should maintain the current high standards and quality of provision, continue to implement its strategic development plan and seek to incorporate the smaller points for improvement recorded in the report

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|------------------------|---|
| Mathematics | Very good. A-level results in recent years have been well above the national averages. Teaching overall is very good and the A-level courses are well planned. |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| | The students are well motivated and work hard, in response to the keen support from staff. |
| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
| Biology | Very good. The very good teaching and wide range of enrichment opportunities offer a good challenge to the students, leading to rising standards and good achievement. |
| Chemistry | Very good. Very good teaching challenges students to develop their creative and critical thinking, resulting in very good learning. Students enjoy this challenge and have very positive attitudes to their study. |
| Physical education | Good. Student attitudes are very good and good leadership ensures that the course is taught well. |
| Travel and tourism | Good. Results were better than would be expected from students' GCSE results. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and their own commitment and enthusiasm. |
| Art | Very good. Attainment is well above average. The subject is very popular and recruits large numbers onto the courses. Teachers have excellent specialist skills and a passion for the subject that motivates students and helps them learn very well. |
| Music | Good. Small groups of students achieve well. Teaching is good, teachers are enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge. Students really enjoy the subject. |
| Geography | Unsatisfactory. Results in both year groups have fallen and few students have chosen to continue for a second year. Leadership has yet to address this decline rigorously. Teaching is satisfactory and some good teaching was observed during the inspection. Students' attitudes to learning are good. |
| History | Very good. Teaching is very good overall. The large groups of students make good progress and have very good relationships with their teachers. |
| Religious studies | Satisfactory. Improving attainment in 2002. Teaching is good overall. Students achieve in line with expectations and have good relationships with their teachers. |
| Government and politics | Very good. Very good teaching leads to very good learning, particularly in Year 13, where students participate well in class and combine knowledge of contemporary political events with a rigorous appreciation of political ideology. Students show very positive attitudes to their learning. |
| Sociology | Good. Standards of attainment are good. The good teaching and learning results in students making good progress in lessons. |
| Psychology | Good. Teaching and achievement are good. Standards in Year 13 are slightly above average. Year 12 standards are around the national average. Students in both options are well motivated and work hard, and this helps their attainment. |
| English language | Good. The first results for this new course in 2002 matched candidates' earlier attainment. Standards in the current Year 13 are higher because good teaching stimulates thinking and debate. Assessment by teachers ensures that students |

| | |
|--------|---|
| | know what skills they need to learn and demonstrate. Students are given good advice about how to improve their standards. |
| French | Good. The achievement of the small groups of students is satisfactory. Teaching and relationships are good, and good use is made of language assistants. |

All other courses were sampled. The teaching observed was consistently good or very good. Common features were the good subject knowledge of the teachers, the very good attitudes of the students, the variety of planned activities and the commitment and involvement of the students.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| How well students are guided and supported | Good support and guidance is provided in the sixth form. Induction arrangements are effective and students are generally happy with the personal and academic guidance they receive. Clear information is available about opportunities beyond school, especially in relation to university application. Assessment is very good in some subjects and generally the school makes good use of assessment data to set students individual targets and to monitor their progress. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head teacher has a very good overview of the sixth form. The head of the sixth form, a member of the senior management team, fulfils his delegated responsibility very well. A clear development plan has appropriate targets with success criteria. The management team's responsibilities match individual's strengths and experience well. The governors work closely with the sixth form and are very well aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and are involved at a strategic level in the formation of policy relating to the sixth form. |

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| What students like about the sixth form | What they feel could be improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoy it and would recommend it to others • They are well taught and challenged by the teaching • Teachers are very accessible to provide help when needed • The printed information they receive is clear and helpful • The courses they are following match their needs and aspirations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advice they receive about future options • The information they receive about the progress they are making • The helpfulness of advice that they receive |

Inspectors endorse the positive aspects from the student questionnaire returns. The concerns indicated in the questionnaire were more often from Year 12 students early in their course than from Year 13. Discussion with students found little support for these concerns and the inspection evidence is that students receive helpful and good advice and information, particularly about their progress.

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 students' achievements

1. Results in the end of Year 9 tests in 2002 were well above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools¹. These results were well above average for students, nationally, with similar Year 6 test results². English, mathematics and science results were all well above the national average. English results were well above, mathematics results were similar to and science results were below similar schools' averages. Compared to students, nationally, with similar Year 6 test results, results in English were in the top 5 per cent of schools, in mathematics were well above and in science were above average. Overall, progress from Year 7 to Year 9 was well above the national average, similar to the similar schools' average and above average for students with similar Year 6 test results. Over the last five years results have been rising at the same rate as they are nationally. Science and mathematics results mirror the national year on year pattern and English results are back up again, having fallen gradually for the last three years. In mathematics and science, boys' and girls' results are similar, as they are nationally. In English, girls' results are higher than boys' results by a slightly greater margin than nationally.
2. The standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are generally above those expected for their age. They are at the expected level in information and communication technology (ICT), modern languages and drama. Students are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 7 in most subjects. Their achievement is satisfactory in modern languages and drama and is very good in English.
3. GCSE results in 2002 (based on comparing the average total point score³) were well above the national average and were average for similar schools. The results were well above the average of those gained by students, nationally, who had obtained similar results in their Year 9 national tests⁴. Students therefore achieved very well. Sixty seven per cent of students gained five or more grades A* to C and 96 per cent gained five or more grades A* to G. These proportions were both well above the national average and in line with similar schools averages. The proportion achieving at least a grade was in line with national and similar schools' averages. The school met its targets for 2002 and has set realistic but overall challenging targets for 2003.
4. On average, over the three years to 2001, the performance of boys and girls has been similar. The rising trend in the school's results is broadly similar to the national trend. In 2001, both boys' and girls' results were above the national average in all subjects and in many subjects, significantly so. Students generally made better progress in French and history, and worse progress in English, mathematics and dance, in comparison with the other subjects they studied. Comparative figures for 2002 are not yet available.
5. The standards of work of students currently in Year 11 are similar to those indicated by previous results. In all subjects they are at least at the level expected for their age. They are above expected levels in mathematics, design and technology (DT), geography, music, dance, drama and religious education and well above expected levels in English, science, art and history. Students' achievement, in

¹ Similar schools means those schools in which the proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is below 5 per cent.

² Students who gained at least 27 but less than 28 average point score.

³ A students' GCSE total point score is calculated by scoring a grade A* as 8, a grade A as 7, etc

⁴ Students who gained at least 33 but less than 36 average point score

relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course, is good in most subjects. It is very good in English and is satisfactory in ICT, and modern languages. In physical education, students following the basic course are making satisfactory progress but those following the recently introduced GCSE course are not making sufficient progress from their above average standards at the end of Year 9. The expectations of what they could and should be attaining are too low.

6. Students with special educational needs do well when compared with previous attainment. In the lower school, in particular, students progress very well because of the intensive early individual support, assistance and care they receive. The special educational needs department works hard to allow students the best chance of progress by identifying and meeting their needs at an early stage. By the end of Year 9, tests show that good progress is made for all students with special educational needs. Success may be seen when comparison is made between the large number receiving support in Year 7 and the much reduced number in Year 9. By the end of Year 11 very good progress is made. Some students achieve GCSE grades and then go on to sixth form education. Achievement is very good in the learning support units and progress may be seen in most lessons.
7. Gifted and talented students generally make the same good progress as their peers. There are particularly good high grade results in science, DT and history. However, these very high attaining students are not consistently challenged in all subjects.
8. Standards of literacy are good overall. Students' learning is underpinned by good quality discussion in mathematics, science and religious education. Students are generally fluent in basic number skills and can use statistics and algebraic techniques effectively. A very good example of the use of basic numeracy work was seen in an English lesson where numeracy skills were being used to develop awareness of syllable stress and verse pattern in ballads. In design and technology, the use of proportion and scale was being used, and students' knowledge of shape and space was used to develop 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional work.
9. Students' ICT skills are at expected levels in Year 9. These students have not been taught ICT as a discrete subject. Standards are above expected levels in Years 7 and 8, where students are being taught for a period each week. In Year 11, standards are at expected levels. The use of computers within the subjects of the curriculum is contributing to achievement in ICT in all years.

Sixth form

10. Nationally, to allow easier comparison between all providers of post-16 education and training, results are now reported differently. This means that direct comparison between the school's 2001 results and previous years is not possible. In 2001, (based on the average point score⁵) results were above the national average. The results of boys, girls, and of students who followed a mixed A-level and AVCE course were all above average. Based upon the average point score, A-level results were well above average in art, theatre studies, economics and mathematics, and above average in geography and sociology. They were below average in business studies and religious studies, and well below average in French. In all other subjects they were either broadly average or the small number of students made national comparison too unreliable.
11. Results in 2002 were, overall, slightly higher with boys' attainment rising and girls' falling. National benchmarks are not yet available for making comparisons. In the larger groups, the average point score rose significantly in mathematics, biology, chemistry, business studies, sports studies, art and

⁵ A students' A-level point score is calculated by scoring a grade A as 10, a grade B as 8 .. etc

history. They fell significantly in design and technology, where the group of students had lower standards of attainment at the beginning of the course, and geography. In small groups, where results were more dependent upon the individual students who chose the course, the average point score rose in religious studies and French, and fell in economics and theatre studies. Other subjects were either examined for the first time or showed little change in the average point score. Students' portfolios of their work in the key skills of communication, use of ICT and application of number did not meet examination requirements last year.

12. In the subjects which were a focus for the inspection, the standard of work of students currently in Year 13 is well above average in mathematics and art. It is above average in English language, music, chemistry, psychology, government and politics, biology and travel and tourism.. Current standards of work in other subjects are average. In relation to the attainment of these differing groups of students at the beginning of their courses, achievement is very good in government and politics, satisfactory in geography and French, and good in all other subjects.
13. Students with special educational needs have very full files recording achievement, targets and specialist involvement from entry into the school. Key teachers are ready to assist students make a smooth transition to the sixth form and their needs are well anticipated through good liaison. Students progress well because of the one to one support they receive and the careful monitoring by their teachers and teaching assistants.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Students behave well and have good attitudes to school. Students are happy at school and many take part in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. They settle quickly to their lessons and try hard to produce good quality work. In some classes, mainly in the lower school, the behaviour of small groups of boys affects their own learning but generally does not have too great an impact on the learning of others. Students enjoy a wide range of subjects and their commitment to achieving well includes doing their homework and handing it in on time.
15. Behaviour is good on both school sites, in and out of lessons. On one particularly wet day during the inspection, students behaved very well in the dining areas in spite of the halls being crowded. In lessons, the overwhelming majority of students behave sensibly and maturely and this contributes to their good achievement. The level of exclusions is broadly average with one permanent exclusion and 49 fixed term exclusions last year. Attendance is very good and is well above the national average. The number of unauthorised absences is in line with the national average. Students report there is very little bullying and what there is, is usually verbal. All students spoken to felt that when they reported incidents of bullying to staff they were taken seriously and their concerns were dealt with effectively.
16. Students' personal development is good. They readily take on responsibilities such as being school or year councillors. In lessons, students learn to empathise with people in different situations and from different ages. For example, in geography students write about what life in a Favella might be like, while in history they consider the holocaust. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, with nearly all students holding their teachers in high regard. Relationships between students are good overall and often very good. They work well together and help each other willingly. Two isolated instances of students being unkind to others with special educational needs, not giving them the time they required to respond to the teacher or calling them names, therefore stood out. Teachers dealt with these incidents swiftly and firmly. Through their work, students show a good understanding of moral issues, for example in Year 9 religious education where they reflect upon good and evil.

Sixth form

17. Students have very good attitudes to their work and this contributes positively to their achievement. Their attendance is also very good. Students are happy with their choice of subjects and enjoy the challenge of studying them in greater depth. They are very committed to doing well and work hard both in and out of lessons. During their time in the sixth form, students learn good independent study skills that will support those who go into higher education. Students value the advice and support they get from their teachers and respond well to it.
18. Students play an active role in the life of the school by, for example mentoring younger students and supporting extra curricular activities. Musicians in the sixth form demonstrate brass instruments to students in primary schools to encourage more students to play brass instruments and they are now leading a Brass group at Lord Williams's. As part of the sports college, students have promoted and helped organise sport in primary schools and in local clubs.
19. Relationships between students and with teachers are very good. Students collaborate well and show respect for each other's views and opinions. The strong relationship between teachers and students gives students the confidence to feel free to contribute appropriate suggestions. The opportunities students have for moral development are dependent on the subjects they are studying. Where students have the opportunity to explore moral and ethical issues, they show a good understanding and value the opportunity to consider big issues. This is particularly the case for those students studying religious studies and sociology.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching in both the lower (Years 7 to 9) and the upper (Years 10 and 11) school is, overall, good. It is very good in art. In most subjects it is good in both lower and upper school. In music it is good in the lower school and very good in the upper school. In mathematics and drama, it is satisfactory in lower school and good in the upper school. This is because, in both cases, teaching the younger students is too variable. In mathematics not all teachers have the same clear understanding of what constitutes a good lesson in terms of the national strategy and in drama there is too great a variation in how the behaviour of students, unused to the disciplines of the subject, is managed. Conversely, in ICT and physical education it is good in the lower school and satisfactory in the upper school.
21. Strengths in teaching come from the good subject knowledge that teachers have. This allows them to plan lessons well so that new work builds progressively on what students have already learnt. In the best of teaching, sharing with students what they are expected to learn from a lesson and, at the end, spending a few minutes reminding them what has been learnt, helps students know what is expected of them and how far they have gone in achieving it. Generally, good introductions to lessons help students remember what they have previously learnt and how new work is to develop from this. Teachers use questions well to challenge students, to encourage them to expand on their initial response and to get a feel for how well students are understanding their work.
22. Most lessons include a variety of well chosen activities to support the planned learning and to maintain students' interest and concentration. This strategy is not always used as effectively as it could be, particularly in the lower school, where the length of the period is particularly long for the subject, the age of the student, or at the end of the day. Many lessons move at a brisk pace with short, timed activities maintaining interest and momentum. In the main, students are managed well with teachers using the school's disciplinary procedures when necessary. However, there are a few teachers who have difficulty and who are reluctant to use these procedures. The behaviour of small groups of boys, particularly in the lower school, is poor in a number of lessons and, although generally controlled, this

wastes the time and energy of hard working teachers. Good practice, in faculties or subjects, needs identifying and sharing with all colleagues.

23. Work and activities are generally well matched to students' needs. In a number of subjects this is helped through a process of setting although much of the teaching is in groups of mixed ability. Teachers effectively use different strategies, for example giving different tasks, providing different levels of support or expecting different levels of outcome, to achieve this. The learning of gifted and talented students is generally well supported in lessons and through additional extra-curricular opportunities, and this is evident in the high standards being achieved. However, the comparatively small numbers of the highest grades that are being achieved suggests that more could be done to challenge and stretch the ablest of students.
24. Homework was seen to be well used through the setting of appropriate tasks which consolidated students' learning, extended their understanding or prepared them for the next piece of work. This, however, does not negate the concern of some parents supported by students' views, that teachers do not always keep to the homework timetable that students have been given. Work is generally well marked with particularly good procedures and practice in science and English and art. Students are given clear information about how they have done and good guidance on the ways in which their work can be improved and standards raised. In other subjects, there is not the same consistency although good practice exists in all subjects. What constitutes good and effective assessment, in different areas, has not been clearly identified and agreed and then put into practice by all teachers in the area.
25. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught in English and mathematics. Numeracy skills are used and consolidated across the curriculum. Literacy skills are developed well in several subjects. Teachers explain terms and assist students to use technical vocabulary well in music, geography and religious education. Science teachers' methods to develop students' writing skills are excellent. They help them to develop their thinking and understanding of the subject through a variety of writing techniques, including diaries, poems and extended writing. In design technology, good methods are used to help students structure their writing logically, and technical language is well used. Art teachers make good use of technical vocabulary, helping students to understand and think about their own work and that of others. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across all subjects.
26. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed in lessons in which students did not make sufficient progress. In every case this was related to poor student behaviour. In some lessons the teacher had poor or insufficient strategies to manage the behaviour and ended up working with those prepared to work and ignoring the others. In other lessons, the teaching strategies, for example too much teacher input or lack of interaction with the students, led to or compounded the behavioural problems. Classroom monitoring has not clearly identified this small minority of teachers who need focused support.
27. Students with special educational needs learn well in most main school lessons because they are grouped according to their needs and attainment and teachers are aware of their needs. Teaching assistants help students by checking understanding of tasks, reinforcing instructions and maintaining students' concentration. These assistants are attached to faculty areas so they are aware of the content of lessons and targets within the subjects. The support is most effective where there is good planning and liaison between the subject teacher and the teaching assistant. For example, in science teachers modify tasks to both respond to and support students' literacy skills and, at the same time, ensure that the learning outcomes for the lesson are achieved. Targets in individual education plans are not fully used in the planning of lessons in all subjects and this is a developmental issue in some subjects.

28. In the learning support units there is very good, intensive teaching in well-structured lessons. Short term withdrawal lessons are effective in tackling identified problems and weaknesses. Specialist teacher assistants help students with behavioural problems. They build up trust and good relationships with such students so that small targets can be successfully achieved. Confidence-building exercises improve students' self-esteem and this supports their return to mainstream classes. In the upper school, students in learning support areas work purposefully in an environment which is designed to keep them focused on their work so that they can gain the greatest benefit from the support. Teachers in learning support are particularly adept at encouraging students to think and work independently. Teachers and teaching assistants plan well and adapt lessons in response to students' diverse needs.

Sixth form

29. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and a high proportion of teaching was good or very good. Teaching in art, biology, chemistry, mathematics and government and politics is very good. It is good in all other subjects. The strong features of this teaching derive from teachers' very good knowledge of their subject, an enthusiasm for it and very good understanding of the requirements of the examinations.
30. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons which build upon students' previous understanding and develops new learning in a structured way. Lessons incorporate a variety of activities and use a range of methods, all of which stimulate students' interest and encourage their learning. Good and frequent use is made of the Internet for researching material and ideas. The history department, for example puts information on the school website to support students in their work. Power Point presentations are used with and by students to share the outcomes of research and other projects. Students respond very well to these approaches by working hard and, in most cases, putting effort into the preparation they do for lessons so that the greatest gains in their own learning can occur.
31. The very good relationships which exist between teachers and students creates a learning atmosphere, in most subjects, in which students feel confident to share their own thoughts and ideas, to challenge the teacher and to seek help when necessary. This allows class discussion to be an effective and frequently used teaching method in many subjects. Teachers and students bring their experience or preparation into these debates. Teachers have high expectations of what their students should achieve. Their perceptive and often challenging questions lead students to support and explain their assertions and so clarify their understanding of ideas and concepts. The use of practical or real life contexts, for example considering David Beckham's skills in sports studies, or a forthcoming residential trip in travel and tourism, helps students relate theory to practice and sustains their interest.
32. Most teachers mark and assess students' work very thoroughly, providing very clear guidance on how it might be improved and standards raised. Teachers share with students their understanding of what examiners are looking for and their marking of students' work is linked to these shared criteria. Support for students to improve or extend their learning, or tackle identified weaknesses, is provided in a variety of ways, ranging from repeated or re-worded explanations during lessons to extra curricular clubs, lectures and visits.
33. In all subjects, students are keen and demonstrate a willingness to learn. Their very good attitudes play an important part in the very good learning which takes place. They respond very positively with sustained concentration and effort to the commitment which their teachers demonstrate. Within this overall very good picture, there are some comparative weaknesses. These vary between subjects and teachers and are reported in more detail in the subject reports.

34. Students with special educational needs in the sixth form benefit from one to one support to help them with their studies. Teachers identify students' needs clearly in their planning. Gifted and talented students are generally well challenged by the teaching and additional activities. Nevertheless, some opportunities were missed, for example in classroom discussion, to challenge them fully or to make the fullest use of ICT to develop their learning skills in all subjects.

