

INSPECTION REPORT

**SIR WILLIAM BORLASE'S GRAMMAR
SCHOOL**

Marlow

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110515

Headteacher: Dr Peter Holding

Reporting inspector: Robin Coulthard
11746

Dates of inspection: 24th – 28th February 2003

Inspection number: 249633

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Type of school: | Grammar |
| School category: | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 – 18 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | West Street Marlow |
| Postcode: | SL78 2BR |
| Telephone number: | 01628 816500 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Michael Harrison |
| Date of previous inspection: | 17 th March 1997 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| | | | Main school | Sixth form | |
| 11746 | Robin Coulthard | Registered inspector | Educational inclusion | | The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements How well are pupils and students taught? |
| 9053 | Vivienne Phillips | Lay inspector | | | Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 22423 | Jon Lovgreen | Team inspector | English | English | |
| 20845 | Susan Walker | Team inspector | Mathematics | | |
| 30433 | Christopher Corp | Team inspector | Science | Chemistry | |
| 32170 | Michael Cundy | Team inspector | Art | Art | |
| 322312 | Adrian Lyons | Team inspector | ICT | | |
| 2495 | Brian Munden | Team inspector | Design and technology | Design and technology | |
| 11300 | Barrie Smith | Team inspector | Geography | | |
| 10817 | George Rayner | Team inspector | History | History | |
| 15075 | Bryan Goodman-Stephens | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | French | How well is the school led and managed? |
| 20767 | Jerry Royle | Team inspector | Music | Music | |

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| | | | Main school | Sixth form | |
| 30800 | Betty Colley | Team inspector | Physical education | Sports studies | |
| 31372 | Robert Hardwick | Team inspector | Religious education Special educational needs | | |
| 32208 | Derek Aitken | Team inspector | | German | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students? |
| 28199 | Peter Lawley | Team inspector | Drama | Drama | |
| 27719 | Paul Metcalf | Team inspector | | Mathematics | |
| 3242 | Michael Newman | Team inspector | | Biology Psychology | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sir William Borlase's is a mixed grammar school, situated in the town of Marlow. It has 987 pupils, 483 boys and 504 girls, of whom, 298 are in the sixth form. Numbers of girls and boys are fairly even in the main school. Exceptionally, in Year 10, boys outnumber girls 85 to 54. In the sixth form, girls outnumber boys by 178 to 120. All except a very few pupils are white British, and the majority of the remainder are of Asian descent. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is very small, and their needs relate mostly to dyslexia. The percentage of pupils with a mother tongue other than English is 2.5. None of these pupils is at an early stage of learning English. The school population is very stable, with very few pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual time in 2001-2002. Pupils' attainment on entry is very high, and pupils mainly come from well-above-average social and economic backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective. Standards are very high at the end of Years 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Standards in English, mathematics and science are in the top five per cent in national tests at the end of Year 9. GCSE results are very high. Results for five or more passes at grades A* to C are in the top five per cent nationally, as is pupils' average total points score. Teaching is very good throughout the school, and the school makes very good provision for its gifted and talented pupils. The school is very well led and managed, and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain high standards
- Pupils' attitudes to work and to school life in general are excellent, as are behaviour and attendance
- Teaching is very good overall, with some excellent aspects
- The school is very successful in educating the 'whole person' through very good provision for personal development, moral and social development, and through its excellent extra-curricular provision
- Leadership and management are very good overall, including very efficient management of subjects
- Parents contribute very significantly to the school achieving a culture of success

What could be improved

- The consistency of teaching
- Formal procedures for identifying health and safety concerns

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvements since it was last inspected, in March 1997. Standards are higher, and teaching has improved from good overall to very good. The governing body now discharges its responsibilities very well and takes a full part in the strategic management of the school. Governors have a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have a good knowledge of the work of individual departments. Statutory requirements are largely met. Omissions are: the provision of religious education in the sixth form and adequate time for religious

education in Years 10 and 11, the provision for pupils of their full entitlement to information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11, and the provision of daily collective worship for all pupils. Financial planning and management are now very good, and closely linked to the school's short and longer term priorities for development. Spending is now very closely monitored by the bursar, headteacher and governors.

STANDARDS

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

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

| <i>Key</i> | |
|--------------------|----|
| very high (top 5%) | A* |
| well above average | A |
| above average | B |
| average | C |
| below average | D |
| well below average | E |

In the 2002 national tests at the age of 14, results were very high, that is, in the top five per cent, in English, mathematics and science, as they had been in the previous two years. The overall trend in improvement in all three core subjects was in line with the national trend over the five years up to 2002, although the trend in mathematics and science was above that in English. Pupils' overall attainment was in the top five per cent in comparison with all schools, and well above average when compared with similar schools, that is, with a similar percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Attainment was well above average overall in comparison with schools whose pupils had obtained similar results at the end of Year 6. Standards in English were in line with those of similar schools, which indicated good progress from pupils' starting points in the school. In mathematics and science, standards of work were well above those found in similar schools, indicating very good achievement and progress overall. In drama, pupils achieved very highly. Overall, current standards are well above average, as is pupils' achievement in relation to their standards on entry to the school. Achievement was good in religious education, design and technology and physical education, and very good in other subjects.

GCSE results have been in the top five per cent of all schools nationally for the past five years for pupils gaining five or more A* to C passes. In 2002, 98 per cent of pupils gained five or more passes at grades A* to C, slightly lower than the school's challenging target of 99 per cent. The school narrowly missed gaining its average points score target, gaining 66.9, when its target was 70. Results were also in the top five percent nationally for pupils gaining five or more passes at A* to G. In work seen during the inspection, standards were well above average overall, as was pupils' achievement. Pupils' achievement is excellent in drama. It is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, French, physical education and religious education. In science, art, geography, history, Spanish and German, pupils' achievement is very good. In citizenship, achievement is satisfactory.

Attainment in the sixth form is well above average. In 2001, attainment was well above that of other maintained schools and of all post-16 providers. Standards were generally similar in 2002, and in work seen during the inspection. Achievement in the sixth form is very good overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Excellent throughout the school. Pupils of all ages are highly committed to making a success of the wide range of activities in which they are involved. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Outstanding. Pupils show levels of courtesy and consideration characteristic of self-disciplined, mature members of an exceptionally well-ordered community |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Relationships are very strong. Personal development is highly effective, particularly in terms of understanding of and respect for others. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take responsibility and would welcome even more scope to use initiative in school life. |
| Attendance | Excellent. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Years 7 – 9 | Years 10 – 11 | Years 12 – 13 |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching | very good | very good | very good |

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

Teaching and learning are very good, overall, throughout the school. Just under half of the lessons observed in the main school were at least very good, and a fifth of these were excellent. Only three in each 20 lessons were below good. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred in only two lessons. Teaching in English and mathematics was good and in science it was very good. Excellent relationships, between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils, were a feature of almost every lesson, and they are a major factor in pupils' very good learning. Pupils work very hard, and are keen to produce work of a high standard. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Their expectations of pupils are very high, and they plan well to challenge and meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are gifted and talented. Occasionally, planning was inappropriate for some comparatively lower-attaining pupils. Planning for the very small number of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Homework is an integral feature of planning and teaching. It is set in good time and is relevant to the tasks in hand. Pupils learn very well independently and in pairs or other groupings. Assessment in class provides helpful advice, and an effective means of assisting pupils who need extra challenges or support. Questioning was very well used to extend pupils' thinking and check their knowledge. Lessons proceeded at a very good pace, because the teachers established this with stimulating starter activities, and used deadlines judiciously to maintain it. Lessons are generally rounded off with an effective period of consolidation. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is very good; numeracy is well taught.

Teaching is very good overall in the sixth form. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations of students. As a result, students learn very well. They set themselves very high standards and work very hard to achieve them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good. It is very good in Years 7 to 9, with some imaginative use of cross-curricular ICT. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 offers pupils a wide range of educational opportunities, but not all statutory requirements are met in religious education and ICT. Provision for extra-curricular activities is outstanding. A wide range of A-level subjects is available in the sixth form. Students are expected to study a varied choice of subjects in Year 12, from which they select those they will follow to A-level in Year 13. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Very good. A well qualified, committed and experienced co-ordinator for special needs and her assistant identify and provide very good support for the small number of pupils with special educational needs. Staff are kept aware of the specific needs of individual pupils. Lesson planning is suitably adapted where this is needed. Valuable assistance is sometimes provided through the school's Intranet. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent because of the school's emphasis on traditional values and rich opportunities for teamwork. Spiritual development is fostered well, in general, but is not built systematically into high quality provision. Cultural development is encouraged very well. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Well. The quality of care provided by the school is very high. It is based on exceptional procedures for checking on attendance, behaviour and personal development. However, health and safety procedures are not monitored with the same very sharp focus on assuring pupils' welfare. Pupils' academic progress is monitored well. Pupils are regularly informed of the standards they are attaining and what they need to do to improve further. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Very good. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher is a very good leader who has made considerable improvements to the school since the last inspection. Those in middle management with posts of academic or pastoral responsibility carry out their responsibilities very efficiently. Teachers share a very strong commitment to the school's further development. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Very well. The role and effectiveness of the governing body have improved very significantly since the last inspection. Governors are very well informed through regular information from the headteacher, regular meetings and the work of the committees, and by links with departments. Governors play a major part in determining the strategic direction of the school. Statutory responsibilities are not fully met for ICT, religious education and collective worship. |

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. Senior managers monitor classroom practice well to raise standards. The school now regularly reviews what it provides in order to respond to the wishes and needs of pupils in what it provides. However, the school does not regularly canvass the view of parents. |
| The strategic use of resources | Very good. Financial management is very good, and resources are carefully used to support the school's priorities for development. The school seeks to secure the best value for the money it spends. |

Staffing is very good. Staff are suitably qualified for the subjects they teach. Procedures for inducting newly qualified and new staff are excellent. Very good provision is made for the continuing professional development of teachers. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school is overcrowded, and some classrooms are too small for the size of classes. Specialist accommodation for design and technology and some aspects of music are unsatisfactory. Some games areas cannot be used because they are in poor condition. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Subject-based resources are good but access to ICT is limited. The library is an effective resource centre and is being developed well. It provides well for most subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress • Teaching is good and the school has high expectations of its pupils • Behaviour is good, and pupils are helped to become mature and responsible • The school is well managed and led | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closeness with which the school works with parents • The amount of homework • The range of activities outside the classroom |

The inspectors agreed with all of the parents' positive views. They felt that the amount of homework was appropriate for the nature of the school, and justified by the school's very good results. Inspectors consider the school's extra-curricular provision to be outstanding. Inspectors accept that not all parents have a close relationship with the school. In response to this issue, the school has just begun to use e-mail and a website to make communication with parents more effective.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM SIR WILLIAM BORLASE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Very few students from Year 11 do not progress into the sixth form. A small number of students, mostly girls, join the school at the sixth form. The sixth form contains 298 students, which is much larger than the average. Girls outnumber boys in both years, and particularly in Year 12, where just under two thirds of the 155 students are girls. Twenty-three A-level courses are offered. Students' attainment on entry is well above average. Students are generally expected to have at least a grade B in subjects they wish to study at A-level. The school does not provide opportunities to retake GCSE subjects. Vocational subjects are not available. Students choose four AS-level subjects in Year 12. In addition they study critical thinking AS-level and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Religious education is not provided. Students are expected to take part in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, including activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme or the Young Enterprise scheme, which offer additional accreditation. Few students leave at the end of Year 12. Students come in the main from very advantaged backgrounds. Very few students have special educational needs. No students are at an early stage of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Results are well above average, as are current standards. Teaching is very good overall, as is pupils' learning. Leadership and day-to-day management are very good. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The wide range of academic courses offered meets the needs of the students well. Resources are good. Financial management is very good, and the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is very good.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, students achieve very well, and results are well above average in most subjects
- Students' attitudes are excellent
- The sixth form is very well led and managed
- The school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities

What could be improved

- Consistency of teaching
- The use of ICT across the curriculum

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. National comparators exist for 2001 results, but they are not yet available for subjects taken at A-level in 2002

| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|-----------------------|--|
| Mathematics | Good. Results were above average in 2001, and similar in 2002, as a result of teachers' very good subject knowledge and positive relationships. Teaching is good, and pupils achieve well. However, students have insufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. |
| Chemistry | Good. The teaching is good and leads to above-average results at A-level. The department has a team of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers who share a very good relationship with their students. |
| Biology | Very good. Results in 2001 were very high, that is in the top five per cent nationally. Achievement is very good. Standards seen in lessons and student folders were above average, as were teaching and learning. Students' attitudes are very good. |
| Design and technology | Good. Results were average in 2001, but higher in 2002. Students' current work is above average, and they achieve very well because teaching is very good. Students are well supported by the individual guidance they receive. |
| Sports studies | Very good. Teaching and learning are very good, and results are well above average. The course is very well led. Students extend their knowledge and experiences through excellent extra-curricular opportunities. |
| Art | Very good. Results were very high in 2001 and in the top five per cent nationally. Teaching and learning are very good, with a high level of individuality encouraged across a wide range of materials and styles. Students achieve very well. |
| Music | Excellent. Results were above average in 2001. Teaching is very good. Students achieve very well in class. They develop their practical talents to a high standard in a wide range of extra-curricular ensembles. Their practical achievement is excellent. |
| Drama | Excellent. Results at A-level were very high in 2001. The excellent teaching is based on expert specialist knowledge and very good relationships with classes. Students' achievement is excellent and standards remain very high. |
| History | Excellent. Results are very high. Teaching and learning are very good. Students' attitudes are very good and they make very constructive contributions to discussions. |
| Psychology | Excellent. Results are very high. Achievement is very good. Standards seen in student work are very high. Teaching and learning observed were very good, with areas of excellence, including the use of ICT to facilitate learning, especially for students who need extra support. Management of the subject is excellent, as are students' attitudes. |
| English | Very good. Results are well above average. Teaching is good. Students' learning benefits from teachers' very good subject |

| | |
|--|--|
| | knowledge, and their very helpful and accurate assessment of written work. |
|--|--|

| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|-----------------|--|
| French | Very good. Results in 2001 were well above the national average, and in 2002 these high results were broadly maintained. Students' achievement is very good. The teaching and learning of French are generally very good. |
| German | Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good and clearly focused on examination requirements. Marking is very detailed. ICT is too little used. |