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

35. The overall opportunities for students to learn are very good in Years 7 to 9 and are good in Years 10 and 11. The length of lessons, sixty-five minutes, is determined in part by the split site nature of the school and the need for travelling time between sites. The overall teaching time, 24.5 hours, is below the recommended 25 hours. The need to review the curriculum was identified in the previous report. A thorough review took place resulting in more, slightly shorter teaching periods and an overall increase in teaching time. With such large units of time the school reaches an appropriate compromise for the time it gives to differing subjects.
36. The school curriculum has shown good improvement since the last inspection. New computer software is enriching learning in mathematics for Years 7 to 9, the school has instituted structured student feedback arrangements for informing future curriculum planning, including seeking the views of newly-arrived students in Year 7 and there is a range of initiatives developing out of the recently acquired sports college status. *Learning to Learn* initiatives are strengthening independent learning for students across a wide range of subjects. There is a good quality curriculum policy in place and school's equal opportunities policy meets statutory requirements in relation to racial equality issues.
37. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 meets national requirements. It is enhanced by courses in dance and drama. Religious education is taught to the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Information and communication technology is taught, as a discrete subject, in Years 7 and 8. This is a change since the previous inspection and has been instrumental in raising the attainment of students in this subject. Half the students in each year group study German and half study French. A second foreign language is introduced for the more able linguists in Year 9 within the curriculum time for languages.
38. The provision in these years is further enhanced for students with particular learning difficulties, low literacy skills for example, by short sequences of focused teaching in small withdrawal groups. Students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by a team of teaching assistants. Those with particular needs, for example dyslexia or dyspraxia, receive additional individual support through withdrawal groups.
39. National Curriculum requirements are met in most respects in Years 10 and 11 and the curriculum has been organised to meet the needs of students well. Students have a suitable range of choice within a well-defined structure. Within the areas of choice, the curriculum is enhanced by the chance to choose dance, drama, business studies, child development or, more recently, an examined PE course. The school offers a wide choice of courses within the design and technology area. The school is taking advantage of the national move towards greater flexibility in the 14 to 19 curriculum. Students who wish to study more of one subject area, for example humanities, need to specifically argue their case for reduction in another area. The result is that, while some students study two DT options, a proportion of students do not study such an option which, currently, is in breach of National Curriculum requirements. Religious education is taught to the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Students' experience of ICT is, as in Year 9, within and through the other subjects they study. This provides them with many good opportunities to increase their knowledge but, as yet, current planning and assessment does not enable the school to be certain that they all receive their full entitlement.
40. The school makes very good provision for students with special educational needs. The curriculum is accessible to all students on the special needs register and students with differing needs are well integrated into lessons. Students based in Chinnor Resource Unit, with appropriate teaching assistant support, attend main school lessons and tutor groups whenever possible. A few students are dis-

applied from modern foreign languages and this allows them to concentrate effectively on their remaining subjects. Additional support in examinations is efficiently arranged for those who need it. The full examination load is inappropriate for some students and their needs are met by allowing them, during Year 10, to drop an option subject and use the time, working within the learning support unit, to support work in their basic subjects. In Year 11 an alternative curriculum is provided for a small group of students who might otherwise remove themselves from the school. This includes accreditation for basic skills through ASDAN, a vocational option within a nearby further education college and regular work placements or experience to prepare students for life beyond school.

41. There is good provision for careers education and guidance. The careers programme begins in Year 7 with a focus on self-awareness, interests and hobbies, moves on to consider the world of work in Year 8 and options and choices in Year 9. Careers interviews are available for all Year 9 and 11 students who wish them. There are strong and developing links with the Connexions Service and good team working between them and the school. There is good quality work experience in Year 10 and the vetting of these placements meets government recommendations. The curriculum time available for this work has been reduced, following the curriculum review, and it is not yet clear that students will continue to receive their entitlement. The provision of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, or of work related learning, is minimal but this weakness has been identified and planning for development is beginning.
42. A good and well organised programme of personal and social education is taught by form tutors. Responsibility for co-ordination is clearly allocated. Health education, meeting requirements, is provided partly through this programme and partly through science and PE lessons. The programme also includes work on careers education and guidance and some aspects of the developing programme of citizenship. Other contributions to citizenship are made by subjects, for example history. With the time available to form tutors now limited, the expectation of what can be taught is high and it is not yet clear if these high expectations can be met.
43. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy skills is good. A working group has done much to establish good practice throughout the school, and raised staff awareness of their responsibilities in this respect. The outcome is that a great deal of good and some excellent learning was observed during the inspection. Nevertheless, much more remains to be done to ensure that all teachers apply such good approaches consistently. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills is good in mathematics and, overall, the development of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory.
44. The programme of extra-curricular activities, and the learning opportunities that it provides, is excellent. The weekly programme covers sporting, musical, subject support, dramatic and community based opportunities. The provision includes many sports teams and musical groupings. The range is wide and participation rates are high. In addition, a very wide range of activities takes place on a more infrequent, though regular, basis. Visits and trips support subject learning, foreign visits and exchanges support both subject learning and personal development. Residential opportunities, annual productions, musical performances, and award schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's, further support personal development. The quality of some aspects of this provision has resulted in the Artsmark Gold award and other aspects follow from the new sports college status. A significant number of sixth form students made World Team Challenge trips to Rajasthan (1999) and Argentina (2001) and a trip to Botswana and Zambia is being planned for 2003. Younger students were involved in a First Challenge trip to Poland in 2001.
45. Links with the community are excellent and the impact of these are reported in more detail later in this report. Relationships with partner institutions, especially in the primary sector, are excellent. The school is a leading member of the Thame Partnership involving the linked primary schools within and

outside the county. The school has a leadership role in providing for curriculum continuity, and aspects of professional development within partner schools have developed from its sports college status. Excellent curriculum links have developed including co-ordination of special educational needs across primary and secondary age phases and curriculum continuity initiatives in the areas of literacy, numeracy, science and ICT. There is close co-ordination of assessment in these areas in the period before and after secondary school transfer with, for example, pupils completing a piece of English course work in the summer of Year 6.

46. The provision for students' personal development is good overall. Provision for social development is very good. Teachers regularly plan lessons so that students work together in a variety of groupings to develop their social skills. This is apparent across the curriculum with very good examples seen in drama and French. The excellent links with the local community provide students with opportunities for work experience and to take a leadership role in many different sports. The school successfully works hard to provide a sense of community on both school sites. Teachers encourage students to respect each other and to be tolerant of those whose needs are different from their own. The school and year councils allow students to take part in a democratic process as well as giving them meaningful responsibility.
47. Moral provision is good. There is a clear code of behaviour but this is not backed up by a whole school behaviour policy. Students have regular opportunities to explore moral issues in many different subjects. For example, in a religious education lesson students debated the rights and wrongs of whether it is ever justifiable to help someone commit suicide. Teachers effectively model moral behaviour, treating students with fairness and respect. On the few occasions when students do not show respect for others' feelings teachers deal with it sensitively but firmly.
48. Opportunities for cultural development are good. They occur both within the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. Art and music make very good contribution to this area. At present students are rehearsing for the production of the Wizard of Oz. During lessons students learn about their own and other cultures. For example, in geography students learn about life in Brazil and the Tiger Economies of Asia. In addition, there are trips to theatres, art galleries and museums to broaden students' experiences.
49. Overall, there is satisfactory provision for students' spiritual development. All students study religious education throughout the school. During these lessons, students reflect on different faiths and develop an understanding of them. They learn to empathise with others and develop their emotional understanding. Most other subject offer satisfactory spiritual opportunities but there are insufficient opportunities in history and missed opportunities in drama. The school ethos successfully promotes students self-confidence thus allowing them to develop their own ideas. There is not a daily act of collective worship and the assembly programme does not provide opportunity for spiritual development.

Sixth form

50. The learning opportunities provided in the sixth form are very good. Students may choose from some 25 A-level options, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses in business studies and travel and tourism, or a one year General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Intermediate course in leisure and tourism. All Year 12 students follow a taught course in key skills and compile their portfolio of work through their experience in the other subjects they study. Year 13 students may choose to continue the programme to complete their portfolios. The curriculum provision has been carefully developed over time and as a result the range of courses, whilst predominantly non-vocational in nature, provides a good match to the students' aspirations and potential. Self-audits are regular and thorough to ensure that this match of courses to learners is sustained. A thorough programme of

consultation and guidance helps to ensure appropriate choices and the high retention rate confirms that both provision and guidance lead to well-matched choices. The school does not provide religious education to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

51. Equality of opportunity in the sixth form is good. Sixth form courses are open to all students who fulfil the entry requirements. Students who join the school from other establishments are well supported by tutors and other staff. The wide range of courses meets the needs of most students.
52. The numbers of Year 12 students involved in work experience have fallen during the past year. This is similar to the Year 10 programme and does not have the greater emphasis on a structured programme of work shadowing available in many schools. Students report favourably on the availability of UCAS information that is provided in assembly time and tutor periods. The school is beginning to work with new progress profiles and is involved in a pilot scheme *Widening Horizons* with the Learning Skills Development Agency, but it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative.
53. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment are excellent and these activities dovetail very well with the academic programme offered by the school. Music is supported by jazz and choir clubs. A range of subject based opportunities support learning. Overseas visits reflect a wide range of interests, including a planned visit to the Gambia as part of the World Sociology module for these first year students. Timetabling allows for students to participate in sports, recreational activity and community service. Take up is very good and students use their time productively in these activities. This serves to strengthen community links and there are many examples of both boys and girls achieving well in these fields, including at regional and national level, particularly in sport.
54. Very good support for students with special educational needs continues into the sixth form. The range of needs includes general learning difficulties, sensory impairment and physical disability. These students have access to the full breadth of the sixth form provision and achieve as well as other students. There is very good liaison between special educational needs teachers, support staff, subject teachers and sixth form pastoral staff. Where appropriate, there is targeted support in lessons though the incidence of special educational needs in the sixth form is relatively low.
55. Provision for students' personal development is good. There is very good provision for social development with students having the opportunity to take on responsibility within the school and the local community. For example, sixth form students may act as mentors to younger students in the school or to students in local primary schools. Others lead after-school technology clubs. Teachers successfully help students develop independent learning skills. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer makes a good contribution to students' cultural development. Opportunities for spiritual development are insufficiently planned for and the assembly programme does not contribute significantly to either spiritual or cultural development. Students have good opportunities to develop a moral code with subjects making a significant contribution. For example in sociology, students discuss such matters as the effects of global racism on the indigenous culture of Hawaii.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

56. There are very good procedures and practices for promoting health and safety. Monitoring by school staff and outside agencies is thorough and well documented. Effective systems remedy any identified health and safety issues quickly. Procedures for reporting, recording, and investigating accidents are fully implemented. Relevant information about individual students can be accessed speedily in the event of an emergency and staff training in first aid more than meets requirements. The school has very clear procedures for identifying students who may be at risk and these fully meet local and national requirements. Procedures are well documented, new staff are briefed, key staff are well

known and the school liaises very well with other agencies in supporting and monitoring the progress of students on the 'at risk' register.

57. The school has developed a strong pastoral system. Considerable effort is made to be aware of students' individual needs when they enter the school from the primary sector, move into the upper school or join the school at other times. Teachers and support staff provide students with considerable support and guidance in lessons. The 'fast forward' system, for monitoring and supporting students with personal and other difficulties, is very effective. The schools' pastoral system works very effectively with additional professional support provided by the school's full time counsellor and other agencies, in monitoring and supporting students and their families. Parents are kept well informed about the need to take action in these and other programmes of support, and the school is encouraged by the positive responses it now receives.
58. A whole school behaviour policy is currently being developed. Meanwhile, a code of behaviour is followed in most lessons and students are clear about departmental and whole school systems and practice. Disruptive behaviour is minimised in most lessons. Involvement of students in the rewriting of the school's anti-bullying code has been successful and students report that the incidence of bullying is low and effectively dealt with if it does occur.
59. The school has good provision for wheelchair access on both sites with appropriate ramps and lifts. Most areas are accessible and where first floor access is not possible, timetabling arrangements ensure appropriate provision at ground floor level. Students from the Chinnor Resource Unit are supported within main school teaching and tutor group activities wherever it is appropriate for the student. A range of effective strategies, for example *Reading Boost*, tackle identified weaknesses and enable students to make greater progress in their learning. Students' behavioural and emotional needs are addressed well so that students are successfully integrated and encouraged to achieve. The dyspraxia group has benefited from funding for specialist sports college status with equipment being purchased to encourage these students to increase their fine motor skills.
60. Registration procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection. Registration occurs at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers are returned to the office where the information is transferred to the computer. Staff investigate all un-notified absences on the first day of absence. Parents are encouraged to contact the school on each day of their child's absence and there is a dedicated telephone line to enable them to do this. The school discourages parents from taking holidays in term time and, in line with government regulations, does not usually authorise more than ten days holiday.
61. Overall arrangements for assessing and monitoring students' academic performance are very good and teachers provide effective support and guidance to raise students' achievement. There are particular strengths in subjects such as English, science and modern languages, although at present there is less consistency in some other subjects. The school has benefited from being involved in a formative assessment project, and has a clear and appropriate assessment policy.
62. The school's systems for setting individual student targets are strong and are based on records of students' earlier attainment and the increasing use of national performance data. Care is appropriately taken that targets are realistic and that the procedures are manageable for staff, for example by simple checks of performance above, at or below a target level. Tracking the progress of individuals as they move through the school is contributing to improvements. In science, arrangements are very good where targets are provided to teachers and to students, who respond well. The students are involved in effective self-assessment using a 'traffic-light' system and appropriate assessment criteria. Strengths

in modern languages lie in the students' knowledge of their own levels of attainment, and the influence of targets on department development planning.

63. The analysis of assessment data and its use to guide planning are good. At whole-school level the progress of students of different attainment and gender is analysed and this information is available for departments. In English for example, the detailed analysis of test and examination results for different groups of students contributes to changes in curriculum plans and in teaching, to tackle any weaknesses. Such analysis is supplemented by monitoring of work samples, discussion and classroom observation, to moderate evaluation.
64. Students with special educational needs are identified as soon as possible and good liaison with primary schools and the local educational authority assists this process. Where appropriate, external agencies are involved in the preparation of appropriate strategies. Students have access to the full curriculum and courses meet their needs. Reviews take place as recommended by the new code of practice. Socialisation is an important factor in the development and integration of some students with special educational needs and these students are encouraged, particularly at upper school, to mix with other students during breaks in the school day. Teachers and assistants are frequently available, particularly at lower school, to help with homework and address any concern students may have.

Sixth form

Assessment

65. Overall the arrangements in the sixth form for the assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance are good. One key feature, which continues to be refined, is the setting of target grades based on each student's previous achievements. The very good procedures in A-level chemistry, for example, involve the close monitoring of progress and the sharing of value-added ideas with the students. In A-level French the students benefit from very good marking of work and a mentoring system. Generally, sixth form students are clear about the grades expected, and are appreciative of the sessions they have with teachers to discuss their progress.
66. Reporting arrangements are good, with detailed subject reports that provide opportunities for students to review their own progress and identify targets for improvement. These reports also record a student's attendance at subject sessions and their involvement in extra-curricular activity.
67. The school has assessment and moderation procedures that follow the various external awarding body requirements, for example in relation to the different courseworks in A-level mathematics. However in 2002, the school did not ensure the Year 13 students completed their key skills portfolios appropriately. The school is planning to tackle this issue.

Advice, support and guidance

68. The school provides good personal support and guidance to sixth form students, including advice about courses and their future beyond school. The students themselves feel they are well supported by their teachers in terms of their personal as well as academic development.
69. An induction programme is well-established and includes appropriate meetings, written information, taster days and registration arrangements. The programme places some responsibility on the students but a variety of key staff helps students to settle effectively into post-16 work. Further support during both Years 12 and 13 helps students with future courses or career opportunities. For example, an annual joint conference raises student awareness about their future including university application and

volunteers offer their expertise to provide interview experience. Students feel well supported in terms of careers guidance.

70. Many students said that teachers are keen and accessible to provide help. A small proportion of students indicated through the questionnaire that they are less happy with advice about future options or receiving support if there are personal problems. However inspection evidence suggested most students had very good relations with staff, who give much time to help students, irrespective of ability or need. In addition, clear procedures are in place to monitor and deal with personal problems that might arise, and this includes the provision of the support of a counsellor. The school has systems to ensure the health and safety of students, including for example the completion of risk assessments for trips or activities involving sixth formers. Usefully, there is careful monitoring of students' attendance at lessons, with the chasing up of individuals whose attendance record is below 80 per cent. However, the school does not yet have a system for recording which students are in school at a particular time, but this is currently being rectified.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. The school has a successful working partnership with parents that effectively supports students' education. Parents are supportive of the school and value their children being happy at school. They feel the school is well led and managed, teaching is good and that teachers have high expectations. If they have a concern, parents find teachers are approachable and will listen sympathetically. Parents appreciate the wide range of extracurricular activities. Areas parents would like to see improved are: homework, information about their children's progress and for the school to work more closely with them. The inspection team agrees with all the parents' positive views. Information about students' progress is satisfactory in that it is clear and meets the minimum required of schools. Nevertheless, the school is looking at ways to provide additional, interim reports on progress. The school seeks to work closely with parents. Homework is satisfactory but not always set in accordance with the homework timetable.
72. Information for parents is satisfactory. Regular newsletters inform parents about events in school and the achievements of students. An Options Choice booklet provides both parents and students with clear descriptions of the courses on offer to enable them to make informed choices about which subjects to follow in the upper school. Parents receive information about their children's progress through a yearly consultation with subject teachers and an annual report. The reports give parents good information about students' strengths in the subjects and clear advice on how students can improve their work. However, the school acknowledges that there is a need for more information throughout the year and is looking to introduce an interim report. The arrangements for consultation evenings rely on students taking a sheet to each of their subject teachers to arrange an appointment time. The school has no formal procedure for monitoring the number of parents who do not get the appointments they require; instead, it relies on parents contacting them if they have a problem.
73. Parents have a good impact on the life of the school. Parent governors contribute very well to the management of the school and The Lord Williams's Parents group raises significant amounts of money that are used to provide extra resources for the school. Recently they have contributed to the Technoquest project. The school surveys parents' views through questionnaires and as a result of this has clarified the homework policy.
74. Parents make a good contribution to their children's education. They are supportive of homework. They support the many sports and performing arts activities at both the school and at clubs in the community. Parents are also involved in supporting students reading through the *Reading Boost*

scheme. The school keeps in close contact with parents who are receiving extra support through the Fast Forward group.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

75. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and other staff with senior managerial responsibilities. The headteacher has a very clear view of the strategic direction that the school is moving in as a sports and community college and a high commitment to his role in leading this. This is balanced with a sensitive awareness of the school's challenges, strengths and areas in need of improvement.
76. There is a commitment towards ensuring that the school is fully inclusive, by ensuring that each individual who studies or works there is made to feel part of the school community, that they have something to offer and that students achieve to their full potential. That the school is successfully securing these aims is demonstrated by a shared commitment to the direction in which it is moving and most students currently achieving well. The school succeeds well in identifying and meeting the needs of different groups of students, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. It is strongly promoting its aim of contributing to the wider community. This is being achieved by, for example spreading the benefits of its sports college status by improving and sharing its sports facilities. The school is expanding upon its training school status through developmental work on the primary to secondary school transfer process and through its development and sharing of best practice in the ways in which all students can be incorporated into the educational experience, whatever their background, need or attainment. The school is also part of a developing local Network Learning Community, aimed at improving the way in which local schools share their good practice. The school's development plan strongly reflects its aims and objectives and is generally effective in helping it to meet them.
77. There is appropriate recognition of the logistical difficulties of managing such a large school, on two sites, some distance apart. Senior managers succeed well in overcoming the challenges of achieving a cohesive institution in these circumstances. The school has sought to ease the problems faced by teachers who have to travel during the school day by keeping this to a minimum and building travelling time into the timetable. It is aware that current arrangements are still not ideal, for example in requiring younger students to have longer lessons than is usual, and continues to review the situation. There is also an awareness that communication between the two sites is not always completely smooth and the school is seeking ways to improve this. There is an imbalance in the regular presence of senior managers on each site. The split site situation is also recognised as having distinct advantages, for example in supporting the aim of 'having a big school that feels small' and by promoting an ethos on each site that is particularly suited to the ages and needs of the students who are based there.
78. The delegation of roles and responsibilities works well, overall. The senior managerial team is fairly recently constituted, but has a good blend of staff with long experience of the school and newcomers with fresh perspectives. Although at a quite early stage in establishing itself, the team is quickly becoming effective. The overall quality of heads of faculties and subject departments is good with a significant proportion being very good. The management of the large special needs provision is very good. Middle managers are generally well supported by senior managers in carrying out their roles effectively.
79. Governors provide very good support to the school. They are strongly committed to their role in shaping the direction of the school and carry out this role, and that of a critical friend, very effectively. Their capacity to do this is considerably enhanced by an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although governors are very supportive of the headteacher, staff and

students, they are still very willing to question policies and actions, and to suggest improvements. The governing body has increased its links with some subjects, particularly the core ones of English, mathematics and science, but recognises that there is still a need to improve those with other subjects. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities with the exception of ensuring there is a daily act of worship, religious education in the sixth form and design technology for all students in Years 10 and 11.