Lessons were also sampled in examination courses in physics, geology, computing, art history, geography, government and politics and critical thinking and physical education. Teaching was mostly very good. In physics, it was excellent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| How well students are guided and supported | Well. Students receive good guidance when they enter the sixth form. Their welfare and academic progress are regularly reviewed so that additional support can be given as required. Academic guidance is good and in most subjects students receive very clear information on how to improve their work. Advice about future study and career opportunities is good. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | Very good. The overall leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Management of subjects is very good. Teaching is well monitored. The governing body makes a very good contribution to the success of the sixth form. |

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| What students like about the sixth form | What they feel could be improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students think they are well taught and challenged • Courses suit their talents and aspirations, and they received helpful information before starting them • Teachers are readily accessible to give help • They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well they are informed about their progress, and the advice they receive, particularly about their future options • The way the school responds to the views of the sixth form • Some students feel they are not treated as young adults • The range of activities and enrichments |

Inspectors agree that students are well taught, and that the school offers a suitable range of courses. Inspectors felt that the information available to students before they join the sixth form is helpful, and considered that procedures are good for keeping students informed about their progress. The good relationships that exist between teachers and students provide a good basis for dialogue with senior managers. The very good opportunities for social development and taking responsibility suggest that the school makes a good effort to treat students as responsible young adults. Inspectors consider the range of extra-curricular activities available to supplement the curriculum to be excellent.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very

poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils enter the school with very high attainment that is well above average. As they progress through Years 7 to 9, they achieve very well in relation to their starting points. Standards are very high, and in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils' attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 was in the top five per cent nationally in 2002. Attainment in mathematics and science is higher than in English. Attainment was well above average overall in English, mathematics and science compared with schools whose pupils gained similar results at the end of Year 6, and in comparison with schools in a similar social and economic context. Specifically, attainment was well above these averages in mathematics and science. In English, it was above these averages. This demonstrates very good achievement. Overall attainment in the three core subjects was well above average for grammar schools. It was well above average in mathematics and science and average in English in comparison with attainment in grammar schools nationally. The upward trend in the school's results is broadly in line with that found nationally. In English, boys' and girls' performances were above their respective national averages by a similar amount. In mathematics and science, boys' performance was above their national averages by more than girls' performance was above theirs. Pupils' standards are well above average in literacy and numeracy.
2. Evidence from lessons observed during the inspection and from a representative scrutiny of written work in Years 7 to 9 indicates that pupils' standards are very high overall in their current work. Current standards are very high in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, ICT, drama and design and technology; they are well above average in art and design, modern foreign languages and music. In physical education and religious education, standards are above average, while in citizenship they are average. Current standards accord closely with teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, except in geography, where last year's assessments were a slight overestimate. Pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is very good overall. It is excellent in drama, and very good in other subjects, except for English, design and technology, physical education and religious education, where it is good, and citizenship, where it is satisfactory.
3. GCSE results remain in the top five per cent nationally for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C passes. These results were average in comparison both with schools whose pupils did similarly well at the end of Year 9 in 2000, and with schools in a similar social and economic context. Results were above average by these comparisons for pupils gaining five or more A* to G passes. Pupils' average total points scores were very high in comparison with all schools, as were their 'capped' average total points scores. Pupils' 'capped' scores include only the points gained from their eight most successful subject results. Pupils' capped average total points score was average in comparison with schools whose pupils had gained similar results at the end of Year 9.
4. Current standards in Year 11 are very high in English, science, drama, geography, ICT and French. They are above national expectation in German and citizenship, and well above expectation in other subjects. Pupils' achievement in relation to their standards on joining Year

10 is very good overall. It is excellent in drama, good in mathematics, physical education and citizenship, and very good in all other subjects.

5. The school narrowly missed its target of 99 per cent passes at A* to C, when 98 per cent of pupils achieved that level. The school's average points score was 66.9, when its target was 70. Future targets are suitably challenging.
6. Standards in literacy are well above average across the curriculum, resulting from the effective implementation of a good literacy policy. Standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are all well above average. Pupils are articulate and contribute constructively to discussion. They have a thorough knowledge of key terms in each subject. This knowledge is sometimes helpfully reinforced by displays of key subject-specific terms in classrooms. Standards in ICT are well above average in Key Stage 3. They develop very well because good opportunities for using computers are incorporated into most subjects, and ICT is intensively used from time to time in core subjects. However, in Key Stage 4, the achievement in ICT of pupils who are not preparing to take GCSE in ICT is unsatisfactory, because its use is not systematically promoted across the curriculum. Standards in numeracy are above average.
7. Numbers of pupils with special educational needs are small. Their needs, which are mostly connected with dyslexia, are very well met and they achieve very well.
8. None of the pupils whose mother tongue is other than English is at an early stage of learning English.

Sixth form

9. Attainment in the sixth form is well above average. In 2001, the school's performance at A-level was well above the average both for sixth forms nationally and for all providers of post-16 education. Students' results were similar in 2002, but national comparisons are not yet available. Students achieve very well in relation to the standards they attain at GCSE, which represents good value-added. Students who join the school in Year 12 from other schools in the area also achieve very well.
10. A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average. In biology and history, results were in the top five per cent nationally. They were well above average in art and design, business studies, communication studies, computer studies, English literature, French, geography and sports studies, and above average in chemistry, German, mathematics and music. Results were average in economics, design and technology and physics. Students did well in a range of other subjects, where small numbers prevent meaningful comparisons with national averages.
11. The standards being demonstrated by current students in Years 12 and 13 are generally in line with those previously reported. In design and technology, standards are higher. They are higher also in mathematics, because of a closer concentration on examination preparation. Standards are slightly lower in biology because planning is not sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of the lower-attaining students.
12. Students have very good study skills. They have a strong grasp of technical language in each subject. They write well in note form or more extended prose. Research skills are well developed. Students use libraries for independent research. ICT skills are well practised in a

good range of subjects, and students use computers confidently for research, for presenting work and for handling data.