80. The school has potentially good systems for monitoring and developing the quality of teaching and learning. This includes a system of termly observations by senior managers and an expectation that this will be complemented by sharing of good practice within subject faculties and departments. The school has also improved staff development opportunities, in response to the identification of these as a weakness in the last inspection report. The impact of these measures is currently no more than satisfactory however. The school needs to sharpen up procedures for monitoring for the purpose of management. There is too great a variation in, for example, the management of student behaviour and the effectiveness of homework both within and between faculties. There is also a need to reach a more consistent view across the subjects of what constitutes good classroom practice and to ensure that, where it already exists within the school, it is shared.
81. The school succeeds well in having a well-established system of appraisal that balances what is useful with what is realistically achievable. The school demonstrates its commitment to the process by providing staff with opportunities to reflect upon and discuss their progress towards performance targets.
82. Priorities for development are based upon a clear, balanced, analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and effectively focus upon improving the achievement of students. The governing body plays a full role in setting appropriate targets and effectively reviewing progress towards these. Subject departments have their own development plans, which generally make good reference to school priorities.
83. The quality of financial management and planning is very good. Senior managers and governors monitor the finances well and make informed decisions based on accurate budget information provided by the school bursar and the business manager. The governing body, through its finance committee, scrutinises the budget and exercises very effective control. It meets regularly to monitor expenditure and receives detailed financial analysis on a monthly basis. Spending is closely related to the school development plan and systems for monitoring expenditure are effective. The management of general funds and designated grants is very good and expenditure against them is effectively recorded, showing clearly that designated grants are used properly for their specific purposes. The business manager has a clear vision of the way forward for the school and the capacity to ensure it achieves this.
84. The size of the school budget has doubled in just four years because of the increased funding due to the school achieving sports college status and various other grants. The business manager and school bursar, assisted by efficient support staff, ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the very large budget. The bursar is very effective and has a firm control over expenditure through very good financial systems. Each faculty receives very clear information about its budget and levels of spending. Spending on administrative staff is relatively low considering the large amount of administrative support required in such a large school.
85. The school has made very good progress in implementing the best value principles and applies these very well to all areas. For example, all cleaning is now controlled directly by the school and is very cost effective. The school continually assesses its provision, looking for ways to improve. Spending on staff professional development has increased since the last inspection. The recent change to the school day

was carefully costed and this ensured there were very few financial surprises once it was established. The school receives above average funding, but has used its resources wisely to improve the quality of education for its students.

86. The good leadership of the new specialist sports college aspect of the school is beginning to bring benefits to the quality of the learning experiences for both students and the wider community. Some curriculum areas have already benefited. For example, science has received more data-loggers, modern languages benefits through language links with fencing coaching offered at a school in Germany, dance is supported by visiting professional dancers and learning support benefits through the special project of developmental work with students suffering from dyspraxia. The full impact of the sports college status has yet to be seen with many other developments still in the planning stages.
87. The provision of teaching staff to meet the needs of the curriculum is good with particular strengths in art, modern languages and music. Good opportunities are provided for professional development. An administrative assistant provides effective support for each faculty on this large and diverse site. This provision is effective. The school makes a strong commitment to students with special educational needs through the provision of a large number of effective teaching assistants. Suitable and effective support is provided for newly qualified teachers through a well organised induction programme.
88. Accommodation is satisfactory. Both sites have a mix of older and contemporary buildings, all in good condition. The community uses both sites extensively, sharing the sports and arts centre, where a new swimming pool is nearing completion. The school is continually seeking to improve the quality of accommodation and this is reflected in the school development plan. On both sites rooms have been grouped together to create faculty suites for most subjects. Music, with very good practice room facilities, and modern foreign languages, with spacious teaching rooms, have particularly good accommodation. Science, though, has to operate from four different locations. Accommodation for physical education is also good with two sports halls and extensive playing fields. For many other subjects, although the accommodation is satisfactory, the increase in student numbers in the sixth form and the popularity of some courses has resulted in cramped conditions in several lessons. In art, there is a general lack of space for Year 10 and 11 students. In drama, there is no appropriate teaching space in the lower school. The learning support units provide very good accommodation for learning. The school provides a stimulating learning environment, which is enhanced by very good quality display, including artwork of high quality in many areas. There is very little litter and no graffiti was seen during the inspection. There is access for wheelchair users to almost all parts of both sites.
89. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Most departments have sufficient resources to meet their basic needs and both the mathematics and science departments have improved the quality and range of resources recently. The two main school libraries are well stocked and resourced. There is a good range of fiction and non-fiction books, ICT facilities, including access to the World Wide Web, some talking books in the lower school library and a good collection of topic boxes to support students' work in the various subjects. The libraries are well used by students throughout the day, including lesson changeover times. Learning support units on both school sites are well resourced.
90. Following a considerable investment in resources, the provision for ICT is good with the ratio of computers to students at the national target level (1:7). Recent changes in provision mean that all ICT rooms have the same computer system, making them easier to use for teachers and students. A recently completed, realistic, achievable and costed development plan is being implemented effectively. This plan, agreed by the governors, is already improving the quality of students' learning and attainment throughout the school.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

91. The leadership and management in the sixth form are very good. The headteacher has a very good overview of the sixth form and is always available for support and advice if required. The head of the sixth form, a member of the senior management team, fulfils his delegated responsibility very well. He has a clear vision for the sixth form and ensures that all systems are properly in place to realise that vision. The school development plan has very specific targets for the sixth form and these agreed targets all have appropriate success criteria. The head of sixth form is very well supported by his deputy and the heads of Years 12 and 13, all of whom have detailed and appropriate job descriptions. The responsibilities of the members of the sixth form management team match their experience, strengths and preferences. This team works very cohesively and also coordinates and manages an impressive enrichment programme.
92. The leadership and management of subjects in the sixth form are good, with the exception of geography where the recent fall in attainment remains to be rigorously tackled. The curriculum has been broadened to include some vocational courses since the last inspection. The trend in results is upward. The attitudes of students are very good. The sixth form ethos is good and staff morale is high. This has all contributed to the high reputation of the sixth form within the community, which is evidenced by the increased number of students on roll and the positive views of parents.
93. The attractive and informative sixth form brochure, which contains details of the curriculum, basic sixth form organisation and procedures, is a very good vehicle for communicating with students, parents and staff. Additionally, the sixth form management team organises a very good programme of induction evenings and days for prospective students and their parents, which enable them to make informed choices. There is a very well coordinated whole-school policy for the monitoring of teaching and learning which also applies to the sixth form. The governors work closely with the sixth form and are very well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The governors are involved at a strategic level in the formation of policy relating to the sixth form. The governing body has not, however, fulfilled its statutory duties with regard to the daily act of worship and the teaching of RE in the sixth form. The governors have been very actively involved in identifying priorities for the future development of the sixth form.

Resources

94. Resources are good. Access to the use of ICT is generally good both within lessons and for private study. Most subjects have sufficient textbooks, with the exception of government and politics where resources have not kept up with student numbers. The sixth form library complements this provision with further textbooks, journals and fiction to support students' wider reading and research activities. History and religious education have comparatively weaker provision. The library has ICT resources to support students' learning and has recently started opening after school. The expertise and experience of the teachers in the sixth form are very well matched to the needs of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95. The school should continue to implement its current development plan. There are no key issues which, on their own, would significantly raise standards. Nevertheless there are a number of lesser but important issues which the staff and governors should consider incorporating in their planning:
 - Improving the attitudes and behaviour of a small numbers of boys in each year group, particularly in the lower school (*paras:14,22,26,164*)

- Increasing the opportunities for vocational courses and work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 (*para 41*)
- Improving the co-ordination and assessment of ICT across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 (*paras: 201,207,215*)
- Improving the expectation and challenge in GCSE PE (*paras: 5,212*)
- Developing a whole school behaviour policy (*para 58*)
- Consistently challenging the highest of higher-attaining students (*paras: 7,23,34,172,212*)
- Sharpening the monitoring of classroom practice for management purposes of ensuring greater consistency and identifying and sharing best practice (*paras: 22,24,26,27,80*)
- Improving the relative weaknesses in opportunities for students' spiritual development and seeking ways to work towards acts of collective worship (*para 49*)

Sixth form

Similarly, in the sixth form there are no major key issues. The school should continue to implement its current development plan and ensure that the following lesser, but important, issues are incorporated:

- Develop and implement planned action to ensure standards in geography return to their previous higher levels (*paras: 264,268*)
- Meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education for all students (*para 50*)
- Devise a procedure for registering Year 13 students when they are on-site but not being taught (*para 70*)
- Ensure that key skills portfolios meet examination board requirements (*paras: 11,67*)

THE AUTISTIC UNIT

96. The Chinnor Resource Unit (CRU) is an LEA specialist base within Lord Williams's School. It is for 30 students whose learning and Autistic Spectrum Disorder affects academic and social development. There are two physical bases, one purpose-built building on the upper school site, and the use of one and a half demountable classrooms on the lower school site. All staff are employed by the LEA central support team, although the management of the unit and school are integrated by the assistant headteacher of the unit being a seconded member of the Lord Williams's teaching staff.
97. The CRU is an effective provision for a specific, yet varied group of students. It works closely with the main school to enable each individual student to make the most of their abilities. Flexibility in the provision allows students and staff to react to changes in students' needs and autism, whilst using the facilities of both the main school and the unit. There is a very positive relationship between the school and the unit.
98. The standards achieved by the students within the unit vary according to the level of difficulty with learning and the degree to which they are affected by their autism. Clear signs of progress by individual students, from their earlier attainment, can be seen from observation in lessons, from records, from their developing individual education plans and the annual reviews of progress. Students with challenging behaviour, but higher general learning ability, more often those with Aspergers syndrome, tend to make good progress working within mainstream groups. This leads to success in examinations up to and including AS and A-levels. The support, care and welfare of students, given by the unit staff and school staff, help promote positive outcomes in all students. This is evidenced through the visits of students, who are mainly integrated into the main school, but who return to the unit, for support, advice and reassurance on a regular basis.

99. The quality of teaching within the unit is good, ranging from satisfactory to very good. It was at its best when teachers had planned well, had good subject knowledge, shared objectives with the group of students, and used a variety of short teaching tasks which all reinforced the social and communication skills aspects to learning. This good teaching enabled students to concentrate for full-length lessons of up to 65 minutes. Teaching assistants worked well with students, making a positive contribution to their learning, and showing a good understanding of the level of their needs. In some lessons that were satisfactory overall, students were not fully involved because lessons were not so well planned and structured.
100. The progress in the learning of students was clear from observation, review of records and evidence of prior attainment. Students worked well within mainstream school lessons, building upon good, sustained, individual progress in integration into the main school. All opportunities, such as break and lunch times, were utilised to reinforce appropriate social skills and learning. Interactions with staff and other students were generally positive and handled well when difficulties arose. A small minority of students, facing difficulties working within the unit and group situations, did not show clear progress in learning and this raises a concern over the age-appropriateness of materials and the placement within the unit. The balance and breadth of curriculum access needs to be kept under constant review to ensure all students receive their entitlement to a full, but appropriately modified, National Curriculum.
101. Students' attitudes to being in the unit are positive. Those students integrating into the school, and using the unit as a safety net, use it well. Behaviour was generally good within the bounds of their autism. No significant incidences of negative behaviour were observed. The ethos of the school was seen as a positive contribution towards the development of students' attitudes and personal maturity. Some faculties, such as creative arts and PE, worked very well with the unit staff and students with autism. Relationships with all staff in the unit and many staff in the main school were very good, with friendly, but firm and supportive help adding to the learning opportunities of all students with autism. Parents were generally very positive in their views of the unit, both in the annual review reports and as expressed in the inspection questionnaire and parents' meeting.
102. Students have very good access to school facilities. In the lower school, staff and students use specialist facilities in dance, drama, PE, technology and science. This enables specialist teaching to take place which cannot operate within the bounds of the unit buildings. Extra-curricular opportunities are good and students have been included in a dance competition, the Rock Challenge, main school drama productions and gym clubs. This works best when teachers have a clear interest, are well informed about the specific needs of unit students, and joint teaching and collaborative work is undertaken with staff and students. A great majority of the unit students join an appropriate tutor group in the main school for at least some of the tutor time. This enables even students with severe autism and learning difficulties to work and co-operate together.
103. The leadership and management of the CRU are effective. Good links to the main school are fostered through the secondment of the assistant headteacher of the unit to the staff of the school. This allows appropriate access to the main school faculties and influences classroom practice. Individual team base leaders work quietly, efficiently and overcome the possible difficulties of the split site. They provide good support for the unit teams of teachers and assistants.
104. The overall strengths of the unit relate to the quality of teaching of the unit staff. The teaching is carefully matched to the main area of need of each student at a particular time. This may focus upon social and communication skills, being a part of a wider community or on academic skills. Being within the mainstream environment and amongst their mainstream peers positively influences the attitude of the students.

105. The main weakness in the provision is the accommodation provided by the unit on the lower school site. The temporary classrooms detract from the positive co-operation within the school and the accommodation does not feel a part of the main school. In addition, not all students take part in an age-appropriate, broad balanced curriculum within the unit.
106. There is scope for a greater involvement, of staff from the unit, in the development of appropriate upper school courses for disaffected students and those with lower academic abilities. Staff from both unit and the school could further develop their links through joint teaching for specific projects and on longer-term teaching projects.

COMMUNITY LINKS

107. The school places great importance on developing links with the local community and has been very successful in doing so. The excellent links it has forged benefit the students at the school and the local community. The school can be justifiably pleased with what it has achieved. Developing links with the local community was an integral part of its successful bid to become a sports college. Within the school development plan there are specific targets for building further links with the community as well as a community development plan. The school is meeting its targets well.
108. An extensive range of links with local sports clubs has improved the opportunities for students to try new sports. For example, the school arranged and paid for coaches from local clubs to provide taster sessions for fencing and kick boxing. After these taster sessions, some students joined the local kick boxing club while the school ran a fencing club and subsidised the cost of coaching. In addition, the school organises sports tournaments with other schools in the area. During the inspection week a Year 7 rugby tournament should have taken place involving seven schools, unfortunately it had to be cancelled because of appalling weather. This was to be held at the local rugby club and coaches from the club were going to instruct the students for an hour before the tournament began.
109. The school works successfully with the local community in such activities as the Thame Festival. The school has organised carnival floats, provided music through its samba band and linked a school arts festival with the town festival.
110. The school actively promotes the use of its facilities by the community and the lower school sports hall is now almost fully booked with many different groups, such as local football and cricket clubs using its facilities to train indoors, and local businesses arranging five-a-side football competitions. Adult Education Services use other rooms in the sport's building to provide English and watercolour lessons.
111. Links with the local community make a good contribution to students' personal development. Sixth form students help in primary schools and may act as mentors, as part of their community service. The Rotary Club holds practice interviews for students in the sixth form to give them the experience of presenting themselves well to people they don't know. In addition, local businesses provide students with work experience placements in Year 10.
112. The school supports the work of other local schools. A teacher from the school and a dance assistant run dance clubs at two local primary schools. Sixth form music students visit primary schools to demonstrate brass instruments as an encouragement for primary students to take them up. Year 9 students have developed their leadership skills by organising sporting events at local primary schools. Sports scholars have also contributed to promoting sport in the local primary schools, as well as using their skills within the school.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|--|--------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 7 - 11 | 150 |
| | Sixth form | 47 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | | 90 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 7 – 11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 6 | 35 | 69 | 35 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 4 | 23 | 46 | 23 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 0 | 18 | 25 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 0 | 38 | 53 | 9 | 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 here as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's students

| Students on the school's roll | Y 7 – Y 11 | Sixth form |
|---|------------|------------|
| Number of students on the school's roll | 1697 | 445 |
| Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals | 53 | 2 |

| Special educational needs | Y 7 – Y 11 | Sixth form |
|---|------------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 74 | 2 |
| Number of students on the school's special educational needs register | 272 | 2 |

| English as an additional language | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 15 |

| Student mobility in the last school year | No of students |
|--|----------------|
| Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 50 |
| Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 23 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|----|
| School data | 93 |
| National comparative data | 91 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.2 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 2002 | 169 | 148 | 317 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 118 | 135 | 125 |
| | Girls | 134 | 119 | 120 |
| | Total | 252 | 254 | 245 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 79 (69) | 80 (83) | 77 (84) |
| | National | 66 (64) | 67 (66) | 66 (66) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 50 (35) | 61 (55) | 44 (54) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 45 (43) | 33 (34) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 115 | 136 | 128 |
| | Girls | 127 | 123 | 127 |
| | Total | 242 | 259 | 255 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 76 (77) | 82 (85) | 80 (80) |
| | National | 67 (65) | 71 (68) | 67 (64) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 32 (30) | 53 (49) | 44 (51) |
| | 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 | 171 | 149 | 320 |

| 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 | 92 | 162 | 165 |
| | Girls | 121 | 145 | 147 |
| | Total | 213 | 307 | 312 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 67 (66) | 96 (95) | 98 (96) |
| | National | 51 (48) | 89 (91) | 95 (96) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | (45.9) |
| | National | (39.0) |

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

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

| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2001 | 74 | 69 | 143 |

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|--------|------|
| | | Male | Female | All |
| School | Number of candidates | 83 | 70 | 153 |
| | Average point score per candidate | 14.9 | 18.1 | 16.3 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | 16.9 | 18 | 17.5 |

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations | | | For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|--------|------|---|--------|------|
| | | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| School | Number of candidates | 74 | 69 | 143 | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| | Average point score per candidate | 15.9 | 18.1 | 16.9 | 6.7 | 18 | 7.8 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | 16.9 | 17.9 | 17.4 | 9.8 | 11.4 | 17.5 |

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

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2016 | 79 | 1 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 86 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 22 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded..

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|-------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 119.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 17.9 |

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Total number of education support staff | 81 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 2042 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 71 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Key Stage 3 | 29 |
| Key Stage 4 | 26 |

Financial information

| | |
|--|---------|
| Financial year | 2001/2 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 6198795 |
| Total expenditure | 6111308 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2954 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 290985 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 378472 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|------|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 29.5 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 49.7 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 4.5 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 4.5 |
| 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 | 2142 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 758 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 39 | 54 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 37 | 53 | 6 | 0 | 4 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 24 | 60 | 8 | 1 | 7 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 19 | 60 | 15 | 3 | 3 |
| The teaching is good. | 28 | 63 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 22 | 49 | 21 | 2 | 6 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 51 | 42 | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 50 | 45 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 24 | 47 | 21 | 2 | 6 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 39 | 52 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 34 | 57 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 51 | 42 | 2 | 0 | 5 |

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- End of Year 9 and English language results well above and literature results significantly above national average
- Very good subject knowledge of teachers used well to question and prompt students
- Advice given to students to help them know how well they are doing and how to improve
- Very good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Boys' attainment across the age range, especially in the writing and spelling of some lower-attaining students
- Speaking and listening skills of Year 10 and 11 girls

113. Results in 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. When averaged over the three years to 2001, girls' results have been slightly further above their national average than boys'. Their performance has been slightly better. English results had been falling for three years but the 2002 results have increased significantly. Performance in English, mathematics and science was similar. English results were well above those of similar schools and, in comparison with students, nationally, with similar Year 6 results, in the top 5 per cent.
114. GCSE English language results for 2001 were well above the national picture for the subject, with three-quarters of students obtaining the higher A* to C grades and all obtaining a pass. Girls' results were higher than boys' but to the same extent as they were nationally. Results in 2002 were similar. English literature results in 2001 were significantly above average with three in five students obtaining higher grades. Girls' performance was better than boys' at the higher grades, although boys' performance, based upon average point score, was better than girls'. In 2002, results improved, particularly for the proportion of girls obtaining higher grades.
115. Standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are good. In their first three years in school, they make good progress from average starting points and are achieving well. Students discuss ideas together industriously in class, thinking through questions independently, and explaining their understanding of issues confidently in response to well-focused teacher questioning. One group of fourteen-year-olds debated the issue of capital punishment judiciously. In the process, they demonstrated a mature ability to consider, summarise and collaborate reflectively on ethical and moral questions, as well as to argue persuasively the case for their own views.
116. Students read a good range of fiction and non-fiction with understanding and enjoyment. They explain fluently their reasons for choosing the novels or biographies they read for pleasure, conveying well their awareness of the way in which different types of books gain the attention of a variety of readerships. By Year 9, students' standards of written work reflect the latest improved national test results because lessons are now better planned to tackle previous weaknesses. Their handwriting is clear, and ideas are thoughtfully arranged using conventions of paragraphing and varied sentence construction to convey their understanding logically. Girls' writing is better than boys' overall, communicating ideas at greater length and in more detail, but boys' standards of speaking and listening

match girls'. Limited opportunities to use computers mean that opportunities are missed to extend writing and thinking. Students with special educational needs make sound progress because they are well supported in class, both by sensitive teacher prompting, and by the constructive presence of additional staff in classrooms who provide valuable extra help to individuals.

117. Current standards of work in Year 11 are very good and students are achieving well. They read and enjoy a good range of fiction, poetry, plays and non-fiction, developing their perception and understanding steadily, in response to well-set, well-marked homework assignments and sharply-focused teacher questioning in class, based on very good subject knowledge. One group working on Tom Leonard's poem *Unrelated Incidents* understood well the way it conveyed the expressiveness of Scottish dialect, while simultaneously dealing perceptively with its theme of social alienation. Year 10 students' assignments on Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* demonstrated the benefit of good, challenging teaching in the way they gained insights to show a strong grasp of the underlying themes of the play, the development of character and use of techniques to build suspense with an audience. Computers are used with reasonable skill to lay out work logically and communicate thoughts well to the reader.
118. Matching examination trends, girls' standards of writing exceed boys'. Here, a small proportion of lower-attaining boys is not sufficiently challenged or engaged, either by the nature of the work set, or the level of teacher expectation of what they should do. Their written work suffers in particular from spelling problems, where they spell words as they sound rather than in the conventional form. Nevertheless, boys' contributions to class discussions are better than girls', especially in cases where teachers do not do enough to draw out the thinking and understanding of girls. The number of students using English as an additional language is small, and they make progress in line with their peers. None are in the early stages of learning English.
119. Teaching is good. It was very good in one in five lessons seen and was never less than satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well, capitalising on students' enthusiasm and interest in ideas, by making sure that they profit from a varied and stimulating range of activities in each lesson. They deploy very good subject knowledge to question and confirm students' understanding of what they have learned. This permeates some of the helpful written comments given to students outlining the strengths of their work, while going on to explain what they have to do in order to get better. At the same time, the quality of comments could be improved by making them more consistent. Attractive well-stocked library areas enhance students' skills of reading for pleasure and information.
120. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. They show enthusiasm and interest in lessons, and respect each others' contributions to discussion, while learning well by listening attentively to teachers and each other in whole-class question and answer sessions.
121. English is very well led by a head of faculty, whose management of a large team of teachers has improved the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Improvements in teaching methods and lesson content have been made following careful checking on classrooms and analysis of samples of students' work, in addition to studying examination and test results in detail. These initiatives have enhanced the quality of learning, with a consequent rise in standards, particularly at the end of Year 9. Improvement, since the last inspection, has been good.
122. Standards of literacy are good overall. Students' learning is underpinned by good quality discussion in mathematics, science and religious education. Teachers explain terms and assist students to use technical vocabulary well in music, geography and religious education. Science teachers' methods to develop students' writing skills are excellent. They help them to develop their thinking and understanding of the subject through a variety of writing techniques, including diaries, poems and

extended writing. This vigorously promotes, research, independent thinking and exploration of personal beliefs and attitudes to the discipline. In design and technology, good methods are used to help students structure their writing logically, and technical language is well used. Art teachers make good use of technical vocabulary, helping students to understand and think about their own work and that of others. In physical education, opportunities are missed to develop extended writing in the examination course, but there is a satisfactory use of discussion in class.

123. A working group has done much to establish good methods of teaching literacy across the school, and has raised staff awareness of their responsibilities in this respect. The outcome is that a great deal of good and some excellent learning was observed during the inspection. Nevertheless, more remains to be done to ensure that all teachers apply such good approaches consistently.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Examination results and student achievement are at least good
- Some staff have excellent skills in the use of the national numeracy strategy
- The leadership and management of the department are good
- There is an effective collegiate approach and strong mutual support among staff

Areas for improvement

- A greater consistency in the use of departmental policies, including the response to the national strategy
- The existing monitoring and evaluation strategies

124. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above the national average and were in line with results of similar schools. They were well above the results of students, nationally, with similar end of Year 6 results. Since students join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding which is around the national average, student achievement is very good in relation to their attainment on entry. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. Overall, results in mathematics have steadily improved since the last inspection, in line with the national trend.
125. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average and well above average for students, nationally, with similar end of Year 9 results. More than 63 per cent of students gained the higher A* to C grades and the overall pass rate exceeded 99 per cent. In 2002, the results were very similar. This represents very good progress. In 2002, girls' attainment was higher than boys' by more than the national margin. Overall, there has been an improvement in performance since the last inspection.
126. Current standards in Year 9 are good overall. In lessons seen during the inspection, Year 7 students were skilfully using algebraic expressions and substituting into simple formulae. A higher-attaining group in Year 9 was enthusiastically tackling an ambitious topic using both graphical and algebraic methods to solve linear equations. An average-attaining group in Year 9 was practising the mental calculation of the circumference of circles and students were quick and accurate in their answers in a well-paced starter activity. In these lessons, expert teachers were using the national numeracy strategy well. Achievement was at least good, and students were well motivated and responsive. In some classes however, where the national strategy was not being used rigorously, standards were not so high. Some students become bored and disruptive and they achieved less than they could because the pace of learning was reduced.

127. Current standards in Year 11 are good overall. A higher-attaining group in Year 11 contained a number of students who had already taken GCSE a year early. They were successfully extending their knowledge of the sine and cosine rule and were working toward AS maths modules. Students in a lower-attaining Year 10 group understood and could describe the presentation of data using bar charts and other methods. They demonstrated an intuitive grasp of probability and could make judgements based on this understanding. Most students can quickly and accurately recall key number facts and can calculate using integers, fractions, decimals and percentages.
128. The school has recently introduced a modular mathematics scheme for lower-attaining students in Year 10. They are responding well to the short term goals and challenges that the scheme presents. Achievement was greatest in those classes where experienced teachers were using some of the techniques developed in the national strategy and used so effectively in Years 7 to 9. For example, students were practising their knowledge of trigonometric functions using a variation of the short starter type activity and were achieving well. In most lessons, student response was positive, and students were well motivated and keen to learn.
129. Overall, teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and nearly one half was good or better. Teaching was most effective in those lessons where the teachers had applied the national strategy. These lessons had good starter activities and learning objectives were made clear to the students. The lessons were well paced and contained a variety of activities. The learning of students in these lessons was good and in some cases, excellent. Teaching and learning overall in Years 10 and 11 are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and more than four out of every five lessons were good or better. The three-part lesson is gradually being extended from the earlier years into these years, and is already embedded in the practice of many staff. The emphasis being placed in some Year 10 classes on the development of examination techniques, and the use of frequent assessment, is having a positive impact on learning.
130. There was little evidence of work in literacy, although a few staff paid considerable attention to the use and meaning of correct terminology. Spelling mistakes in books were often left uncorrected. ICT was not very evident during the inspection, although a good example was seen using spreadsheets to check investigative work. ICT is becoming embedded in the schemes of work and the department has satisfactory access to ICT facilities. The use of the recently acquired interactive white boards is still developing but there is evidence that this technology is improving the quality of teaching and learning in the department. Liaison with the primary sector is effective. The school makes good use of the summer schools and has introduced the Springboard programme into Year 7, although the effect of these has not been analysed.
131. The leadership and management of the department are good and there is a strong collegiate approach to planning. Staff are mutually supportive. This is a strong feature of the department. The department contains some excellent practitioners. The department operates an extensive monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice involving paired observation. Good use is made of assessment data and analysis of results to group students and to set targets. The current departmental policies are well written and provide a good framework for continued improvement. A new marking and assessment scheme has been introduced and where it is fully used, it is proving to be effective in helping students understand their mistakes and how to raise the standard of their work. However, implementation of these policies is inconsistent and the monitoring currently lacks sufficient rigour to ensure that the best practice is being used across the department. The department has three new staff and a further three who have only been at the school for just over one year. Thus, nearly half the staff in the department are relatively new to the school. The expert staff need to be fully involved in helping other less experienced staff to adopt the effective techniques and further raise standards. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

132. Students are generally fluent in basic number skills and can effectively use statistics and algebraic techniques. A very good example of the use of numeracy skills was seen in an English lesson in developing awareness of syllable stress and verse pattern in ballads. In design and technology, the use of proportion and scale was being used, and students' knowledge of shape and space was used to develop 2D and 3D work. Overall, the development of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Very high standards and achievement
- Very good innovative teaching methods and literacy development
- Very good support for students with special needs
- Very good curriculum development
- Very good formative assessment
- Excellent educational leadership and very good management

Areas for improvement

- Disseminate the very good behaviour management of the majority such that no lessons are impaired by the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of students
- Improve accommodation in upper school laboratories as suggested in the previous report

133. Results in the end of Year 9 tests, in 2002, were well above the national average. They were above average when compared with students, nationally, with similar Year 6 results. Results have improved over the previous five years with a similar trend to the national picture. Boys and girls do equally well in science, both exceed the national average.
134. GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average and well above average for students, nationally, with similar end of Year 9 results. All students studied double science. Two thirds of students gained the higher A* to C grades and all candidates achieved a pass. This represents very good achievement. Boys and girls performed equally well. Results in 2002 were very similar.
135. Standards of work seen in lessons and in work samples are consistent with the results of national tests. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Students have developed science skills, such as classifying and creating keys. Good investigatory skills were in evidence in, the effect of cola drinking on pulse rate, the effect of chlorophyll in photosynthesis, and vitamin C investigations. Students show good knowledge and understanding across the topics covered. Standards of numeracy are sound, for example students can distinguish between continuous and discontinuous variation. Standards of literacy are very good, for example in extended writing on selective breeding and on the discovery of vaccination. Students are achieving very well in relation to their average attainment when they started the course. In Year 11 there is a strong tradition of independent writing, even in technical areas such as subduction. There is good research on cell structure, above average in both research method and knowledge and understanding of cells. Higher-attaining students' course work is well above average, including prediction based on well above average scientific understanding, for example on why energy is required to enable animals to stand still (isotonic muscle contractions). Independent work promotes very high standards in higher-attaining students and formative and detailed marking supports the standards of students with special educational needs so that they make very good progress. Students are able to predict the shape of graphs, such as the electrical characteristics of resistors, diodes and filament bulbs. The work samples add to the evidence that achievement is good.

136. Teaching and learning overall is good with many very good features. All teaching observed in Years 9 and 11 was satisfactory or better. One third of all lessons seen were very good or excellent. Teacher knowledge and understanding are very good. Teaching methods promote active learning and this leads to very good personal development and independent work. The pace of lessons is generally good. An emphasis on applying existing knowledge to new situations leads directly to the high achievement. Basic skills are well developed. The small number of minority ethnic students were well integrated and often in the higher-attaining groups. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. Teaching methods for literacy, such as Directed Activities Related to Text, writing frames, sequencing exercises, and sentence matching have been very helpful for them. The overall teaching grade was brought down because in a small number of cases, learning was impeded by some weaknesses shown by a few teachers in curbing the immature behaviour of a minority of students.
137. Attitudes and behaviour overall are good. In the majority of cases behaviour management by the teachers is very good. In most classes the pace of work ranged from good to excellent. The department promotes an active approach to knowledge transformation, which involves listening to students and allowing them to develop their ideas, both orally and in writing. The effect of this approach to teaching is that students develop independence and confidence, which contributes both to good learning and good attitudes. This is seen in the quality of presentation in the written work. There is a minority of students who are disruptive and cheeky. This is particularly so in the lower school, though traces persist in some Year 10 and 11 classes. The department should seek to disseminate the very good practice of the majority across all teachers.
138. The department makes a very good contribution to personal development and social and moral education because the stress on active learning promotes independence, teamwork, co-operation and listening to others. Opportunities for citizenship are identified in the schemes of work and developed by the approach to discussion, distinguishing between fact and opinion and the tackling of ethical issues both in class and in displays of press cuttings. The National Key Stage 3 strategy is well embedded and the GCSE scheme has been very well implemented over a two-year period. Nationally provided syllabuses have been thoroughly modified to fit the students' needs. The provision for literacy development is very good. The schemes contain detailed and insightful methods of teaching discussion skills, extracting meaning from text and extended writing to a range of audiences.
139. There has been a recent but very good development of ICT. Equipment and access to computers have been improved since the last inspection. The curriculum has been audited for opportunities to use and assess ICT skills. During the week, the use of ICT was seen to promote learning on human variation and the chemistry of the halogens, and to facilitate homework, coursework and the development of extended writing on scientific themes.
140. Extra-curricular provision is good with science clubs on both sites. Outside links are fruitful, such as the young detectives work with Year 6 students, competitions such as the Society for General Microbiology and a link with Oxford University on science writing. Work is also done in Cuttlebrook nature reserve and results reported back to the management committee. Submission of the scheme of work on energy to the Energy Saving Trust brought £400 of equipment into the department.
141. Assessment is very good. Participation in the Formative Assessment Project with King's College has made a strong impact on marking. The department consistently follows the model. Students' response to this is very good, with many conducting a dialogue with their teachers through the marking process. The information gathered is used very well to set targets and monitor progress, and to evaluate the impact of teaching.

142. The leadership of the department is excellent and management is very good. The department as a whole is hard working, consistent in the use of teaching and learning strategies and committed to professional development. Improvement has been good. New technology is used very effectively for administration, monitoring and producing teaching materials. Resources are good. Accommodation in the upper school is unsatisfactory and is one feature that has not changed since the last report. This has health and safety implications, particularly for technicians who have to carry equipment to three dispersed sites in the upper school, and laboratories in the Plummer building have hazardous floors and decayed stone work in the windows.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- An ethos that encourages participation and a shared responsibility towards the community
- The skills and expertise of teachers across a range of subjects
- The audit carried out across the school to identify subjects that were already contributing to this area of the curriculum and to identify gaps in provision

Areas for improvement

- The management of the subject; to monitor coverage and the quality of delivery

143. There have been no examinations in this new subject and the school has yet to decide whether the subject will be formally examined. It is thought that students will collect evidence of the course from several subjects and compile a portfolio.
144. Lessons were seen in several subjects where lesson plans contained specific reference to citizenship. In some subjects these referred to the way students were encouraged to cooperate and to work together, as in art lessons. In others it was the curriculum plan that outlined the actual content of the course, for example in history or as part of personal and social education. In most cases, the aims of the lesson and the contribution of the learning to the citizenship curriculum were not made clear to students. As a result, coverage of the key components tended to be incidental rather than underpinned by clearly expressed aims and objectives that students could recognise and relate to. There was insufficient evidence to comment on the standards in citizenship and students achievements.
145. The quality of teaching and learning, in lessons where citizenship was implicit but not a clear focus, were satisfactory overall and in some were good or very good. Some notable examples included a Year 7 geography lesson, a personal and social education lesson in Year 10, a Year 10 business education lesson and in art in Year 9. The key factors that made these lessons effective were that teachers managed students' behaviour well, gave them the space to reflect and ask questions and the teacher spoke from a position of authority and knowledge of the subject. Equality of opportunity underpinned teachers' work.
146. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Currently the school does much to promote an ethos of open and shared decision-making, encouraging students to take personal responsibility for their actions and to become responsible citizens. A start has been made to identify where the citizenship curriculum is currently taught in subjects across the curriculum and encountered elsewhere, for example when students take part in the school council or in the promotion of the healthy eating programme. However, the arrangements for accreditation, monitoring and managing the subject, that is bringing together the elements of the formal curriculum together with the active citizenship components, have yet to be finalised.

CREATIVE ARTS

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning that leads to good progress in Years 7-9 and very good examinations results in Year 11
- The use of computers in Years 7-9 as part of a very rich curriculum
- The support given to students to raise their achievement, by successfully managing students behaviour, adopting range of teaching and learning styles and analysing data to help identify what is working well and where improvements are possible
- Students' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning

Areas for improvement

- The performance of the highest-attaining students
- The accommodation in the upper school

147. Teacher assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 were above those reported nationally. This is good achievement because when students came to the school the standard of their artwork was broadly average for their age. Positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning, combined with strong teaching, contributes to their progress in lessons and through the years.
148. Standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are above average. The curriculum is very rich. Students work with clay, use computers and work in two and three dimensions. Literacy skills are developed well, for example when students' are asked to talk about their own work, when they annotate work in their sketchbooks and when they research and carry out investigations. A very lively Year 8 class was observed who were applying colour, in a fairly random way, to their initial drawings. By getting the students to describe first an imaginary animal, the class teacher made students think more deeply before setting about the practical activity, and the quality of work improved as a result. By the time students begin Year 9 approximately half are working at levels above those expected for their age and have acquired a good repertoire of skills. In one Year 9 class students had excellent sketchbooks containing very skilful drawing and colour work. They used their preparatory work, based on natural forms, to inspire the shapes and decoration of a piece of pottery ware. This work showed a significant number of students were working at very high levels. They were able to use their own work and the work of artists and craft workers to create very imaginative shapes and decorative features cut into or added to the surface of the clay. Students achieve well.
149. The percentage of students gaining A*-C grades in the 2001 and 2002 GCSE examinations was well above the national average. This trend has remained consistently strong and well above the national average for several years. However, the percentage of students gaining the highest A* and A grades is broadly average.
150. From the evidence of the students' work and in the lessons seen, standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above the nationally expected level and a significant number were working at higher levels. In a Year 11 lesson, students learnt how to create the shape of their hand-built pot, to modify it and make the structure strong. Design sheets showed research tasks carried out to a high standard, first designing several possible ideas and then refining their final selection and making prototypes. Students were able to make connections between their own work and the work of a Japanese designer and to demonstrate a good understanding of how the simplicity of line, form and shape had influenced them.

151. The majority of students, including those with special learning needs, achieve well and make good progress. In Years 7 to 9 no significant differences were seen between the attainment of boys and girls. Teachers had found that boys tended to be less organised or able to sequence their ideas and work patterns, so they planned and structured lessons to take account of this. Although teachers mark thoroughly, praising what is successful and giving students information on how they can improve their work, they give insufficient information on National Curriculum levels. Without this information, students are less able to monitor their progress. With this information, teachers could more precisely target their teaching to ensure higher-attaining students demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding identified in Levels 7 and 8.
152. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well because the teaching is reflective and responsive to the pace at which students are progressing. Teachers make good use of the data and other information they are given to monitor students' progress. Teaching has clear objectives so students are aware of what will be assessed and can structure their work in lessons and at home accordingly. As the work on display and in portfolios demonstrates, by the end of the course they have acquired a wide repertoire of skills that can be used independently and in combination.
153. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations. They feel passionately about the subject and have the skills to stimulate students' interest and curiosity and develop high levels of creativity. Their commitment to learning leads to some thoughtful and innovative teaching and learning, particularly in younger classes. In lessons where students made the greatest improvement, teachers used writing frames, and questioning effectively to challenge and prompt students to think more deeply. They made their expectations of behaviour and work rate very clear, and stuck to them. Since the last inspection, computers are in regular and effective use in Years 7 to 9 and are often combined with other more traditional media. The use of computers is under-developed in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum, which includes visits to national galleries and museums together with visits and presentations from artists and designers, makes a significant contribution to students' personal development.
154. Leadership and management are very good. The subject is very strong, and high standards and success in examinations have been maintained. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There are improved systems for assessing attainment and progress in Years 7 to 9. The increasing information this is providing will allow a more rigorous analysis of the outcomes of teaching and learning and will inform teachers' expectations and lesson plans for all year groups. Use of computers is now planned within the curriculum for younger students but more needs to be done to ensure the skills are developed in the GCSE course. Throughout the school, the development and good use of sketchbooks supports students' independent learning very well. The accommodation in the upper school is unsatisfactory. There is too little storage space, the rooms are cramped and restrict the scale and range of GCSE work.

Dance

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2002
- Sports college links which supplement the curriculum
- The extra-curricular opportunities offered

Areas for improvement

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the schemes of work• Identify and make use of the common aspects in drama and dance |
|--|

155. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is in line with the national expectations. Students enter the school with varying experience of dance skills and make good progress in reaching average levels by the end of Year 9. Dance is taught to all students in mixed groups and boys and girls make similar progress. They achieve well. Students' work shows the full range of body awareness with generally good spatial awareness. The students generate a good variety of ideas, as seen when working on mirror imaging in the style of the DV8 dance group.
156. GCSE results were in line with the national average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002 when almost all students obtained grades A* to C. The current standard of work is good. Students show good ideas in developing the motif from a set pattern. The quality of movement, not a focus in the lesson seen, was varied. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and are achieving well.
157. Overall, the teaching of dance is good with a number of very good aspects. Students are well managed. Teaching challenges students well and requires high levels of concentration from them. The activities provided encourage the participation of boys and girls. GCSE work is carefully marked with encouraging, constructive comments that helps the students improve their work. A comparative weaknesses in teaching was missed opportunities for student involvement in leadership roles, for example when the teacher leads the warm up and the teacher gives developmental ideas without first allowing the students to experiment with their own ideas. Behaviour in, and attitudes to, dance are very good. Students bring appropriate kit for lessons, arrive ready to participate and really get involved in the lessons. During students work well in pairs and in groups, and show an appreciation of the contributions of others.
158. The curriculum is good. The provision of a range of extra-curricular activities allows good opportunities for performance, and the recently started dance group for boys is aimed at encouraging more to take the subject at examination level. The school having sports college status has benefited dance in a number of areas, for example the involvement of a professional dancer working on a Street Dance project with all Year 9 groups. This adds to the cultural development of the students, as did the African Dance work undertaken earlier this year. Schemes of work are under revision but currently lack detail. At the moment, drama and dance are taught as discrete subjects within the creative arts faculty. Some students study drama first and others dance; common elements are not identified and so opportunities to build on previously covered work are missed.
159. The department, in conjunction with physical education, has developed and begun to use National Curriculum levels for assessment. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The new head of department, in post for only seven weeks, has a clear vision as to the way forward but the impact has yet to be seen. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Dance has been introduced into Year 9, there is closer liaison with physical education, all staff are dance specialists and there is a wider range of extra-curricular activities.