13. There is very little drop out at the end of Year 12. At the end of Year 13, in recent years, 99 per cent of students have moved on to higher education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The quality of pupils' attitudes, values and personal development has shown very good improvement since the last inspection, when differences between the majority of mature well-behaved pupils and a less committed minority were marked.
15. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to work and to extra-curricular activities are excellent. Pupils of all ages are highly committed to success in all they do, not only in their academic studies, but also in sport, the arts, and activities that underpin their personal development, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. As parents said, the school reinforces pupils' own expectations that they are here to learn through the prevailing work ethic and culture of intellectual effort. Pupils' interest and involvement in activities is first rate. When teaching inspires them, as in a Year 8 English lesson that spurred pupils to identify and discuss different genres of fiction, they are so keen to rise to the challenge that their effervescent enthusiasm almost spills over and they do not want to stop work. In almost all instances, motivation only wanes a little on occasions when pupils sense that shortcomings in teaching prevent them from doing their best to learn.
16. Standards of behaviour are very high. Pupils of all ages are very courteous and helpful. Levels of self-discipline are particularly impressive, so that classroom management rarely involves more than a look or a quiet word. Pupils treat other people, and their property, with exceptional care. Very occasionally, boys' attention-seeking behaviour surfaces. In one or two lessons, where teachers tolerated this, with the view that 'boys will be boys', opportunities were reduced for studious, quieter pupils, both boys and girls, to contribute fully. For the most part, pupils work together in an atmosphere refreshingly free from sexism. There is no sign of bullying or racism. There are no exclusions.
17. Relationships are outstanding. Pupils throughout the school work very purposefully in pairs and groups, sharing ideas and solutions in a constructive way. When asked to work with particular partners or team members, they make the best of the situation rather than fussing about being with friends or talented individuals. For instance, in a Year 8 art lesson, the teacher used signs of the zodiac to organise groups to ensure a good balance of abilities and gender, and this was readily accepted by pupils. In the lesson, pupils' fundamental goodwill and sense of common purpose contributed to groups becoming absorbed by the challenge of developing African animal head masks together. Team spirit is a strong feature of school life as a result of a very well established house system, and the rich range of sporting, musical and dramatic activities outside lessons.
18. Personal development is very good. Pupils in Year 7 are already more mature than others of the same age. They show well-established commitment to learning and strong self-reliance. Virtually all pupils have a much stronger sense of personal responsibility than usual. Pupils in all year groups show great respect for what others have to say. In fact, at times, they listen and accept what is said too readily. Inconsistent opportunities for pupils to reflect on spiritual, ethical and philosophical issues result in lack of practice in when or how to question received wisdom. Pupils show great capacity to understand the impact of their actions on others. They have less scope for debate, initiative and asking questions than they would like. As a result, although most aspects of personal development are outstanding, pupils' skills in crafting questions and galvanising reasoned, lively debate are less well honed.
19. Attendance is very high. Pupils are very eager to be in school and actively involved in the range of opportunities for academic and personal achievement. It is extremely rare for anyone to be absent without good cause. Parents are very well aware of the importance of regular,

punctual attendance and are very responsive to the school's efforts to minimise unnecessary absence and avoid term-time holidays.

Sixth form

20. Students in the sixth form are very highly motivated and make the most of the opportunities provided by the school for their intellectual and personal development. Their attitudes to work are remarkable. They are extremely diligent and willing to do whatever it takes to achieve the standards of which they are capable. As a result, they are critical of anything or anyone who acts as a barrier to their goals, but full of thoughtful praise for staff who offer constructive help and encouragement. They work very hard, particularly on their own, as is evident from the quality and quantity of material in their files, subject by subject. Their self-discipline and capacity for hard work is not always matched by a spirit of inquiry and creativity because not all teaching enables students to develop the necessary skills to probe, challenge and question. The vast majority of students are deeply committed to learning and have the skills that they need to continue to learn successfully in adult life. Attendance is very high
21. Relationships in the sixth form are excellent, as elsewhere in the school. Those who join the school in Year 12 feel welcomed and supported, so that by this stage, halfway through the year, it is easy for everyone to forget who are the 'newcomers'. Students are very clear that they have very productive working relationships with teachers, in general. Where this is not the case, in the main, because of individual differences, students are mature enough to make the most of the situation and look to another member of staff for extra help, if appropriate.
22. Students' personal development is very good. They have huge respect for individual senior staff, who listen to and act on their genuine concerns and constructive suggestions. However, as yet, there is no regular forum where students can have a meaningful voice in the school's life and work and an active debate on issues of concern to them. Their contribution to the ethos of the school and, through this, the influence they have on younger pupils is very significant because they are mature, responsible and personable. Prefects conduct themselves in an exemplary way, acutely aware of their responsibilities and privileges. All students behave exceptionally well.
23. Students' views are very positive. Where there are elements of criticism to do with help and encouragement received, these reflect students' earnest desire to use their time in school to best advantage for the highest academic and personal achievement. They are critical where they feel short-changed. They would welcome being consulted and would like to be treated consistently as responsible young adults, which, in inspectors' views, they are.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is very good overall in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching was at least good in seventeen out of every twenty lessons observed. It was very good or excellent in almost half, and excellent in almost one lesson in ten. Very little unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
25. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge is excellent. They have very high expectations of pupils, and their management of pupils' behaviour is excellent. Teaching is good in English and mathematics in both key stages, and very good in science. Teaching is excellent in drama, very good in art, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and music. In design and technology, physical education and religious education, teaching during the inspection was good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. No overall judgement could be made on teaching in citizenship.