Drama

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

| |
|--------------------|
| <h3>Strengths</h3> |
|--------------------|

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GCSE results have been very good over the last two years and the standards achieved by students currently in Years 10 and 11 are above national average |
|---|

- Students are confident performers with good awareness of how to stage their work. They combine gesture, movement and voice effectively
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and stress on technical vocabulary leads to students being able to link theory with practical work
- The new head of department has a clear vision of how to take the department forward, exemplified in the development of a well-structured scheme of work

Areas for improvement

- The carousel within Years 7 to 9 which hinders the steady development and extending of drama skills
- The management of the misbehaviour of a minority of immature and over-confident students who try to misuse the independence which drama requires of them
- The accommodation for teaching drama in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.

160. Drama is a discrete subject in Years 7 to 9 and is a popular GCSE option, attracting a good balance of boys and girls. In 2001, GCSE results were very high with all candidates gaining a higher A* to C grade and a quarter gaining A*/A grades. Boys made comparatively better progress in drama than in the other subjects they studied. Results in 2002 were almost as good with all candidates gaining a pass and over a third gaining A*/A grades.
161. Standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are at nationally expected levels. This represents satisfactory achievement from their starting point in Year 7. Girls do better than boys because they are more careful in planning their work, and more willing to reflect on how it might be improved. All students show good ability to work in groups and to present rehearsed pieces to an audience. Imagination is well used in making use of space and furniture for a set. Many students learn how to combine movement with gesture, expression and voice. Ideas presented are often very predictable because few students explore alternative ideas in their groups before they begin to rehearse. Too many fail to realise the importance of close attention to circle activities and their lack of thoughtful listening leads to a superficial understanding of what they need to do.
162. Lesson observation confirms that the standards in Year 11 are above the nationally expected level. This good achievement is evident in group work where students show good co-operation and listening skills. They organise time well, can work without being distracted by others working in close proximity, and learn how to judge their own performance. As an audience, they are attentive and supportive. A Year 11 class studying *Billy Liar* made very good progress in getting into role when the teacher stimulated them to look, think, act, and talk in character. The written work of GCSE students is confident and interesting, with good understanding of drama shown in the correct use of specialist terms. They are weaker at applying focus skills to their work, so that in discussion they analyse a performance from a general viewpoint rather than by considering how effectively dramatic techniques have been used. Too many limit the impact of their very good practical work by not adapting the pace and volume of their delivery to suit the requirements of space and audience.
163. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They take a full part in lessons and gain confidence from the chance to use scripts or shared group-ideas, for performance.
164. Overall, the quality of teaching observed was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and all lessons contained good features, especially those with older or more co-operative students. Teachers have good subject knowledge from which students learn drama vocabulary and techniques. Year 7 students began to realise the need to consider how their performance would appear to the audience when the teacher alternated activities between small group and whole class work. The effective use of space and furniture is well taught, although teachers are inconsistent about insisting on the quiet, careful movement and use of tables and chairs. Both in discussion and marking, teachers give valuable

guidance to students so that they have good awareness of the standard of their work and how to improve. Teachers use a good range of methods within lessons but routines for physical or mental warm up and what is expected from circle work are too varied. It is partly because of this that some students lose concentration and self-discipline. When this leads to silliness, teachers tend to intervene too little and too late. Younger students would benefit from shorter bursts of group work with a clearer emphasis on improving the techniques being learnt, interspersed with quiet spells of planning and reflection.

165. Student behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory. Many students respond well in drama lessons, showing thought and consideration for others and a willingness to work together, take turns, and support each other. A minority of students in every class can become inattentive, spending energy on immature and moderately disruptive behaviour. Whilst this always stems from boys, a minority of girls are too easily drawn in. Thus some student attitudes, even in some GCSE classes, are disappointing. Relationships between students are always good, and even in Year 7 they are comfortable working in mixed sex groups.
166. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Most strengths have been sustained, and GCSE results have improved. Student attitudes, whilst satisfactory, have declined and this is one of the factors which has led to the progress of students in drama during Years 7 to 9 being satisfactory where it was previously good. Drama is taught in various spacious rooms in lower school, but none provides a suitable combination of flooring, blackout/lighting, adaptable furniture and display facilities. Shared use rooms mean that it is very difficult for teachers to provide the stimulating drama atmosphere which would benefit younger students. The upper school drama studio provides very good accommodation for teaching students on the GCSE courses. Beyond lessons, the department provides theatre trips, workshops, clubs and involvement in school productions.
167. There are sufficient, appropriately-qualified teachers for drama but their other commitments and responsibilities make planning meetings, communication and consistency, difficult to achieve. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. A rotation system between dance and drama means that students' skills and understanding are not systematically developed and this inhibits their progress. The recently-appointed head of department provides enthusiastic leadership for the subject and has already determined priorities for improvement. Considerable work has gone into a new and developing scheme of work which is very well thought out.

Music

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are consistently high
- Teachers are excellent musicians and their teaching methods help students to build on their knowledge and skills through very good planning
- Very good relationships that increases students' confidence and effectively supports their learning

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough computers to allow all students to make use of music technology
- Quality and relevance of singing within lessons is weak

168. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was significantly above the national average, representing good achievement and a significant improvement since the last inspection. Results gained in 2002 were even higher. Boys and girls do equally well.

169. Over the last two years the teachers' own assessment of students' standards at the end of Year 9 has been overly optimistic and significantly above the level reported nationally. This is because the assessments have not related to the National Curriculum levels in all areas of students' work due to the unstable staffing situation at that time. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 9, standards are above national expectations. This represents good achievement in relation to students' musical attainment on entry to the school.
170. By Year 9, students who receive instrumental and vocal tuition, either privately or from the visiting tutors, achieve very high standards of performance. Standards of notation and theory work, such as recognition of modes, is better than that normally found. The more musically talented students have a well-developed vocabulary of technical musical language which they use well to describe the music they play and hear. In one Year 9 lesson, students created themes in response to hearing an extract from Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije*. They accurately notated them and discussed the texture, melodic shape and pitch. There is good emphasis on the use of literacy and numeracy to help students develop their research skills and ability to recognise musical patterns. Singing in lessons is generally weak. Students' tonal quality is poor and lacklustre singing is praised too highly by teachers. Students do not sing suitable songs that link directly with the focus of the lesson. Students do not get access to computers with music software and as a result they cannot create, refine or develop their musical ideas.
171. Standards by Year 11 are above average; this represents a good level of achievement in relation to these students' level of attainment at the end of Year 9. The standards achieved by the current Year 11 are slightly below that of previous years. This is because there are more students who have not had any prior musical experience in this particular year group. The higher-attaining students are good performers on their chosen instruments, as was demonstrated by one Year 10 girl who performed a well structured piece using complex cross rhythms on the drum kit. The standard of her playing was very high, especially considering she had only been playing the drums for six months. Composition work is generally good but lower-attaining students struggle with incorporating harmony into their simple pieces.
172. Students learn well because the teaching is good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and the subsequent learning are very good. The teachers are skilled musicians, as was seen, for example, when a teacher expertly demonstrated the instruments of the woodwind family to a Year 9 class. Lessons are carefully prepared to include development of literacy and numeracy. In the better lessons, the introduction includes a sharing of the learning objectives, this is followed by the learning activities and a final check of the students' understanding. Teachers have high expectations, assessment is frequent and students understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Students are encouraged to incorporate their instrumental skills within the classroom, often resulting in high levels of performance. Students generally benefit from tasks which are carefully matched to their needs but occasionally the more musically talented students are not challenged enough and do not always work as well as they could.
173. All students show good attitudes to their work, relationships within lessons are very good and there is a good environment to encourage learning and build students' confidence. Students are attentive, quickly settle down to their tasks and, when motivated by good teaching, respond well. However, a minority of students in one Year 9 lesson did not behave as well as expected and slowed other students' learning. Students are taught to listen to and respect the views of others. There are good opportunities for social development through working together and taking part in the extra-curricular activities. Work is marked regularly but some constructive comments are too brief to give detailed guidance on improving performance. The quality of the tuition provided by the local music service's visiting instrumental teachers is good and students achieve well in lessons.

174. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The recently appointed head of department fosters a very good spirit of team work and is providing the leadership necessary to take the department forward rapidly. The staff team work well together and have a shared vision for the future of the department. They are already having a very positive impact on the quality of students learning through their energetic and enthusiastic approach. Schemes of work are being reviewed and the department's development plans demonstrate realistic and well thought out aims. Assessment procedures are now effective, with all students aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Good use is made of students' self assessment. The department is supported very well by seventeen visiting instrumental teachers. Accommodation is excellent, with good sized teaching rooms, a keyboard room and several practice rooms for individual study. Resources are good but the requirement for using ICT within the subject is not being met because there is no use of computers or music software in the lower school.
175. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Enthusiasm for the subject is very high and there is an increasing range of musical activities which are valued highly by students. The music department contributes well to the personal development of students throughout the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Consistently high standards being attained
- Good teaching and learning in all years leading to good achievement by all groups of students
- Good student attitudes which contributes to their learning
- Very good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Greater consistency in behaviour management
- More consistency in identifying learning outcomes and sharing assessment criteria
- Further guidance to teachers on planning for the development of students' literacy, numeracy, personal and ICT skills

176. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were well above those reported nationally, as they have been for several years. Current work indicates that these high standards are continuing and that students are achieving well when compared to the attainment on entry to the school.
177. The standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are above the nationally expected level. Students use a good range of presentational skills for recording results of surveys, they make flow charts of their production methods and carry out evaluations of existing products and their own work. They use computers effectively for research and presentational purposes, for example in the drawing of three-dimensional models of houses. Projects are well-structured and as a result good levels of knowledge and skills are developed. Students gain good practical experience in working with a wide range of materials, components and ingredients and, overall, their work reaches a good standard. Well-planned projects, which include good designing and making opportunities, encourage all students to make at least good progress and higher-attaining students achieve very well within Years 7 to 9.
178. In 2001, overall GCSE examination results were significantly above the national average. The results of both boys and girls were similarly above their respective national averages. All design and

technology subjects results were above the national figures with results in food technology and graphics being consistently highest. Results in 2002 were similar to those in 2001.

179. The standard of work of students currently in Year 11 is above nationally expected levels. Students effectively use a range of presentational techniques and include a significant amount of computer-generated work in research, computer-aided design, simulation of electronic circuits and presentation of work. Levels of knowledge and understanding are good. Students demonstrate good practical skills with good use of manual skills, and application of computer aided manufacturing, to model ideas and make final products. Standards of work are good in each of the design and technology subjects and the work of the highest-attaining students is very good. Overall, all students make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course.
180. Teaching is good overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach the skills of the subject well. Well-structured courses in each of the design and technology options ensure that students cover the requirements of the examination well. Lesson planning is effective with most teachers having suitably high expectations of what students can do and using time and resources effectively. In most lessons, the management of students is a strength and teachers achieve the high standards of behaviour they expect. In a small proportion of lessons, students do not make as much progress as they could either because the expectation of their behaviour, when the teacher is demonstrating, is too low or the marking criteria for students work is not made sufficiently clear. As a result of good teaching, students learn well. Students have good knowledge about materials, their properties and their uses. They follow instructions carefully and carry out guided activities that enable them to acquire knowledge and skills. Most students work at a good pace and show interest and concentration when carrying out set tasks. Opportunities for more independent learning and creative thinking enable all students to achieve well and for higher-attaining students to develop very well-presented and original ideas. Assessing students' work with them, allows effective guidance to be given and provides very good opportunities for older students to review and improve their coursework. Literacy, numeracy, opportunities for personal development and the use of ICT are included in students' work but these areas would benefit from more detailed planning for their development. Homework is used effectively to enhance coursework.
181. Overall, students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Although there is potential for students to be disruptive, most are managed very well and respond positively. Students like design and technology and, because most lessons are well planned and managed, they concentrate well. Good working relationships exist in most lessons because teachers know and care about students and their work. As a result, most students want to get on with their work and the attention seeking and disruptive students are more easily dealt with. All students benefit from well-organised and structured work and experiences in design and technology make a positive contribution to their personal development.
182. The curriculum for design and technology is good and time is used well. However, because some students in Years 10 and 11 do not take a design and technology option, the school is not meeting current statutory requirements.
183. Leadership and management of the department are good. Development priorities are appropriate. A strong team of well-qualified and committed teachers is well supported by departmental documentation although this could be developed to provide further support in interpreting policies into practice. Accommodation and resources are both satisfactory overall. The new accommodation, due to be finished shortly, will be a big improvement. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with many of the strengths identified in the last report being maintained.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Above average standards in Years 9 and 11
- Good teaching in most lessons, together with good attitudes among students leading to good achievement for most

Areas for improvement

- In a small number of lessons, unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour and acceptance of this by teachers, leading to insufficient learning
- More opportunities for fieldwork needed in Years 8 and 9

184. In 2002, the results from teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above those reported nationally. Standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are also above average. Standards of presentation are generally good, with almost all students able to present what they know effectively, for example about the range of natural hazards, through writing and diagrams. Students know the causes and effects of such hazards as volcanoes and earthquakes. In describing and explaining these, for example when speaking during lessons, many students confidently use specialist language. Conversely, a few make simple spelling mistakes, indicating failure to check their work fully, resulting in a lowering in its standard. Students achieve well in relation to their average standard when they come to the school. Those with special educational needs generally also make good progress, especially in lessons in which there are teaching assistants. This is because the teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide effective support, well geared to meeting individual needs.
185. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly above the national average and an improvement on the 2000 results. There was no significant variation in the results of boys and girls. Results in 2002 indicate that this improvement has been maintained. Standards of work of students currently in Year 11 are above average for this stage in the course. Many students show good skills, for example in interpreting maps to identify the way in which land is used, and produce clear, detailed notes. Students show good understanding of issues, for example when comparing the reasons different groups of people might visit a vulnerable area like the Great Barrier Reef. All students maintain their good achievement through Years 10 and 11.
186. The attitudes and behaviour of students were generally good although with variation. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, attitudes were excellent with students very well behaved and working together in pairs, with enthusiasm, effort and pace. Similarly, in Year 11 the response of students was consistently very good with students concentrating very well. In Year 9, attitudes and behaviour were sometimes unsatisfactory, due to less effort and an inability to concentrate on individual tasks, and this led to insufficient work and learning taking place.
187. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons, very good planning and classroom management effectively improve knowledge, understanding and skills in relevant and integrated ways. Planning also ensures that tasks and resources provide the fullest opportunity for students, of all levels of attainment, to achieve as fully as possible. This is enhanced by good questioning that provides an opportunity for students to volunteer answers and ideas and, by being directed, ensures that all are involved. Teachers encourage students well, so that willingness and confidence to respond are boosted. In most lessons, homework tasks are given that enable students to practise independently what they have learned in class, or undertake research that will be useful for following lessons. A very small amount of teaching was unsatisfactory because too low a level of effort was accepted resulting in insufficient learning.
188. Teaching supports the development of literacy by encouraging relevant and confident use of specialist vocabulary. The best paired and group tasks provide very good opportunities for speaking and listening. Reference to statistics helps students to understand, for example, the potential impact of eco-friendly policies upon the world environment. The department recognises however, that it needs to continue to improve the way in which it plans for these opportunities. There are currently insufficient opportunities to take part in fieldwork in Years 8 and 9, although the department has plans to improve this.

189. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Help in presenting work, a weakness previously, is now a strength. More work closely matched to student need was seen in this inspection. Opportunities to use computers are increasing in number and effectiveness, but are not yet sufficiently identified in the scheme of work. Teaching, learning and achievement have improved. There remains a need for closer liaison with the primary sector to try to improve consistency in the level of geography skills when coming to the school.
190. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall with some strengths in management. For example, the department has good assessment procedures. The monitoring of teaching and learning, and sharing of good practice, have been approached with commitment but the inspection evidence is that this is not currently as effective as it has been in the past. There is a tradition of delegation that promotes teamwork well. The longer term, strategic leadership is not currently so obvious. The situation has recently been affected by illness and the promotion of key members of staff. It is important that the school monitors the situation closely and provides appropriate support until current uncertainties are resolved.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- High expectations that all students can make good progress, leading to good results at GCSE, especially the proportion of A* and A grades
- Teachers show very good subject knowledge, and an approach to history which motivates students of all ages to be enthusiastic learners
- Good use of a wide range of teaching methods, incorporating use of ICT, thinking skills, literacy and activities which develop historical enquiry for all students
- Good leadership and management contributing to the popularity of history at GCSE and for further study

Areas for improvement

- Tracking the development of historical skills is comparatively weak so that students in Years 7 to 9 do not know how they can improve their own learning

191. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were above those reported nationally. The standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are above average. Through their study of trench warfare in the First World War, students were developing their skills of interpreting original source material well. They used their findings to develop an empathy and an understanding of those involved, the life of an ordinary soldier and the difficulties of the commander, Haig. Some asked quite perceptive questions, for example about the impact of the Gallipoli Campaign on Russia's part in the war. Students with special educational need receive appropriate support and the use of writing frames helps all students to progress well.
192. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly above the national average, particularly in the highest A*/A grades. Girls' results were higher than boys' and by a greater margin than they were nationally. A significantly higher than national proportion of the year group is entered for examination. Students make comparatively greater progress in history than in the other subjects they study. Results in 2002 were a little lower than the previous year.

193. The standards of work of students currently in Year 11 are above average. Students have a good understanding of, for example the factors leading to the reform of public health in the nineteenth century and the role played by the government in this. They are able to extract the appropriate information from their sources, to analyse this and evaluate the relative importance of each piece of information. In doing so, they are developing historical methodology well.
194. Students' attitudes to history are good, they enjoy their work and willingly get involved in the lessons, working well together. It is a popular option choice. Behaviour is better in Years 10 and 11 than in the earlier years, where some students, mainly boys, need very firm control.
195. Teaching is good. Teacher's good knowledge of their subject helps them to plan good and interesting lessons which incorporate a variety of tasks. They make very good use of resources, including their own original source material. For example, the use of a grandfather's war diary as a chaplain provided a good stimulation for Year 9 students' own, empathetic writing. Video material is used well to focus students' attention and interest. The use of a computer simulation was not only fun but helped Year 9 students to understand some of the difficulties faced by a commander. Teachers manage students well and have effective strategies for coping with any behavioural issues. Teachers help students make sense of the past, for example by thinking through positive and negative features of the feudal system, to compare these with modern rights and responsibility. Assessment of students' work in the upper school is clearly related to examination criteria and students are given good guidance on how they might improve their work. Discussion, as a teaching strategy, is familiar to older students and is used well, involving them all and helping them to draw their ideas and understanding together. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants, through the careful matching of work to their needs and through strategies, such as the use of writing frames, to help them record their work. This good teaching leads to good learning.
196. Leadership and management are good. The options studied in the GCSE course have been chosen in the expectation that they will appeal to boys and, by gaining their interest, raise their attainment. The curriculum makes a good contribution to students' personal development, for example through consideration of the changing role of women in society and the discipline of discussion as a teaching method. Very good support materials are provided for non-history specialists teaching the Years 7 and 8 humanities modules. A number of visits enhances the taught curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been sound.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8 are good, ensuring effective gains in students' knowledge and skills
- Computers are used very well in history, design and technology and mathematics to enhance subject knowledge and skills
- Greatly improved provision
- Very good leadership

Areas for improvement

- Greater access to computer use in a number of subjects
- The assessment and monitoring of student progress and standards in Years 10 and 11
- Raising the attainment of the higher-attaining students

197. The results, of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were similar to those reported nationally. Students enter the school with varied information and communication technology experience, but overall it is broadly average. The current standards of work in Year 9, seen in lessons and recorded work, are average while standards in Year 8 are above average resulting from the focused teaching these students have received. There have been no examinations in Year 11. Current standards in Year 11 are satisfactory. In both Years 9 and 11, too few students achieve the higher levels.
198. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. The recent introduction of information and communications technology lessons in Years 7 and 8 has made a positive contribution to improving standards and provision. Most students achieve well, with greater gains being made in Years 7 and 8. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There are no discreet lessons but nearly all subjects contribute to learning in information and communication technology and this is a very positive feature of provision. The monitoring of students' achievement and progress across work completed in other subjects is currently weak. In all years, students show higher attainment in information and communication technology through their work in design and technology, business studies, mathematics and history. In design and technology, they use complex, industry standard, two and three-dimensional drawing and rendering software packages. They design complex objects and modify them to good, often excellent, effect. In history, students simulate battles, varying aspects to produce different results. In mathematics, a program is used very effectively to create highly motivating and enjoyable activities in which students achieve well. The achievement of lower-attaining students is good, the use of the computer often motivates them. Students with special educational needs make good gains in ICT skills and in their subject skills through the use of computers. For example, the word processing of history coursework on Adolph Hitler by a student with autism helped effective reflection on the issues raised. The use of computers contributes to the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, Year 8 students modified text to suit different audiences, presenting it in different styles and choosing which was most appropriate. Year 9 students drew accurate designs for nets using a vector drawing program.
199. Students' attitudes to the subject and their behaviour in lessons are good, and often very good. Students work hard to produce work which, for example combines data, images and text. Relationships between the teachers and students are very positive. Students listen carefully and settle down quickly to work. They use computers enthusiastically. Their positive attitudes are illustrated by their independent use of computers in the library and their enthusiastic debating of issues around the use of information and communication technology. They make good use of ICT to learn quickly about difficult topics in other subjects, For example, Year 9 students in science solve the mystery of a decaying object, and in mathematics and science they explore the relationships of angles, force, motion and acceleration.
200. The quality of teaching in information and communication technology lessons, in Years 7 and 8, is good. In lessons across the subjects in Years 9 to 11, teaching is satisfactory although sometimes it contributes to good and very good lessons. In Years 7 and 8, teaching is always at a good pace and this contributes to fast gains in learning and achievement. Teachers' long term planning is improving through the use of national schemes, and this is contributing to more effective learning.
201. The curriculum provision has improved and meets statutory requirements although, currently, there is no use of ICT in music in Years 7 to 9. English, modern foreign languages, art, religious education and history need greater access to computers to enhance their subject curriculum further but this will require more time than is currently available in the computer suites. Access to computers for students' private study is limited before school, during breaks and after school with the opportunities offered by the libraries often being fully booked. Assessment procedures are good in Years 7 and 8 with target

setting and review sheets. Assessment and cross curriculum monitoring is satisfactory in Year 9 but weak in Years 10 and 11.

202. Leadership has recently improved and is very good. Many innovative and bold changes have been made to the curriculum. These have been costly yet worthwhile, and successfully implemented. A task group meets regularly to plan improvements across all subjects. A recently completed, realistic, achievable and costed development plan is being implemented effectively. The ratio of computers to students is at the national target level (1:7). Recent effective changes in provision mean that all ICT rooms have the same computer system, making them easier for teachers and students to use.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The good or better teaching in nearly all the classes from enthusiastic and committed teachers
- The good subject knowledge of the teachers and their very good linguistic skills
- The contribution made by the French and German assistants
- The excellent programme of trips and exchanges to France and Germany
- The very good management of the department

Areas for improvement

- More use of ICT to enhance learning
- The achievement of boys
- The extent to which students participate orally

203. Most students have little or no knowledge of French or German when they arrive in Year 7, and so all courses are for beginners. In 2002, the results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 were above those reported nationally. In French, nearly two-thirds of students reached the expected Level 5 standard while in German it was more than two-thirds. Girls' results were higher than boys' in both subjects. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course.
204. The standards of work, in French and German, of students currently in Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. In a Year 9 French top set, students could brainstorm well on topics for a survey and had a good knowledge of basic grammar. Pronunciation was generally very good with the exception of a few students. In a Year 9 top set in German, pronunciation ranged from satisfactory to good. Most students displayed above average standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing. In both languages, higher-attaining students are writing dialogues, short letters and compositions containing a range of tenses and simple structures at Level 5 or above. Average and lower-attaining students write basic dialogues and short texts, pick out details from simple recordings, understand classroom instructions, read short familiar texts and ask and answer simple questions.
205. In recent years, the school has entered over 90 per cent of Year 11 students for a language examination whereas, nationally, the figure is nearer 60 per cent. This makes direct comparison with national standards a little difficult. Nevertheless, results in French in 2001 were well above the national average. Results in German were broadly in line with national results but the proportion of the year entered was twice the national proportion. Girls' results were higher than boys' but by a smaller margin than nationally in French and by a larger margin in German. Boys and girls made comparatively more progress in languages than in the other subjects they studied. Results in both subjects were significantly lower in 2002. Girls' results fell slightly but boys' results were very much lower. This indicates underachievement of boys.

206. In French in Year 11, the standards of students' recorded work are above average. Higher and average-attaining students have written on a wide range of topics including holidays, daily routine, school, jobs and family relationships. Many students can use a range of basic tenses and simple structures well. In a Year 11 class, largely of lower-attaining students, many could pick out leisure activities from a recording, but made lots of basic errors in simple sentences. Their answers to GCSE oral questions were hesitant. In a Year 11 top set in French, students could make good presentations about sports and hobbies after preparation in pairs. Most students are currently achieving satisfactorily in French. Standards in German in Year 11 are generally above average. In a Year 11 top set, students could understand a lesson conducted almost entirely in German and understand a recording of people talking about a menu. Their pronunciation and intonation when reading out loud was very good. Their ability to talk in German was less well developed. In a Year 10 mixed ability set containing some lower-attaining students, most could talk about the life of someone in the past when given adequate support. The five students with special educational needs participated well, both orally and in writing, with the effective help of the teaching assistants. The written work in German is generally in line with national expectations. Achievement in German is good.
207. The teaching and learning of French and German are generally good and several were very good or excellent. Teachers' linguistic skills in French and German are very good and they have a very good understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. Teachers have high expectations of student behaviour and attitude to work. Lessons are very well planned and lesson aims are always made explicit to ensure that students understand what is to be covered and what has to be learned. All lessons cover the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a logical sequence and homework always consolidates and extends class work effectively. Modern foreign languages contribute well to students' general literacy skills by focusing on grammar and the importance of accurate spelling. Lower-attaining students, and those with special educational needs are very well supported in most lessons. Teachers frequently set different tasks to match individual learning needs, which enable all students to participate well in lessons. Most students are actively involved in lessons and quickly tackle written and oral tasks. They listen carefully to spoken texts to pick out details. In a few French lessons, some students do not make sufficient oral contribution. Occasionally, in French lessons, some students are slow to start a task and do not work at an acceptable rate. Students taking German are generally attentive and apply themselves well to their learning. Teachers mark students' work regularly and include detailed comments and set targets to help students raise their standards. More use could be made of ICT to enhance students learning. The department has few ICT resources.
208. The department is very well led and managed. Departmental documentation, including schemes of work, is very good and teachers work well together as a team. Trips abroad are of great benefit to those students who take part. In-class support from the French and German assistants is motivating students and helping to improve oral fluency. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The positive relationships between staff and students
- A very good range of after school activities
- Good facilities

Areas for improvement

- The setting of targets for improvement for individual students
- Extending the most able students
- Developing consistency in both teaching and classroom procedures across the department

209. The results, of the end of Year 9 teacher assessments, in 2002 were above those reported nationally. Evidence from lesson observations indicates standards are average although in both badminton and football they are above.
210. Although a significant minority of students perform at levels above average, especially in football, and to some extent in badminton, the attainment of the majority of students is at nationally expected levels in most areas of the curriculum. Most students are able to apply the techniques, skills, and where applicable, the competition rules to several aspects of the curriculum, including rugby, football, basketball, badminton and gymnastics. In football, students in a Year 9 mixed ability group displayed both accuracy and control in their passing, and many students display control skills that are well above that expected from students of this age. Students in a Year 8 badminton group had a good range of basic shots which they were able to execute with accuracy and control. A significant minority of higher-attaining students were not given the opportunity to extend their skills in several lessons. The ability of students, in Year 9, to observe and analyse performance is under-developed but where the opportunity to do so occurs, especially in gymnastics, it is contributing to improvement in their performance.
211. The GCSE examination course was started in September 2001 and the first group of students will be examined in 2003. Evidence from the recorded course-work of students in Year 11 indicates a sound understanding of many aspects of the physiology and anatomy units and of the unit on the acquisition of skills, but little application of this knowledge to practical sporting situations. Students in a Year 11 practical lesson on badminton had a sound understanding of a range of basic shots and were able to execute these basic shots with reasonable accuracy. A significant minority had well above average skills in most aspects of badminton but were unaware of how these related to specific examination criteria. Attainment of students following the basic course is at expected levels. In football, although a significant minority of boys have very good control and are accurate in their passing, the majority are inconsistent with their passing and control and also lack essential tactical awareness.
212. Overall, the progress of students in lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 is good. In a good badminton lesson, Year 8 students improved their technique in a range of basic shots and developed a good understanding of how to score in doubles and some tactical awareness. In a Year 9 football lesson, boys made good progress in developing close control skills and in developing tactical awareness and applying this to a game situation. In Years 10 and 11, progress in lessons observed for most students was sound although, given the progress earlier in their school career, progress overall during these years is unsatisfactory. In lessons on football, both Years 10 and 11 boys made some progress in the development of basic passing and control skills but those higher-attaining boys did not improve their performance skills to the appropriate level or apply them consistently in a game situation. Year 11 GCSE, students made satisfactory progress in a theory lesson focused on the risks associated with participation in a range of sports, but were not encouraged or challenged to make decisions on how to combat these risks. In several lessons on both sites, the progress of higher-attaining students is unsatisfactory because they are not sufficiently challenged.
213. Students' attitudes to learning are good, although better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are generally attentive and are able to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Relationships are usually very positive and this is a significant factor in the progress made in many lessons. There are

very few opportunities for students to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official, and opportunities for independent learning are generally restricted.

214. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but was better with the younger students. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. In the good lessons, a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to students through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning, is also a feature of these lessons. Discipline and class management is good. In those lessons that were not as good, management of the students was weaker, planning was not sufficiently specific or detailed, and the range and type of activities was less appropriate, particularly with respect to extending the higher-attaining student. In good lessons, the assessment of performance is regularly used to enhance teaching but even in these lessons students are only rarely set clear targets for improvement. Observation and evaluation by students, to help improve performance is still developing and is not consistently applied, although it was good in both Year 7 gymnastics lessons and had a very positive impact on learning. Assessment of each activity at the end of a unit is developing. Recording of assessment, using specific criteria linked to schemes of work, and involving students in setting their own targets for improvement, is not yet being developed. This is restricting individual student progress. The assessment of GCSE theory work is inconsistent and is not providing enough useful information to help students to improve.
215. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides opportunities for all students to develop skills, understanding and knowledge in a good range of activities. Schemes of work are still developing but are sound working documents although they do not provide specific guidance on developing the potential of the more able students. Although there is a discrete unit on fitness in the older students' curriculum, and a unit on health education in the lower school curriculum, there is insufficient emphasis in many lessons on the importance of health related fitness and insufficient time to develop levels of fitness. There is very little use of ICT, even in the GCSE course. A very good range of extra-curricular activities and fixtures with other schools provide opportunities for students to extend and develop their skills. The many school teams are very successful in fixtures with other schools and many students achieve representative honours at district and county level in a range of sports.
216. Management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department works hard to further the best interests of both staff and students but does not teach either GCSE or A-level courses and does not fully appreciate the issues involved in the successful development of these courses. The present development plan provides many appropriate targets. However, for all members of the department to be genuinely involved in the development of the department, more time needs to be spent deciding on priorities and agreeing procedures and curriculum development, with a clear focus on teaching and learning. The day-to-day organisation of the department is very good. All members of the department are committed, generous with their time and good role models. The departmental handbook clearly identifies most policies and procedures, although it is still in some instances a statement of intent rather than a reflection of working practice. The head of department and other members now monitor the teaching and learning, though this has yet to result in any significant impact and there are significant differences in classroom practice and procedures. There are very few opportunities for the department to share good practice and for this to affect the overall quality of teaching in different activities.
217. The school achieved sports college status in 2001 and this is beginning to have an impact on the physical education department in several ways. Staffing has been enhanced and dance and outdoor education are now available for students at the lower school. All students now have the opportunity to take GCSE physical education, and for those who do not there is the opportunity to take the Junior Sports Leaders Award or coaching and officiating awards. Staff development opportunities have

improved. The very good, and developing, community links have resulted in improved opportunities for students to participate in an extended range of after school activities.

218. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Assessment procedures have developed since the last inspection. A discrete fitness course has been developed in Years 10 and 11, although the development of physical fitness is still not a significant feature of most lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Planning and preparation of lessons
- Short course GCSE results and levels at the end of Year 9
- The oral work in lessons makes a particularly good contribution to students' learning

Areas for improvement

- Boys' attainment at the end of Year 11
- Use of ICT to enrich students' learning experience
- Building on existing monitoring and evaluation in the department to ensure consistency

219. The results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above the average expected by the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Results in the 2001 short course GCSE were above the national average. There is a rising trend. Results in 2002 are an improvement with girls gaining better results than boys.
220. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is above expected levels. Higher attaining students produce pieces of high quality extended writing on *Good and Evil*. The work of lower-attaining students shows effort, care and understanding of the key ideas. In Year 9, oral work in particular showed that students had made good progress in their understanding of religious and moral issues. In a Year 9 lesson on prejudice, lower-attaining students demonstrated a good grasp of the key issues through their answers. Students are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course. The standard of work of students currently in Year 11 is above average. There are some very good examples of written work and examination coursework. Year 11 coursework showed maturity in students' ability to address the complexities inherent in topics such as euthanasia. Students are achieving well.
221. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to ask searching questions and give clear explanations. Lessons are well planned, the expected learning outcomes are shared with students and a plenary session helps students to confirm what they have learnt. Lesson time is used effectively to allow the teacher to interact with individuals or small groups and provide them with focused support they need to progress. Students typically respond to the teachers in lively and keen, if sometimes chatty, fashion, with both boys and girls of all abilities keen to speak, write and offer their views. Good examples of work closely matched to students needs were seen. In a Year 8 lesson on Hinduism students were invited to experience aspects of the ritual if they wished. In a Year 10 lesson students made good use of ICT to construct a presentation on a euthanasia campaigner. A very small minority of boys learn less well because of silly and immature behaviour. The best examples of marking give guidance to students on how to improve, but the quality is inconsistent in years 7 to 9.
222. Improvement since that last inspection has been satisfactory. Improvements in the provision of specialist teaching, time for the subject, results, accommodation and compliance with the Agreed

Syllabus through a carefully audited scheme of work have been made. Resources are good. Leadership and management by the acting head of department are good, with promising work in hand to develop and extend existing monitoring and evaluation procedures.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

GCE AS level courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Mathematics | 4 | 75 | 62 | 25 | 15 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Other sciences | 6 | 100 | 78 | 50 | 27 | 3.2 | 2.3 |
| Dance | 4 | 100 | n/a | 75 | n/a | 4.0 | n/a |
| Religious Studies | 1 | 100 | 85 | 0 | 26 | 1.0 | 2.4 |
| Sociology | 5 | 80 | 63 | 40 | 7 | 2.6 | 1.2 |
| English language | 8 | 100 | 96 | 75 | 28 | 4.0 | 2.9 |
| French | 2 | 50 | 78 | 0 | 13 | 0.5 | 1.7 |
| German | 3 | 100 | 82 | 0 | 13 | 1.7 | 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 | 45 | 98 | 87 | 49 | 43 | 6.6 | 5.8 |
| Chemistry | 20 | 85 | 90 | 35 | 43 | 5.3 | 5.9 |
| Biology | 23 | 87 | 88 | 30 | 34 | 5.0 | 5.3 |
| Physics | 20 | 90 | 88 | 35 | 40 | 5.6 | 5.7 |
| Design and technology | 25 | 100 | 91 | 36 | 30 | 5.8 | 5.4 |
| Business studies | 18 | 89 | 92 | 22 | 32 | 4.6 | 5.5 |
| Economics | 19 | 100 | 89 | 58 | 36 | 7.0 | 5.5 |
| Sports/PE studies | 18 | 94 | 92 | 33 | 25 | 4.8 | 5.1 |
| Art and design | 37 | 100 | 96 | 59 | 46 | 8.1 | 6.6 |
| Music | 4 | 100 | 93 | 50 | 35 | 7.5 | 5.7 |
| Geography | 31 | 97 | 92 | 42 | 38 | 6.3 | 5.7 |
| History | 25 | 84 | 88 | 36 | 35 | 5.0 | 5.5 |
| Religious studies | 8 | 88 | 92 | 25 | 38 | 4.8 | 5.8 |
| Sociology | 32 | 88 | 86 | 47 | 35 | 5.9 | 5.3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------------|----|----------------------------|-----|
| English literature | 46 | 93 | 95 | 28 | 37 | 5.1 | 5.9 |
| Communication studies | 10 | 100 | 93 | 70 | 31 | 8.2 | 5.5 |
| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
| French | 8 | 75 | 89 | 13 | 38 | 3.5 | 5.6 |
| German | 4 | 75 | 91 | 0 | 40 | 4.0 | 5.8 |
| Other languages | 1 | 100 | 93 | 100 | 56 | 10.0 | 6.8 |

Intermediate vocational qualifications

| Qualification | No in final year | % gaining qualification | | % gaining merit | | % gaining distinction | |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Leisure and Tourism | 14 | 93 | | 46 | | 0 | |

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

223. In mathematics, the inspection focus was on the A-level mathematics course. The department also offers courses leading to AS level and to A-level further mathematics, a re-sit GCSE course, and the Year 12 Application of Number section within the key skills course. In science, the focus was on A-level biology and chemistry courses. Results in further mathematics have been very good in recent years, with all students gaining A to C grades. Given the need to recruit sufficient students, timetable enough lessons and retain students for the full course, the department has been successful. The teaching is effective. In an observed lesson, the students displayed accurate skills in identifying regions on a graph that met a set of conditions. The good subject knowledge of the teachers and the very good relations with the students are used well. In an application of number lesson, the teaching engaged the students with a practical starter activity that practised ratio ideas and a main activity about value-added calculations, intended to have relevance for the students' A-level targets. However a weakness was the lack of a scheme of work to ensure well-planned use of the series of ten lessons. The students were unclear about what was expected of them and their recorded work reflected the lack of planning. Appropriately this course is a focus for department development.
224. The science department also provides an A-level physics course. Results in A-level physics over recent years have been in line with national averages. One lesson in Year 12 was observed. The teaching was good, the learning was satisfactory and attitudes were positive. Attainment was in line with national expectations. The lesson was about simple resistors. Students worked in groups doing practical experiments, but with differing degrees of success. The teacher provided a very good instruction sheet to guide the work, but some groups were confused for a time on how to proceed. The outcomes of the different groups were very variable. The homework provided a good opportunity to consolidate the work in the laboratory.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- A-level results in recent years have been well above national averages

- Teaching overall is very good and the courses are well planned
- The students are well motivated and work hard, in response to the keen support from staff

Areas for improvement

- The department development plan appropriately identifies the need for consistency of high quality teaching and of students' achievement on different courses