26. Teachers plan lessons very well. Lessons have clear objectives that are communicated to pupils. Appropriate resources, including worksheets of high quality, are provided. Time is used very well. Purposeful planning largely offset the disadvantage of single, forty-minute periods, by ensuring efficient use of time, for example in history and drama. Most lessons begin with a brisk review of previous work to recall topics and establish a good pace of learning. Pupils may then work collaboratively in pairs or other groupings. Teachers usually set challenging deadlines to help maintain a good pace of work. Just occasionally, introductions to lessons are over-long and some momentum is lost. This was noted in art and geography during the inspection. Lessons generally conclude with a recall of objectives, to establish what has been learnt, as a guide to planning subsequent lessons. In general, planning is excellent for higher-attaining pupils, and especially for those who are gifted and talented. However, the needs of those pupils who are comparatively lower-attaining are inconsistently reflected in planning in science. Teachers provide very good levels of individual attention when classes are working independently.
27. Teachers are keen on their subjects and convey their enthusiasm well to pupils. An excellent example of this occurred in a music lesson in Year 11. The group was comparing pieces in 'blues' style. The teacher easily communicated his excellent knowledge of the topic. A good range of recorded extracts brought the topic to life for the pupils. Learning about the backgrounds of the performers and the development of the blues provided, because of the teacher's commitment, an outstanding opportunity for furthering pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
28. Pupils learn very well. Their excellent attitudes mean that they are enthusiastic, and they listen well. They co-operate very well, individually, and in groups. They show initiative and can be trusted to work independently. They respond to teachers' very good planning by maintaining a very good pace of work. They work very diligently to produce their best work.
29. Literacy is very well taught across the curriculum. Its development is guided by a very good policy and promoted through the initiative of the head of English. Opportunities are included in all subjects for developing literacy. Teachers use questioning expertly in all subjects. Discussions are frequent, and pupils develop and exchange ideas fluently and confidently. They gain precise knowledge of technical terms. Good emphasis on a firm understanding of key terms was noted particularly in science, art and PSHE. Pupils read much, both for information and research. The following of written instructions is developed well through design and technology and mathematics. Pupils read aloud well, and with a quick understanding of what they read. In an excellent English lesson in Year 8, pupils spontaneously adopted a suitable tone to match the characters, when they read at sight excerpts from 'The Ghost of Thomas Kempe'. Writing is developed in many ways. Note taking is regularly practised, particularly in science. Teachers provide very good opportunities for extended writing. Pupils write technical description, for example when analysing their products in design and technology. Imaginative writing is a feature of geography, history and English.
30. Overall, numeracy is well developed across the curriculum, although opportunities for this are not systematically included in all subjects. Pupils incorporate graphs and statistics in science and geography. In music and drama, metre and rhythm involve mathematical calculation and awareness.
31. Homework is an integral part of pupils' learning, and provides pupils with valuable opportunities for developing independent learning skills. Homework is very carefully set in good time before the end of the lesson, and is usually an extension of what has been done in class. Some parents

expressed concern about the amount of homework set. Pupils' homework diaries indicate that homework is almost always set as required. Pupils say that staff are sensitive when there is a danger of overload.

32. Marking of homework and other work is conscientiously carried out and good overall. However, marking and assessment are not as refined and helpful as they might be in all subjects. At its best, for example in art, opportunities for assessment are included in each topic, and pupils receive very constructive feedback. In geography, modern foreign languages and physical education, and in English in Years 7 and 8, marking does not use systematic criteria, such as those included in the National Curriculum. Guidance for improvement is not precisely referenced against known criteria. Pupils do not, therefore, learn exactly what they need to do to reach a higher level of attainment. No assessment criteria are yet used in citizenship, and, in religious education, the levels of attainment specified in the local Agreed Syllabus are not followed. The marking of incorrect spelling is not thorough enough generally.
33. ICT is very well used in some subjects as a means of teaching. Almost all pupils use computers at home for presenting or researching their work and pupils' keyboard skills are well developed. Pupils use computers intensively in English, mathematics and science for part of their course in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is very good because of the specialist assistance that is available. However, computers are insufficiently used in these years in art, modern foreign languages, music and history. Their increased use is planned in history and science. In Years 10 and 11, computers are insufficiently used overall as a teaching means.
34. Teachers are aware of those pupils who have special educational needs. These pupils unobtrusively receive appropriate support. Their needs generally relate to dyslexia. Worksheets and other materials are appropriate for them, and teachers' notes are, where appropriate, made available through ICT. As a result pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with their fellow pupils.
35. The monitoring and development of teaching are very good overall. As a result, planning is generally very good. However, during the inspection, a few lessons, though satisfactory overall, lacked some of the qualities of the majority. In these lessons, and in the two that were unsatisfactory in the main school, teachers' planning was inappropriate. Occasionally, pace and challenge were too low and teachers expectations were insufficiently high. This led to insufficient learning, and very occasionally, to silly behaviour.

Sixth form

36. As in the main school, teaching and learning are very good overall, and have similar qualities. Of the lessons observed, over half were at least very good, and just over ten per cent were excellent. Ninety per cent were good or better. Teaching was judged unsatisfactory in only one lesson.
37. Teaching was excellent in drama; it was good in mathematics, chemistry, physical education and German, and very good in other subjects.
38. Teachers have excellent specialist subject knowledge. Lessons have clear objectives that are communicated to students. Relationships with students are in almost all lessons excellent. The management of students' conduct was rarely an issue because of the excellent attitudes of students, who are very keen to learn and achieve well. Only in French was the motivation of some students questionable. Teachers are familiar with examination criteria and base their

constructive assessment practice on these. Only in sports studies were examination criteria not used to best effect.

39. Learning was very good. Students sustain a high level of intellectual effort. They listen very well to teachers and to other students. Independent working skills are well developed. Students use initiative in research and display high standards of literacy.
40. Teachers prepare lessons very well, using appropriate resources. Teaching methods are carefully chosen to suit each topic. For example, in the physics lesson observed, where the students were revising aspects of electricity, information was carefully presented with the use of PowerPoint. Very careful questioning stimulated pupils' recollections. The lesson was excellently paced to give students time to think. Questioning was carefully targeted at individual students to make sure that everyone contributed. The result was excellent learning and much ground was covered.
41. Discussion and questioning are used effectively in all lessons to recall knowledge and deepen understanding. While students take part wholeheartedly in lessons as a rule, and readily make oral contributions, in English and German some students were reluctant to join in and were not always prompted sufficiently to do so.
42. Students receive very good individual support in class, but, in chemistry and biology, the needs of the lower-attaining students are not always fully reflected in lesson planning. Where planning catered for the needs of a whole group, it enabled excellent learning to take place. For example, an outstanding Year 13 French lesson, on the topic of 'violence', was a model of the best practice in all respects. Teacher and students used French throughout. Students suggested various issues connected with the topic, and confidently ventured their views. Time was very well apportioned at each stage to maintain a lively pace. The teacher sensitively intervened to improve the accuracy and style of students' French. Methods included whole-class, small group and individual work, which maintained interest. Excellent working relationships and attitudes ensured that the students sustained their listening and concentration throughout the lesson. High quality recorded resources helped consolidate learning. As a result, students made excellent gains in their knowledge, understanding and their facility and confidence in speaking French.
43. In lessons which were satisfactory overall, but lacked some of the usual qualities seen, lack of pace was generally an issue, and some students were distracted from their work.

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

44. The curriculum is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum provides pupils with a very good range of courses to suit their aptitudes and abilities. Improvements in recent years include an increased presence for creative arts subjects in Years 7 to 9, supported by other activities, for example the Year 8 Arts Week. Spanish was added two years ago in Year 7 and is proving to be popular with pupils. Teaching time is one hour and twenty minutes above the nationally recommended minimum.
45. In Years 7 to 9, all statutory requirements are met. In Year 9, pupils have lessons in the three separate sciences in preparation for their GCSE courses where they can choose either the dual award or triple sciences course. Other distinctive features include the provision of three foreign languages from Year 7, with the requirement that pupils must study two of them to the end of Year 9, and drama, which is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum in drama is particularly well structured and planned to address pupils' levels of skill

and understanding. In mathematics, there are effective systems for tracking pupils' progress, and, if need be, supporting them with extra lessons. Provision in ICT is well mapped across the curriculum in most subjects. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of programs and develop all necessary skills. Pupils receive two periods per week in religious education and cover the locally Agreed Syllabus in appropriate depth. A short GCSE course is soon to be introduced in Year 9 in religious education. In design and technology, despite complications caused by problems of staffing and accommodation, by the end of Year 9, all pupils experience a satisfactory range of design and making activities, and all National Curriculum requirements are met, although some problems of continuity are encountered. Period allocation is suitable in all subjects.

46. In Years 10 and 11, the school successfully attempts both to provide a wide range of options and also balance group sizes. Most students take 11, or more, GCSEs. Some constraints are applied to pupils' choices to ensure they follow a broad range of courses, for example by insisting all pupils take a humanities subject. Statutory requirements are not met in religious education and ICT. Some modules are in place for the religious education in carousel rotation but insufficient time is devoted to them. In the case of ICT there is no systematic coverage of National Curriculum requirements. The curriculum for art is very good, the only slight weakness being in the area of ICT, but there have been recent attempts to remedy this. All pupils are required to continue with one modern language and some take two. In geography and physical education, single lessons of forty minutes constrain provision in all years but do not affect standards, because of teachers' good planning. English benefits from the addition of an extra period to cover the language and literature aspects of the syllabus.
47. A suitable curriculum plan for citizenship is not yet in place in any year and this has a significant impact on the teaching of the subject, although good examples of the teaching of citizenship take place in individual lessons.
48. Pupils have equality of access to all curriculum areas. In a few subjects, boys or girls predominate. GCSE art is much more popular with girls, while business studies attracts far more boys. Extension work is often available for the gifted and talented pupils, who are very well provided for in the planning of subjects generally.
49. Extra-curricular provision is excellent throughout the school. Year 7 pupils have an Activities Week, Year 9 an Industry Day and Technology Week, while a Citizenship Week is being planned for Year 10 pupils. Year 11 pupils undertake work experience. Some retired engineers and scientists occasionally help out the design and technology department. Links have been developed with a school in South Africa, which will include fund-raising activities to support its development. In English, pupils benefit from visits from writers, workshops, debating competitions and 'readathons' and, in art, from visits to galleries. In history, most years have a trip, including a Year 9 visit to Ypres. The modern languages department takes trips to France and Germany. In geography, the improving level of provision includes links with geographical associations and fieldwork. River studies is being introduced. Opportunities for music are very varied and of very high quality. In sport, pupils achieve particular distinction in hockey and rowing.
50. A very good programme provides for pupils' personal and social education. The content meets pupils' needs very well and covers, for example health and sex education, ethical and ecological concerns and drugs misuse, as well as smoking and alcohol abuse. Lessons are challenging. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils discussed the question, 'Is there a God?' The school has good links with the community and outside speakers, and there is a regular

programme of visits. In sex education, groups receive specialist advice. Very good opportunities are provided for communication, problem solving and exchange of ideas. Pupils learn through role play and discussion. Opportunities are missed for the further development of PSHE through tutor time and more explicit links with citizenship have yet to be incorporated.

51. The school's provision for pupils' personal development has improved well, particularly in terms of raising awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures through art and music, which was identified as a relative weakness in the last inspection report. Throughout the school and in the sixth form, provision for personal development, as a whole, is very good and benefits from exceptional support for personal responsibility and self-respect.
52. The school's provision for spiritual development is good overall. Spiritual development is not given particular prominence and is almost incidental to other activities. As a result, the overall quality of provision does not match that of the best examples. This is because what is offered is not organised systematically to ensure that pupils gain full benefit from regular, carefully planned input rather than fragmented experiences. For example, individual history lessons during the inspection allowed excellent topical discussion about whether war is ever justified. Pupils find visits to Ypres very moving. However, the school did not seize the chance to build on such golden opportunities with related themes for the week, or thoughts for the day, that staff could use to foster meaningful reflection generally in assemblies. Assemblies in chapel provided pupils with time for reflection, a hymn was sung, and a short talk given on a spiritual, moral or social theme. In other assemblies, however, no attempt was made to provide a sense of occasion, a prayer, or quiet moment for personal reflection. In many lessons and assemblies, opportunities for pupils to be moved, to feel compassion, to marvel and to think about what it means to be alive are ignored. This contrasted with other occasions where staff encouraged wonderful, inspiring experiences of empathy, with topical or personal accounts of what is special about the human spirit. A good example was prompted in an art lesson where sixth form students talked about their experiences at the Uffizzi Gallery in Florence. Within an ethos that fosters self-respect and a shared commitment to excellence in all it does, the school has a good foundation for advancing spiritual awareness and encouraging pupils to ask challenging questions about life.
53. Provision for moral and social development is exceptionally good. It stems from the school's aims to develop pupils' self-respect and confidence and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Rich opportunities within and beyond the curriculum allow pupils to become aware of their place and responsibilities within the school and wider community. They are offered meaningful chances to think about moral and social issues through subjects such as English, history and geography. For example, in English and history lessons, ethical and moral questions about patriotism, religious and political extremism, and genocide are raised. In geography, pupils are expected to confront issues such as exploitation and conservation in different regions of the world, and to recognise that such issues are not straightforward. In all subjects, pupils are expected to develop personal and social skills that support effective individual and group work. Staff and sixth form students provide first rate role models of what is right and wrong, how to relate to people, and respect for similarities and differences in people's personal, cultural and religious beliefs. Extra-curricular activities offer outstanding opportunities for personal responsibility, team spirit and collaboration.
54. Provision for cultural development is very good, with outstanding input from the arts, but with scope for a more telling contribution from religious education. The school offers an impressive range of opportunities for pupils to travel within and beyond Europe to gain first hand experience of different cultures. For example, sixth form students have been to Florence to see works of art that they discuss in subsequent lessons. The visit has enriched their understanding of influences that shaped the pieces they study and deepened their personal responses to art. In a range of subjects, individual lessons introduce pupils to different cultural