225. Results at A-level mathematics in 2002 were similar to those of the previous four years, which had been well above the national averages. The proportions of higher grades A and B have been good. Students achieve well in relation to their standards when they start the courses. Records suggest fluctuations in the relative success of the mechanics and statistics modules, of which the department is aware. Twice as many boys as girls take A-level mathematics, which matches the national pattern with no significant difference in their performance. The GCSE re-sit course has been less successful, but this is a current focus for development.
226. The standards of work seen in lessons and in written work are high. Students work hard to learn methods and to record solutions accurately. For example, students confidently apply skills of algebra and trigonometry and use notation precisely, as a result of the thorough teaching. Students produce careful sketches of graphs, although they do not all achieve a full understanding, which was seen when relating graphs of a function to its gradient function. Students have very positive attitudes, they concentrate well in lessons, and work hard. A good feature is how students raise questions themselves to clarify ideas, and the teaching provides them with worthwhile opportunities to discuss mathematics and explain what they are doing. In relation to their GCSE results students are achieving well.
227. Teaching is very good overall, based on lessons observed, recorded work seen and examination results. Strengths include the teachers' confident and secure subject knowledge, reflected in clear explanations in lessons. Teaching is well planned to follow a scheme for each module, within a schedule that is shared with students. The use of a variety of approaches leads to interesting lessons and effective learning. For example, students used individual white-boards to quickly practise and check ideas, they discussed work in small groups or learnt from a fellow student presenting an accurate solution to an A-level statistics question. In a very effective lesson in preparation for their statistics coursework, students learned in great detail about the marking criteria. Both higher and lower-attaining students gained considerably from the activity. Assessment is good, ranging from constructive comments on work, to review tests at appropriate stages, to formal assessment and moderation of coursework. Some use is made of graphical calculators and computers, although this is not yet planned into the scheme. Students individually use the Internet, for example to find data, and neatly present their A-level coursework using word processing. The teachers relate very well with the students, who much appreciate the quality of the teaching and the dedicated help provided, including that available out of lesson time.
228. The management of A-level mathematics is good, benefiting from expert and enthusiastic leadership and a keen team of staff. The overall planning, schemes of work, use of resources and co-ordination of assessment, including coursework, are good. Provision is enhanced by the book resources, access to computers and range of mathematics books in the sixth-form library. The plans for developing sixth-form mathematics are appropriate, including priorities related to different courses and to the sharing of good practice. Monitoring and evaluation, to check that such developments are achieved, will be important to enhance further the current provision.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The rising levels of attainment in the subject
- Aspects of teaching; particularly the high expectations of students, the requirement of students to apply the knowledge gained and the linking of concepts to everyday examples that helps learning
- The range of enhancement opportunities available
- Leadership and management giving a clear focus for improvement
- The rising popularity of the subject both in the numbers following the first and second year of the course

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring greater consistency of marking, devising a way of checking students notes and assisting weaker students with their note taking and organisational skills
- Developing the use of ICT

229. Results over the last three years have varied, being above the national average in 1999 and 2000 and in line with the average in 2001. The results in 2002 have risen and are likely to be above the national average. In relation to the their GCSE results, most of the students did as well or better than expected and they achieved well.
230. The standard of work of the current students is good. Year 13 students were seen coming to terms with the nerve pathways and showed a good understanding of the Institute of Biology criteria for constructing data table and graphs. Year 12 students recalled information and applied it to a practical experiment. Their confidence in handling apparatus improved during the lesson. They had a good understanding of experimental error and could suggest how the experiment might be improved. Lessons started promptly and the students concentrated throughout. Their very good attitudes to the subject assisted their very good learning.
231. Teaching is very good. Teachers build upon previous work, link the work to everyday situations to assist learning and link theory to practical work. Good questioning extends the thinking and understanding of the students. The work is clearly set in the context of the examination requirements. Throughout lessons there is an emphasis on applying the knowledge learned. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and are able to develop their comments and answer questions clearly. Key skills of communication and the use of number are included when appropriate, as in a piece of work on magnification and biological units. The use of ICT to support teaching is developing. Homework is used well to consolidate new learning and in preparation for the next session. A comparative weakness is the tendency of teachers to complete students' answers rather than drawing out ideas from the students. Some weaker students need more help in ensuring accurate note taking and organising their folders.
232. The AS and A-level courses show a suitable progression from the GCSE course. The entry level to the course is broad, including all who can offer a valid reason for following the course. The needs of all students are met and excellent use is made of a wide range of enrichment activities. Most students attend a fieldwork course, attend evenings at the Café Scientifique, and go to a variety of lectures. Particularly gifted students are encouraged to enter for the Biology Olympiad, organised by the Institute of Biology, in which they have obtained two bronze medals.

233. Leadership is very good with the impact of the clear direction provided by the new head of department being seen in the 2002 results. Management is very good. Analysis of examination results and particular units of work have resulted in modifications to the teaching. Assessment procedures are good and the students appreciate the way in which they are encouraged to achieve well and are monitored and supported. Teachers of the A-level science courses work closely together, ensuring consistent demands on the students. Good improvement since the last inspection has resulted in higher numbers of students, rising levels of attainment and far more opportunities for students to develop their interest in the subject beyond the timetabled lessons.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- 2002 results show an improvement in performance by an average of one grade per student
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have a very positive attitude to their work. They make very good intellectual efforts during their lessons to understand the concepts they are being taught
- Relationships are very good and create a supportive learning environment
- The department is well led. Detailed schemes of work provide a framework within which the team can deliver a coherent curriculum experience
- A very good database is kept in order to track individual performance and identify student needs.

Areas for improvement

- Continue the development of the use of ICT
- Identify opportunities for spiritual and cultural development and higher level communication skills within the schemes of work

234. Results in 2001 were average with boys and girls performing similarly. The results were lower than the previous year due to some changes in staffing and personal difficulties experienced by some students. Results in 2002, for a new modular course, show a significant increase.
235. The standards of work of current students are also above average. In a Year 13 lesson on redox potentials, students made a great effort to understand the principles of these reactions and worked hard to apply them to the practical work they had done. Through discussion with each other and the teacher, they gradually sorted out their difficulties. Higher-attaining students made very good progress during the lesson. Students in Year 12 are making good progress having found the adjustment to A-level work demanding but rewarding. They are able to do calculations to find formulae and are learning to think critically about concepts such as electro-negativity. They are able to transfer relevant learning from other courses, such as biology
236. Teaching is very good overall. The course is taught by a team of four well-qualified teachers who are ably supported by their technician. The very good knowledge and understanding of the teachers allows them to plan a range of interesting activities to help students understand and apply the principles of chemistry. As a result, the students learn very well. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher provided a stimulating activity on polar bonds, involving models of compounds, for students to discuss in pairs. His questioning technique challenged the students to think in depth about the overall polarity of the molecules they were handling. The level of discussion was very good and students made good progress. Very good relationships develop student confidence, enabling them to ask for help when they do not understand. They are able to challenge ideas in debate and identify their own learning needs.

The activities provided promote individual learning and understanding and enable students to progress at their own rate.

237. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of structured questions. Problems identified through the marking of these are followed up in the chemistry support club. This club is well attended and students appreciate the opportunity to get individual attention. There are occasional opportunities for extended writing to provide material for the key skills portfolio. Topics covered include the history of the periodic table and the work of Kekule on the benzene ring. The best of this work is well written and referenced, but many students show that they need to develop their writing skills further.
238. Students use books well, but find using the Internet more difficult due to the time factor that can be involved in identifying appropriate websites. Some guided use of ICT resources for research and for presentation would be beneficial. Dataloggers have recently arrived and the department has this area of work on its development plan
239. The very good teaching and learning result from the department being very well led. The head of department was appointed, on an acting basis in September 2001. This was confirmed in September 2002. He has taken and extended the management principles of the science department. The new scheme of work and the very good database of assessment information allows the team to work closely to promote high quality learning. There was little mention made of the A level work in the last report, save that results were below expectations. This is no longer the case and improvement has been satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

240. The school offers design and technology A-level and a lesson was observed in Year 12. Results over recent years have been in line with national averages. In the observed lesson, teaching and learning were very good and students' attitudes were very positive. The lesson focused on product design and standards were above average. The teacher was well prepared and made good use of Power Point to present aspects of the lesson. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and used very good exemplar materials to engage students well. Students worked in pairs on some tasks.

BUSINESS

241. The school offers A-level and AVCE business studies, and A-level economics in this area of the curriculum. Lessons in these subjects were sampled. Results in A-level business studies have been below the national average in recent years but have improved significantly in 2002. The observed lesson focused on the difference between a full and private limited company. Teaching and learning were good with a variety of different activities which successfully engaged students' interest. In particular, one real-life activity based on share prices motivated students to achieve well. The teacher's recapitulation at the end of the lesson was very effective.
242. A good lesson in AVCE business studies focused on the principles of marketing. Standards were above average. The teacher had good subject knowledge and chose a good range of products for students to consider. Students' attitudes were very positive and good use of ICT resulted in them being actively involved in the lesson.
243. Results in A-level economics have varied enormously. Rising to well above average in 2001, they have fallen significantly in 2002, although with a much smaller group of students. A good observed lesson, in

Year 12, focused on aggregate supply and demand. The teaching and learning were good. The teacher's subject knowledge was good and led to a very good variety of activities which stimulated lots of interest and discussion. Students' standards were above average, their attitudes were excellent, relationships were very positive and students made good progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

244. The school is offering an AS-level course for the first time. In a large class in Year 12, teaching and learning were very good. Students learned complex key skills at a good pace. They tried hard to complete tasks and then apply them, working well in groups and in pairs. They value the course and see that it links well with the other subjects they are studying. In Year 12, all students take a Key Skills course in information and communication technology. Attainment is at the national standard and students achieve well. In a sampled lesson, students understood databases and were able to structure the form for gathering evidence for specific purposes. Students made fast gains in knowledge from a low base level.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The school offers A-level sports science and travel and tourism, and intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism.

Sports science

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

Strengths

- Use of a good variety of teaching methods results in effective learning
- Coursework is a particular strength
- Very good attitudes assist students in their learning
- Benefits from sports college status of very good accommodation and good learning resources

Areas for improvement

- Assessment which provides individual targets and clear information to enable students to see how well they are achieving them

245. In 2001, results were similar to the national average, a drop from the previous year. Results in 2002 were significantly higher. Since 2000, when the course started, girls have done better than boys. In these examinations, students produced course work which exceeded the average grade.
246. Students currently in Years 12 and 13 are also producing work which is of average standard. Most students in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course. Current students have not benefited from an examination course in Years 10 and 11. Year 13 students understand why fitness is important. They keep fitness diaries so that good links are made between fitness, body function and achievement, and students understand the psychological and physiological factors affecting performance. They recognise the influence of history and culture on contemporary sport, identifying how international events like the paralympics not only benefit the disabled but also benefit international understanding. Students effectively use graphs and tables to illustrate their work and understand calculations on acidity and the energy required in exercise. High-attaining students produce mature written work that is accurately structured and correctly uses technical vocabulary. The presentation of the work of lower-attaining students does not provide such a good basis for future revision.
247. Overall, the teaching is good and students learn well. Teachers plan and organise well, giving good pace to lessons, resulting in effective learning. Most lessons include a variety of teaching methods that reinforces learning as well as adding interest. For example, in a Year 13 lesson the teacher conducted two experiments, involving students, so that complex issues on fatigue prevention in the body and the

preparation made in the body to receive anticipated loads, were explored. Good links between theoretical principles and practical experience were made. Teaching is often linked to familiar situations or sports personalities so that students readily relate this to their learning. For example, David Beckham's skills were used in understanding movement and muscle action. Satisfactory use is made of information technology to support individual research. Lower attaining students receive individual attention but they need more guidance in analysing exactly what is required for a set piece of work or an examination question, as well as regular, clear targets for improvement. Teaching is less effective when, for example, scientific principles on constants and comparators are not applied. Marking and assessment are not sufficiently linked to target setting with information which will enable students to identify quickly underachievement.

248. Students have a very responsible attitude to their work. They have justifiable confidence in their teachers' knowledge. Good relationships enable teachers to question effectively and include all students in discussion. Students work well together and are prepared to assist one another, for example in making improvements to computer work. Students enjoy the course and are fully committed to achieving well.
249. The course is well led. Teachers have good, specialist skills and update their knowledge by attending courses and studying evaluations of examination courses. Careful analysis of examination results leads to the identification of ways to raise standards. Teachers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of students' previous performance in the various components of the course and know where improvements might be made. The course benefits from the school's sports college status. Accommodation is very good and learning resources are good with the departmental library being supplemented by good provision in the sixth form library.

Travel, tourism and business

Overall, the quality of provision in travel, tourism and business is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching results in students developing confidence and increasing their knowledge and understanding of this vocational area
- The enthusiasm and commitment of students
- Development of the key skills, particularly communication and ICT

Areas for improvement

- Developing work placement opportunities
- Developing opportunities to improve numeracy skills

250. In 2002, the six students entered for AVCE travel and tourism all achieved significantly better results than the grades predicted from their earlier attainment. All but one of the seventeen GNVQ Intermediate students gained a pass, with seven achieving merit awards. Almost all achieved or exceeded predicted grades based on their earlier attainment.
251. The standards of work being produced by current GNVQ and AVCE students are in line with course expectations and all students are achieving well in relation to their starting points. This good achievement is the result of the high motivation of students for sustained, productive and increasingly self-organised work. They are all well supported by teachers who know their strengths and weaknesses very well and respond sensitively, while at the same time insisting on standards that reflect the ability of the students. The accuracy of written work, particularly for AVCE students, is good and most students are able to write effectively for different purposes. Their ability to think

critically is developing and they have a good understanding of all aspects of the travel and tourism course. Year 12 GNVQ students on the leisure and tourism course have good ICT skills which they are beginning to use effectively to help them research information on the leisure and tourism industry. Overall, good progress is made in the key skills of communication and ICT which are related to realistic situations in the travel and tourism industry. There is little evidence of the development of number skills.

252. The quality of teaching is good on both courses. In a Year 13 lesson, where the aims of the lesson were made very clear, students made good progress in planning a residential visit they were to make to the Peak District linked to another part of their course. They developed a good understanding of the importance of such issues as customer base, marketing, finance and time scale, which ensured that the quality of their planning was very good. They used ICT very successfully to conduct their research and to help with analysis. Students worked extremely well independently, but were very well supported at all times by the class teacher. In a Year 12 GNVQ lesson, students were researching different tourist destinations in an attempt to discover how different destinations attract different types of tourists. All students used the Internet very successfully and were using ICT to produce displays and a presentation for the rest of the group. A significant feature of all lessons is the very good relationship between students and teaching staff. The high expectations of staff are rewarded by the commitment and enthusiasm of students.
253. Travel and tourism is well managed and the teacher in charge is well supported by other teaching staff. Courses are enhanced by visits and case studies but there is insufficient opportunity for students to participate in structured work placements. The students benefit from a well planned programme of assessment which helps them with their target setting and is a significant factor in the good progress made.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

254. The focus was on art and design and music, but dance and theatre studies were sampled. In dance, the students learned very well because the teacher had planned a very good variety of tasks dealing with the style and characteristics of the choreographer Lea Anderson. Students were very focused throughout the lesson and produced some stunning dance phrases incorporating minimal facial expressions and body gestures. In a satisfactory theatre studies, lesson students again showed good focus and concentration as they read from the script of Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*. Progress in developing their skills was generally slow. The teacher had very secure knowledge, but left the students to work on their own for too long which slowed the pace of the lesson. The lack of guidance and ability to involve all students in discussion resulted in the students not producing enough work.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Very good examination results
- Teachers' excellent subject expertise, consistently very strong teaching and joint reviews of students' work
- The combined skills and expertise of teachers across a range of disciplines and the excellent team work
- A popular subject that recruits very high numbers of students

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation; there is insufficient space for the numbers of students

255. Examination results in 2001 were well above average, as they have been for three years. Results in 2002 were higher. Of the 22 students entered for A-level art and design, 14 gained A grades and 6 gained B grades. In the AS examinations in the same year, 22 of the 33 entered attained either A or B grades. Most students who chose to take the course had previously attained above average standards in art and design and a wide range of other courses. Nevertheless, their achievement was good in relation to their prior attainment and some did better than their GCSE results indicated. Male students did particularly well with most making significant gains in relation to their GCSE and AS grades. A high proportion of students who begin the AS course continue onto A-level examinations and then onto degree courses in higher education. They are prepared very well for the next steps in their education.
256. Students can choose to work in a range of art disciplines including ceramics, print, painting and drawing. They also complete a written study that draws on the contextual factors that affect artists' work and prepare a multi-media presentation that supports their attainment in the key skills - literacy and information and communication technology. The standard of work by students currently in Years 12 and 13 is well above average, with significant numbers of students on track for very high grades. All are achieving well.
257. Current work and work in portfolios and sketchbooks contain excellent examples of drawing and painting from life. Students are encouraged to explore a range of possibilities and to experiment and express their individual ideas and opinions. They argue convincingly and authoritatively the connections between their own and the work of artists, sculptures and designers. In particular they demonstrate high levels of intellectual curiosity supported by their reading and visits to exhibitions. They are confident and articulate communicators. Teachers closely question and challenge students and rigorously monitor their progress. Classes are each taught by two teachers. The excellent joint planning, communications and teamwork allow students to benefit from different teaching styles and specialist skills.
258. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The strengths of teaching are in teachers' very good subject knowledge and their wide range of specialist skills. Students learn very well because the regular one-to-one assessments of their work and progress, give them a clear idea of how they are achieving and where improvements can be made. Time is spent purposefully and their independent learning skills are excellent. Students are very committed to their studies and very positive about the courses offered and the support they receive.
259. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Examination results over recent years have remained very high and teachers constantly search for ways to improve them further. Recruitment is excellent, reflecting the very high level of interest and enthusiasm generated in GCSE courses. However, the numbers place great strain on the accommodation, which is inadequate. Improvement since the last, very positive inspection, is good.

Music

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

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching with well planned lessons containing a variety of learning activities
- Teachers are enthusiastic with excellent subject knowledge
- Students really enjoy the subject and are eager to learn

Areas for improvement

- The number of students studying the subject is relatively low considering its success at GCSE level
- The use of ICT is not sufficiently incorporated into lessons

260. Results in 2001 were above the national average although the small number of candidates makes the comparison insecure. The two students in 2002 gained higher results. Almost all students complete the courses, but numbers choosing to study the course are relatively low considering the high take up of music in Years 10 and 11 and the size of the school. Students currently in Years 12 and 13 are producing work of above average standards. This represents good achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the sixth form.
261. In Year 13, students produce imaginative compositions that reveal a personal response to a theme or subject. Students' work makes appropriate reference to different musical periods and cultures, and the higher-attaining students show a sophisticated understanding of composers specific styles and characteristics, for example folk music seen in the work of Bartok and Smetana. They evaluate their own work and that of others sensitively, using appropriate technical language. Performance and composition standards are generally good. Students follow musical scores, for example when studying the structure of a dance suite by Bartok, and are familiar with several styles of music and can recognise them aurally. They perform to a high standard on their chosen instruments. Students create their own short works harmonised with simple chordal structures, including first and second inversions, resulting in compositions of a high standard. They understand and can apply musical vocabulary including musical devices such as imitation, sequence, modulation, and suspensions. Students use computers well to research the work of specified composers or periods and a few use computers to manipulate and create their compositions but generally they do not use music software enough during lessons.
262. Students learn well because the teaching is good overall and gives clear guidance to prepare students well for examinations. Teaching is characterised by excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject which is passed onto the students very well. Lessons consist of well organised and tightly planned teaching to which students respond very positively. Students enjoy music lessons because of the enthusiastic teaching and the variety of engaging tasks. They are enthusiastic musicians, keen to learn, willing to join in discussions and take a pride in their own learning. Relationships between teachers and students are very strong and this results pleasant atmosphere, with students feeling free and able to contribute appropriate suggestions. Teachers promote good standards by setting high expectations. In a Year 13 class the students responded well to the challenge of following a complex musical score to identify such features as dactylic patterns, scotch snap and cross rhythms. Teachers ensure that the work is well matched to students' needs and that all students are included in the lesson so that they are able to experience success and celebrate their own achievements. Students receive careful guidance and their progress is effectively monitored.
263. The recently appointed director of music has already had a very positive impact on many areas and as a result of her vision and enthusiasm the department has made good improvement since the last inspection. The department is well organised which results in its provision being effective for all students. The staff team are highly skilled and work well together. Overall, the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory.
264. Students willingly take part in the increasing range of extra-curricular opportunities. For example, the standard of the school orchestra rehearsing for the forthcoming production of the Wizard of Oz was particularly good, with students freely giving up their time after school. Students are given opportunities to perform within the community. The school has strong links with partner primary schools and

students are actively involved in fostering relationships with younger students. For example, several students have given demonstrations of brass instruments in the primary schools and also rehearse and direct a lower school brass ensemble. It is clear to see why the school has gained the Artsmark Gold award.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on all six subjects in this curriculum area.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The good attitudes of students assists good learning
- Information and communication technology is effective in broadening the knowledge and understanding of students

Areas for improvement

- Standards, particularly in the AS-level course, and retention onto the second year
- The use of student performance data to identify weaknesses and inform curriculum planning
- Leadership and management to ensure an improvement in attainment

265. Results in 2001 were above the national average and have been at or above average in preceding years. This represented satisfactory achievement for those students in relation to attainment on entry to the course. Results in 2002 were significantly lower. Results in the 2002 AS examination were also significantly lower than the previous year and resulted in very few of these students continuing onto the second year of the course. The students taking A-level in 2001 and AS-level in 2002 had very similar attainment in GCSE. The department is working to redress this.
266. The standard of work of students currently in Years 12 and 13 is broadly at expected levels for the course. Students make satisfactory progress in determining the key characteristics affecting climate in intermediate latitudes and can transfer their learning between a range of contexts and case studies. During Year 13, their analytical skills develop and knowledge and understanding of world climate and population are being consolidated at a satisfactory rate. The recorded work of students is variable and notes for some students are insufficient to meet course requirements in option areas. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory but a greater focus on these aspects would improve the pace of learning, particularly for average and lower-attaining students.
267. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and some good teaching and learning was observed during the inspection with well planned lessons and clear learning outcomes. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Students' learning is supported by extra-curricular opportunities including attendance at study conferences and residential visits to Wales for fieldwork. Insufficient use is made of the local environment.
268. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good and they are keen to do well. Their development as independent learners is satisfactory. Students speak positively of the support and advice they are given by teachers and of their willingness to extend such support outside lessons.
269. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance and taking effective action are unsatisfactory. There has been a lack of structure in the approach to addressing the decline in student numbers and the unsatisfactory progression from AS to A-level. The reasons for the decline in performance in the AS programme have been only partly analysed and understood. There are appropriate assessment arrangements and students know what they need to do to improve. The focus on clear short and medium-term targets needs to be maintained so that students may develop the relevant strategies for achieving their minimum target grades.

270. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Schemes of work need to be consolidated. Greater use needs to be made of information from assessment to identify underachievement and to develop strategies for raising attainment. The department is making increasing use of ICT although its use in supporting the more advanced skills, for example the assessment of aggregate data, making projections and forecasts and of modelling, is under-developed.

History

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

Strengths

- Improving standards
- Very good teaching across a large group of students with a broad range of ability
- Teachers' very good subject and syllabus knowledge supports students' learning
- Very good relationships with students and very good support for independent learning

Areas for improvement

- Implementing the carefully considered agenda of review and development focused on raising achievement

271. Results in 2001 were broadly in line with national averages. Results in 2002 were significantly higher with twice as many students being examined. Students achieved well in relation to their attainment in GCSE. There is a rising trend in results.
272. Standards of work of current students in Year 13 are in line with course expectations. A class of students was observed absorbing layer upon layer of detail, analysis and interpretation of the rebellions of 1549. The higher-attaining students were confident in suggesting explanations of the rebellions' impact and resolution. All students in this class showed a sound grasp of events and issues. Standards in Year 12 are in line with course expectations. After the first half term of their course, students were confidently preparing presentations on the Pilgrimage of Grace. All students in this group activity showed a sound grasp of significant events and developments. Higher-attaining students confidently took into account the perspectives of a range of contemporary participants. A sound foundation is being laid for independent learning.
273. The evidence from students' results, their recorded work and observed lessons is that teaching is very good. The teachers are experienced, enthusiastic and committed to their students' success. Their enthusiasm is transferred to the majority of students, who make good and sometimes very good progress as a result. Teachers have confident subject and syllabus knowledge, and planning, teaching and assessment reflects this. They provide a wide variety of learning opportunities, including effective support posted on the innovative department website. Provision for gifted and talented students includes the History Society. This has recently been revived by some committed young historians who organise a stimulating programme of lectures, presentations and visits. Boys and girls, and students from ethnic minority backgrounds, make similarly good progress on the two year A-level course.
274. The department is very well led and managed. Teaching across the department is regularly monitored and reviewed. Teachers provide a range of interesting learning activities and resources. They provide quality support through their assessment of students' work. A core of experienced teachers have detailed understanding of the demands of the examination syllabuses - two are A-level examiners. Resources are generally good, although the library provision needs increasing to allow for independent learning and wider reading for all topics for the very large numbers opting for this very popular subject.

Religious studies

Overall, the quality of provision in religious studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good subject and syllabus knowledge supports students' learning
- Good relationships between students and staff

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching across the department to promote consistent good practice
- Establish clear procedures for promoting students' learning; for example marking, assessment and analysis of achievement
- Ensure the library and ICT resources are sufficient to promote students' independent learning

275. Results for the small group of students in 2001 were below the national averages. Results in 2002, for an even smaller group, were significantly higher. Results were as predicted from students earlier attainment so their achievement was satisfactory.
276. Standards of work of current students in Year 13 are in line with course expectations. In one lesson, students were introduced to the ideas of Dawkins, to inform further their investigations of traditional body and soul distinctions. When the teachers' questioning identified early confusion over these new ideas, he was able to modify his planned teaching and through careful recapitulation, demonstration and discussion, brought all students to a basic understanding of the arguments and issues. As a result, later in the lesson, higher-attaining students were able to draw on past learning to suggest that Dawkins's theory and explanation of replication still leave us as uniquely individual human beings. These higher level considerations demonstrate students' growing development in philosophical thinking.
277. Standards in Year 12 are also in line with course expectations. In one lesson, early in their course, students were considering representations of the goodness of God and dealt confidently with the new ideas presented to them. Higher-attaining students found reasons to question fundamental ideas, for example the value of symbolic imagery, such as the shepherd and the sheep. The whole group showed a good understanding of the different representations of God's goodness to which they had been introduced.
278. Teaching is good and as a result students make good progress. The good teaching came from confident subject and syllabus knowledge, and detailed planning. Teachers structured activities to promote good learning outcomes. They have good understanding of the demands of the examination syllabuses. A variety of learning opportunities, including relevant websites, supports students' learning. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds and those identified as gifted and talented make the same good progress as their peers.
279. The leadership and management of the recently appointed acting head of department are effective. He understands the need for formal structures for monitoring standards of teaching and learning in the department, and establishing policies and procedures. Resources are generally good, although the library provision needs to be reviewed to allow for independent learning and wider reading for all topics, given the considerably larger groups now opting for this challenging and enjoyable option.

Government and politics

Overall, the quality of provision in government and politics is **very good**.

Strengths

- The range of learning opportunities provided, including visits and the guided use of ICT
- Students' very positive attitudes to the subject

Areas for improvement

- Students' knowledge of current political issues and debates through their own enquiry
- Accommodation is inadequate to support effective learning for the numbers now taking the subject

280. The first, small group of students was examined in 2002 and there are no national comparators against which to judge the standard. A significantly larger group of students were examined at AS level in 2002 and their results were above those predicted from their GCSE results. Current standards in Year 13 are good. In one lesson, students demonstrated a high level of attainment when drawing out comparisons and distinctions between ideologies. Students respond very well to the subject. They have a high regard for both teachers and volunteered that lessons are 'really interesting'. They value and respect their teachers and participate well in lessons. In an interesting Year 12 lesson, students role playing a parliamentary debate, were able to use well constructed arguments and showed great respect for one another. Students demonstrate good research skills in their work, such as summer research assignments on political ideologies, but are less keen to familiarise themselves on current affairs directly relevant to their politics studies.
281. Very good teaching leads to very good learning, particularly in Year 13 where a very effective lesson on the ideology of democratic socialism was observed. Students were very active in their learning and the lesson was a very good mix of teacher input and student debate. Students are very enthusiastic and willing to contribute their understanding of the real world, such as the Cuban health system. Very sophisticated ideas were put forward by some students, for example the notion that trade unions follow an individualist rather than a socialist agenda. Several students were able to make excellent points relating recent events to alternative ideologies, such as the current government's welfare to work policies being rooted in liberalism rather than socialism, and were able to justify their statements.
282. Teaching is academically rigorous, appropriate for achieving high grades. Students show that they have engaged in independent reading. For example, a student was able to contribute that the Green Party was gaining support in California based on a newspaper report she read last week. In Year 12, students' appreciation of political events is much less well developed. For example in a lesson observed, only one student was aware of the week's rebellion by Labour MPs over schooling for asylum seekers. They need further encouragement to engage in independent study of current political news and issues.
283. The marking and assessment of students' work provides good guidance in most cases. A good range of visits, such as the Westminster Day, help to bring the subject alive and encourage the students' interest in political issues. ICT is used well. For example students are required to visit the Houses of Parliament website and answer specific questions such as noting the key functions of the House of Commons, describing a private members bill and transferring key notes from a virtual tour to a word processed document. Students are also required to submit a question and participate in an on-line debate. This all provides a very good introduction to Parliament.

284. The subject has increased in success and popularity. There are now two large groups in both Years 12 and 13. This popularity has resulted in challenges which have needed to be managed by the new head of department. An obvious problem has been the greater demands on resources and accommodation. Additional staffing have been needed and have been deployed to match their particular strengths with the demands of the examination requirements. Appropriate training and staff development have been put in place. There are insufficient financial resources to provide Year 13 students with a textbook for personal use.
285. Very good departmental leadership is seen through an appropriate subject development plan that clearly targets key issues and identifies resources such as training and books. Challenging success criteria have been set.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well, A-level results were above the national average in 2001 and there was 100 per cent pass rate at AS- level
- The quality of teaching is good and results in effective learning
- Students are very enthusiastic about the subject and consequently there is a good learning atmosphere

Areas for improvement

- The use of evaluation data to inform curricular planning
- Students do not have sufficient planned opportunities for the use of ICT to help them with their work

286. Results in 2001 were above the national average. The attainment of girls was significantly better than that of boys. Overall, this represents good achievement in relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 12, particularly since no students had studied the subject before. Results in 2002 are similar, overall, although the proportion of students achieving A and B grade passes has declined. AS-level results in 2002 have fallen from those gained in 2001, but the school is still awaiting the outcome of an appeal to the examination board.
287. The current standards of work in Year 13 are average. Students are developing a good understanding of theoretical perspectives as applied to world sociology. They confidently discuss, for example, issues of global imperialism and sustainable development. Their research skills are securely developed and all have planned an individual research project as part of the syllabus requirements. Their communication skills are secure, but there are insufficient planned opportunities for the use of ICT to help them in their work. Year 12 students have made a sound start to their course and are coming to grips with sociological terminology and concepts as applied to the family and households.
288. The quality of teaching is good and results in effective learning. Lessons are well planned and paced, with a variety of structured activities that meets the needs of all students. The teacher's enthusiasm, interest and very good knowledge and understanding of the subject ensure students make good progress and develop their interest. As a result, students are positive about the provision and keen to do well. Teaching refers effectively to appropriate contemporary and established sociological research as well as to different theoretical perspectives. This deepens students' knowledge and understanding further and develops their sociological thinking. The good range and use of resources is also helpful in this respect, for example in a Year 13 lesson where students were considering the impact of global

tourism in Hawaii. Effective questioning stretches students' intellectual capacities and engages them well in discussion that draws on their own experiences, as well as on the sociological perspectives they have learned. In a Year 12 lesson, though, more effective use could have been made of directed questions to ensure all students were fully involved. Students show insight in their discussions in lessons. They express their own ideas confidently, as well as listening to and respecting the beliefs and views of others. Students receive very good support to help them develop their understanding and use of sociological terminology, as well as to help them organise their folders. Very good quality marking ensures students are aware of what they have to do to improve the standard of their work.

289. Good procedures have been developed for the support and guidance of students. Assessment procedures are effective in providing guidance for students on how to improve their work but have not yet gathered sufficient information to monitor and guide the curriculum planning. Leadership is effective, with a clear focus on raising standards and the quality of provision. Sociology was not reported on at the last inspection.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good
- Students work with a high degree of independence and this helps the pace of their learning
- Attitudes to learning are very good and this has a positive effect on the standards that students achieve

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are limited and this reduces the students' awareness of applied aspects of the subject

290. In 2001, a small group of students was examined in the former advanced supplementary examination. Results were well above the national average. In 2002 a large group was examined at A-level. The average grade was between B and C but there are no national comparators available against which to make a comparison. Boys and girls attained similarly. Results in the 2002 AS-level examinations were similar to those in 2001. Retention rates are good. The majority of students interviewed felt they were adequately supported in their studies and welcomed the fact that staff gave freely of their time outside lessons.
291. The standard of work of students currently in Year 13 is average. Students are consolidating their understanding and knowledge of a substantial range of case studies in completing modules such as those dealing with friendship and attachment. Skills relating to research methodology are generally well understood and in the Year 12 course are providing a good platform for the start of practical work. Statistical skills are also good for average and higher-attaining students.
292. The quality of teaching and learning is good and some good teaching was observed during the inspection. Lessons are soundly planned with clear objectives. For example, in an A-level lesson mapping out the principal characteristics of friendship patterns, students were given a clear framework for effective peer group exploration of the issue. Overall, students make satisfactory progress in their understanding of key concepts and knowledge of case studies.
293. There are opportunities to deepen understanding through revision classes and attendance at national conferences. At present, guidance does not focus sufficiently on the career paths within psychology,

for example through work experience or visits. Students do not have enough opportunity to experience applied aspects of the discipline, for example within social services, education or clinical fields.

294. Leadership and management are satisfactory and there is a suitable vision for the development of the subject. The department is beginning to make use of student performance data but this has yet to inform teaching and learning strategies or curriculum planning in a significant way. Schemes of work are well documented and appropriately cover the requirements of examinations.
295. Resources are well selected and of good quality and texts are up to date. This supports learning well and assists with student motivation. The library is well used and is stocked with good quality reference materials and journals. Average and higher-attaining students are making increasing use of relevant web sites for their studies.
296. Improvement since the last inspection cannot be evaluated because psychology was not included as part of that inspection. There have been recent developments in the use of ICT and these need to be sustained in order that higher level analytical and modelling skills can be developed.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English language and French but English literature, media studies and German were also sampled.

297. Results in 2001 in English literature were below the national average, and lower than previous years. Results in 2002 were similar to 2001. In an observed Year 13 lesson, the teaching and learning were very effective and attainment was high. The teacher used very good subject knowledge to stimulate great interest in the poem being studied. Students' attitudes were very good and they worked collaboratively on tasks in groups. Results in 2001 in theatre studies were well above the national average, but fell sharply in 2002. However the group size was small in both years. A well taught media studies lesson was observed in Year 12. Students made good progress in understanding how a television documentary was filmed and edited to convey biased impressions and ideas. The ensuing class debate, stimulated by challenging questioning by the teacher, resulted in students having clearer insights into visual media techniques and a better vocabulary for analysing them. This course has not yet been examined.
298. Very small numbers of students have studied German and their results have been below the national average. In 2002, a larger number were examined with similar overall results as in 2001. A very good Year 13 lesson was observed. The lesson was very well prepared and the aims were communicated clearly. It was taught entirely in German which helped develop students' listening skills. Attainment was very varied. Some students had large gaps in their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and their speaking skills were very basic, but they were highly motivated and achieved well. Relationships were very good.

English

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

Strengths

- The course is well planned, organised and managed
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they convey with enthusiasm
- More students are opting for the course, and they are very positive about it

- Students learn well. Very good relationships amongst students and with teachers lead to a very supportive classroom climate of shared exploration and debate. This transfers to written work, which teachers mark very helpfully

Areas for improvement

- Some students are allowed to remain too uninvolved during class discussion; all would benefit from more demanding and focused questioning
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to challenge the thinking of higher-attaining students

299. There were no English language A-level results in 2001 but the small group of students examined in the former advanced supplementary examination gained results that were well above the national average. The new course is attracting good numbers of boys, who are interested in non text-based English study and the possibility of a coursework alternative at some stages. Retention rates are good and attendance is excellent. In recent years, a GCSE English language re-sit course has been offered and success rates were well above the national average in 2001.
300. Lesson observation and a scrutiny of written work show that current standards are above average both in classroom debate and written work. Higher-attaining students can define, analyse and model different writing styles and have a good understanding of when and why techniques, such as euphemism and jargon, are used. Many students have a secure understanding of the history and development of language and the cultural influences which have affected, and continue to affect, it. A Year 13 class explored how printing and the formulation of dictionaries led to spelling orthodoxy, and understood that global initiatives like computer language were a strong influence for the Americanisation of spelling. Average-attaining students have a good ability to propose ideas and to use questioning to clarify their own, and others', ideas. Lower-attaining students have a sound understanding of concepts such as cliché, pun, and register. They rely on thorough notes and plan essays carefully, but too often write indiscriminate, lengthy descriptions and explanations rather than tightly focused analysis.
301. Given their GCSE attainment, most students' achievement is now good. They work with enthusiasm and their willingness to listen and concentrate, and to probe and clarify areas of interest or misunderstanding, are important factors. A minority of students have not fully understood the value of putting forward their own ideas in class debate as a means of stimulating new perspectives and more precise phraseology. Relationships are very good. Students speak warmly about how positive the classroom atmosphere is, such that students and teacher are mutually appreciative and supportive of each other, and learning becomes a shared quest for knowledge.
302. This good achievement stems from consistently good and enthusiastic teaching. Lessons are well planned so that students see the links and flow, between and within lessons. They learn to illuminate what they are studying by drawing on their wider knowledge (for instance by referring to Bill Bryson's comments on language and culture) or asking broader questions ('Do we avoid learning other languages because of the chaotic nature of our own?'). Teachers use these moments well, but could make more general use of short, pointed questions to individuals. Students learn to question and balance ideas because teachers have a good understanding of the value of carefully phrased open questions, and are themselves good models of how to use language. In class debate, however, there could be more intellectual challenge of higher-attaining students or those who come out with an unexpected train of thought. Classes work studiously and show a receptivity to new ideas. Homework teaches students to undertake research, to check their understanding of work, and to take action to

improve any weaknesses. Teachers set regular essays which are carefully marked and helpfully annotated so that students learn to write with the content and style which will lead to success in examinations.

303. Students work well in a variety of situations, showing an appreciation of the value of group work and confidence when presenting ideas to the class. Year 12 students, looking at the grammatical basis of language, benefited from good teaching. After a class discussion about principles, small groups worked on a text to isolate terms, their learning being reinforced by a class presentation where they exaggerated the relevant words. Teachers use a range of methods effectively, but sometimes do not clearly explain to students the precise skills which an approach will benefit. Thus in the previously-mentioned lesson a few students were over-concerned about a low-level task, and did not realise how much they could have learnt from the presentations.
304. There was no English language course at the time of the previous inspection. The present course is well organised and managed by the course leader. Good quality resources are available and well chosen to suit the learning needs of students. A weekly 'catch up' club is available for those students who need extra time or support. Students are very appreciative of this and the other ways in which teachers encourage them to reach higher standards.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good
- Teachers' linguistic skills are very good
- Relationships are very good
- The French assistant is deployed well to develop listening and speaking skills
- There is an excellent programme of trips and exchanges to France

Areas for improvement

- Some students' awareness of grammar and their writing skills
- All students' speaking skills

305. The number of students studying French is small. Their results, in 2001, were well below the national average, having been average for the two preceding years. Results in 2002 show a significant improvement. Generally, the achievement of most students is satisfactory.
306. The standards of work of students currently in Year 13 is average and their achievement, in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course, is satisfactory. The scrutiny of students' recorded work showed satisfactory progression from Year 12 to Year 13. In a Year 13 lesson, many students had a good knowledge of general and specialist vocabulary relating to political manifestos, including structures used for making promises and introducing themes. They had good listening skills and could follow a lesson in the computer suite conducted entirely in French. Their awareness of grammar is variable, ranging from excellent to quite weak. In general, speaking skills are less well developed. Year 12 students have good listening skills and can understand lessons conducted entirely in French at normal speed. In a lesson, most students could write a dictation, delivered by the French assistant, about the differences between life in the sixth form and in the lower school. with reasonable accuracy. They could listen to a recording about school life in France, independently extracting key details, and also understand some extended reading texts on the same topic. They were able to talk at a basic level

about the French educational system, using a Power Point presentation on the computer appropriately, but their speaking skills were generally underdeveloped.

307. In Year 12 students are starting to fill in the gaps in their knowledge of basic grammar and are gradually building up their vocabulary base. With support, they write essays on a range of topics such as the rights and responsibilities of young people in France. By Year 13, some higher-attaining students are producing an impressive range of accurate written work, including essays on such topics as politics, racism and vegetarianism. There is a wide gap, however, between the work of the higher and lower-attaining students. The latter produce a good range of work but it contains many basic grammatical errors.
308. The teaching and subsequent learning are good. Teachers' subject knowledge and linguistic skills are very good. The teachers work well together and adopt a common teaching approach. Their marking of students' work is of a high standard and teachers set clear targets to help students improve the standard of their work. Teachers prepare lessons very well with clear lesson aims. Lessons are taught, almost exclusively, in French and this enhances students' listening skills. The scheme of work is sound and the topics are motivating for students. Good use is made of ICT to enhance learning. Lessons contain lots of variety and students are encouraged to work independently on some tasks. Grammar is presented and practised well, but some students need more reinforcement to improve their basic skills. Very good use is made of a wide range of teaching resources. Lessons are challenging and have a clear structure. They are conducted at a brisk pace with the result that most students work effectively and with enthusiasm. Teachers praise students for their efforts and correct errors sensitively which creates a very positive learning environment. Relationships are very good and most students are committed and hard working.
309. Leadership is good. A recently introduced and very good departmental mentoring system ensures that the work and progress of students is carefully monitored and supported. Progress since the last report has been satisfactory.