- traditions, which influence their outlook and work, as in producing silver jewellery based on a Chinese dragon motif and original artwork influenced by Aboriginal painting and stories.
55. Careers education is very good. Knowledge and skills are built up within the PSHE programme. For example, pupils in Year 9 study lifestyles and learn to budget in preparation to match income and expenditure. An Industry Day is organised each year and a good school-business partnership exists. In Year 10 pupils discuss career aspirations and use the KUDOS program and extensive ICT work is done. By Year 11 pupils are aware of sixth form courses and are planning work experience for the end of the summer term. Pupils are encouraged to discuss, record and research throughout the course. The Education Business Partnership, which is attached to the local education authority, finds placements for pupils on work experience. The school finds this service valuable. Careers education is focused in Years 9, 10 and 11. Pupils have the opportunity of specialist assistance from the Connexions service adviser who visits the school weekly. The careers library is a very good source of information for pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have extra support from the adviser on career prospects.
 56. The school has a very small number of pupils with English as an additional language, but none is at an early stage of English language acquisition. Occasionally in recent years, one or two pupils have required support in English. They went on to complete their A-level courses successfully.
 57. The small number of pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons. Some individual, additional support is given by the SENCO and her assistant outside lessons as required. Teachers are provided with information about pupils in their classes, including individual education plans, so that lesson planning can take these pupils' needs into account. Particularly good practice was observed in English, design technology and science.
 58. Very good links with the local community provide worthwhile opportunities for enrichment of the school's curriculum. Links with local industry and commerce, and with the local institute for higher education, provide valuable resources in connection with the school's annual Industry Day and Technology Week. Pupils and students in Year 11 and the sixth form have very good opportunities for securing work experience placements locally.
 59. Very good links exist with other primary and secondary schools in connection with sport and the curriculum. A link with a local pupil referral unit provides some pupils with a worthwhile opportunity for research. Productive educational links have been established with universities in the area. The area grammar school consortium provides opportunities for linked activities, including Internet-based initiatives.

Sixth form

60. The sixth form curriculum provides a wide range of courses at both AS and A-levels. In total, 23 subjects are offered, including the new additions of geology, government and politics and critical thinking. At present these are offered only at first year level, but a review will be carried out with a view to continuing to A-level if there is sufficient demand. Theatre studies was also recently introduced as a result of strong student demand and is very popular. In addition to the usual subjects art history and the philosophy of religion are offered. All Year 12 students are expected to opt for four subjects. One has to be a 'complementary' subject, from a contrasting area of the curriculum, to ensure students maintain sufficient breadth in their studies. The school can offer combinations of nearly all subjects and, for the most part, students' choices are accommodated. All students are now expected to study critical thinking

as a fifth AS, to follow a PSHE course and to participate in the Youth Award scheme and games. It is also possible to take further mathematics as an additional AS. However, religious education is not provided and the legal requirement for collective worship is not observed. The curriculum does not contain any vocational subjects and there is no provision for GCSE resits. Nonetheless, it carries broad appeal and relevance to the students as retention numbers following Year 12 examinations are extremely high. The academic nature of the courses is highly appropriate for the students as the vast majority continue their studies into higher education.

61. Entry requirements for the sixth form are high, and this is emphasised not only to the school's own Year 11 pupils but to students who join from other schools. These 'newcomers' are well supported, and this enables them to succeed in their courses. Forty five points is the target pupils are expected to achieve prior to entry, with A or B grades in their chosen subjects, if taken at GCSE, together with at least a grade C in English and mathematics. On occasion, this requirement is relaxed, particularly for those students with creative talents, applying for suitable courses. The school monitors the progress of the small numbers of these students, who generally do equally well, as they are very well motivated.
62. Students are expected to spend at least four independent study periods per week in the school library. Sometimes, as in the case of German, this forms part of the period allocation for the subject.
63. All students are expected to participate in extra-curricular activities, which are a very significant feature of the school. These include the Youth Award Scheme, Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Young Enterprise Scheme. The school is planning to run a Master Class week for Year 12 students centred round career and university choices. Students also benefit from the clubs run by subject departments. For example, mathematics students have recourse to revision classes and can participate in mathematics challenges. There are a number of possibilities for students to travel abroad, including work experience in Germany and an art trip to Venice. Other strengths lie in the fields of the performing arts, in music and drama, and in sport, especially hockey and rowing.
64. Students in the sixth form have assistance from the careers coordinator and the Connexions service. They have access to a specialist careers library to assist them to higher education or professional careers. Careers education is taught as part of a continuing PSHE course. Occasionally, students are visited by outside speakers or gather for special sessions, for example funding and grants for higher education. Students are encouraged to visit universities and colleges. Work shadowing is organised through the school and some students complete this experience during the activities session organised for all students on Wednesday afternoons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

65. The strengths in the quality of care identified in the last inspection have been maintained. The school has highly efficient procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare and personal development, resulting in admirable standards of care. In aspects of its physical environment, the school does not have such a sharp focus on precise steps it needs to take to ensure pupils' health and safety. As a result, general matters of health and safety, such as the state of playing surfaces, floors and stairs, are checked and pursued with less rigour than other factors affecting pupils' welfare. This contrasts with very strong work within PSHE to promote healthy lifestyles and awareness of what puts people at risk of harm in everyday life.

So, while the school's other work in terms of welfare and pastoral issues is outstanding, lack of systematic procedures to ensure first rate attention to health and safety results in care of high, rather than excellent quality. The school responded very quickly to health and safety issues noted by inspectors in design and technology, physical education and music.

66. Attendance is monitored with exemplary care. The school has a highly effective pastoral team to which the matron contributes. Her role is crucial. It ensures that pupils' personal development, including absences and illness, is noted and tracked. Individual records are excellent and help to ensure that staff are very well aware of individual pupils' personal, social and emotional needs, so that necessary support can be provided for those in difficulty. The school is swift to identify patterns in attendance or behaviour that could have a detrimental effect on the standards that an individual achieves. It acts quickly to deal with problems before crises develop. The school takes exceptional care to monitor and promote good behaviour and eliminate bullying. Procedures for checking on personal development are impressive.
67. The school has implemented the Code of Practice for the small number of pupils with special educational needs, following the prolonged illness of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Pupils with learning difficulties, usually dyslexia, are diagnosed on entry to the school and their progress is very well monitored and reviewed through the regular assessments carried out by the school. The SENCO sees all the pupils on the register regularly to review their situation with them. She meets regularly with the headteacher, heads of department and heads of year to review individual progress. Parents are invited to share in meetings when individual education plans are reviewed.
68. The school has effective and well established systems for monitoring the progress of pupils. The 'orders' system involves all pupils being graded each half term for achievement and effort, and the results are communicated to pupils and parents. The outcomes are reviewed by the headteacher, with senior staff. Heads of year note the progress of each pupil in the school at very regular intervals. The school also uses national systems for calculating target grades together with information from the local authority for assessing the performance of subjects to ensure good provision. An excellent feature of the system is the weekly tutor time which allows individual reviews of each pupil's progress at least twice a year. Assessment is closely related to examination criteria in Years 10 and 11. Staff make very clear to pupils what they need to do to attain the highest grades. This is achieved through detailed marking and very effective feedback, both written and oral, in most subjects. However, in Years 7 to 9 pupils are often not assessed against National Curriculum levels, except in English, mathematics and science, and this limits the effectiveness of assessment in some subjects.
69. Whilst the school has a large amount of information on pupil performance, the use that is made of it varies. Some staff are making detailed use of data to guide planning and departmental practice, but there is no coherent system across the school. Senior managers recognise that external systems, such as 'ALIS' and 'YELLIS', whereby pupils' previous attainment is used to predict future performance, should not be the only yardsticks for individual target setting, and that pupils can be stretched beyond these guides, but this message has not been implemented by all staff. However, the school has firm plans to share national performance comparisons more fully with staff.

Sixth form

Advice, support and guidance

70. As in the main school, attendance is monitored with very great care. This is to ensure that students do not fall behind with their work because of absences.
71. Contact between students and tutors allows general progress to be reviewed regularly. The system of half-termly 'orders', used in the main school, provides information to report to students and parents. It allows tutors and heads of year to see whether students have responded to targets and made expected progress. Systematic recording, analysis and use of detailed information for individual monitoring provide a very secure foundation for more incisive analysis of individual learning needs and what action is required to meet these. Diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs is good. It works well at the level of identifying discrepancies between performance in different subjects, and between expected and actual grades. It is less successful in evaluating teaching and learning to find reasons for such discrepancies, and in specifying the precise steps the student needs to take to improve knowledge, skills or understanding in a subject.
72. Support for those who are not doing as well as expected is usually well thought out and sensitive. This is not always the case, however. When called upon, the head of year, or one or two members of the senior management team, step in readily with constructive help and encouragement. Students noted that just occasionally, teachers criticise them for errors. They do not, however, do enough to ensure that teaching enables them to overcome the inevitable uncertainties and mistakes that are part of the learning process. Instead, gaps in individuals' skill, subject knowledge or understanding are treated as flaws in them rather than as vital information for planning lessons to ensure that all students, not just the very high flyers, learn to best advantage. In specific subjects, such as history, the readily accessible, high quality feedback and help offered make a significant difference to students' confidence and progress.
73. Students receive good information and guidance in general. They are helped to make choices of Year 12 and 13 courses that are appropriate for them, and are given every help to settle into sixth form life and study. Students said that the process was much easier than expected and just a small step up from work in Year 11, except for brand new subjects. Guidance and impartial advice on future courses are very good, not least for the small number of students who seek an alternative to university. The school has an exceptional network of contacts, which it uses to good effect to ensure that students can visit universities or organisations at times that are less likely to interfere with their studies than is the case with many, formal, open days.

Assessment

74. The school monitors students' progress with the same rigour in the sixth form as in earlier years. Very good arrangements operate in the sixth form for the assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance. The school gives high priority to individual monitoring and target setting. A key feature is the setting of minimum target grades based on each student's previous achievements. Students' work is marked regularly, and both written and oral feedback in most subjects is very good, enabling students to make rapid improvement. Teachers know each student well.
75. Assessment and monitoring procedures are very good and good use is made of previous data about students' individual performance. There are good practices in place to both monitor and support students' performance regularly as they move through the course. However, the information available to assist target setting is not fully understood by all teachers and there is sometimes confusion between minimum targets and aspirations leading to a lack of challenge in some cases. The school has identified this as an area for improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. Parents' views of the school are generally very positive, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Parents of pupils of all ages value the school's work ethic and achievement culture, the progress that their children make, their children's enthusiasm for school and its good teaching. They are less happy with the quantity of homework and range of extra-curricular activities. About one in three did not feel that the school works closely with them. The inspection supported their positive views. Homework is set regularly and pupils feel that it is usually manageable. Where this is not the case, they are quick to tell staff. The school has an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, although a few pupils are reluctant to join in, sometimes because of a misplaced view that clubs are only available to the elite musicians, sporting personalities and performers. The school tries to work productively with parents to achieve the necessary balance in responding constructively to reasonable suggestions and unrealistic demands. The inspection found that the lack of regular consultation or a forum for parents and students to voice concerns productively, has prevented partnership from taking the next step towards excellence. The governors report that parents attend in only small numbers where meetings about matters of general concern are organised, but they respond very readily to opportunities, such as parents' evenings, where their sons and daughters are the specific focus.
77. The school provides parents with a wide range of high quality information. Not only does it send home the usual letters, news, requests and invitations, but it gives new parents a comprehensive pack of information about where to find help for the full range of adolescent problems. The brochure, prospectus and governors' report are interesting and informative. Reports are clear and, in most cases, give parents a good idea of what their child has achieved, subject by subject, although this is not always linked clearly to what might be expected for that child or someone of the same age. Otherwise, the grades given are explained well and often used to make predictions about performance in national tests or public examinations. In one or two cases, where it is appropriate, teachers highlight a pupil's aptitude for the subject and encourage the family to think about future study well ahead of the time when a final decision has to be made, which is commendable.
78. Parents are very committed to education and to ensuring that their children have the best possible chances of academic and personal achievement. They are very supportive of the school in a variety of ways, not only through an active and successful parents' and teachers' association, but also by attendance at productions and meetings. A group of parents accompanies the trip to Ypres, and others support school teams regularly, including coaching in rowing. As a result, the impact of parents' involvement on the school's work is very positive and the school's links with parents are very effective. Parents make an exceptional contribution to their children's learning through their support and values. This makes a significant difference to pupils' determination to succeed and to the standards they reach.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

79. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher is a very good leader who has made considerable improvements to the school since he took up the post shortly after the last inspection. The school has a very good reputation within the local community. Standards are very high, the appearance and behaviour of pupils are very good, and staff morale is very high. The headteacher is respected by governors, staff, pupils and parents, and he has a clear vision for the school which is encapsulated in its four aims.

80. The leadership team is well established and its members complement each other well. They have recently exchanged roles, which has resulted in an input of fresh ideas and approaches. This reallocation of tasks and responsibilities is working well. The members of the leadership team have clear job descriptions, and carry out their responsibilities efficiently. Members of the senior management team lead by example. They all have sizable teaching commitments which enable them to have a good knowledge of pupils both in and out of the classroom. They have a high profile around the school which helps to maintain the very orderly environment in which pupils behave very well. The leadership team meets regularly at the beginning and end of every week to deal with both organisational and strategic issues.
81. The school has a detailed improvement plan with clear priorities for the future developments, such as the acquisition of specialist school status. Heads of departments and heads of year devise improvement plans which link into the school's overall development plan. These plans have target dates for meeting objectives and appropriate criteria to measure success. There is a clear management structure and effective procedures to monitor progress in achieving whole-school and departmental targets. The monitoring of departments by the leadership team is generally carried out well.
82. The responsibilities of middle management are appropriately delegated and heads of department and heads of year have up-to-date job descriptions. The heads of year and heads of department regularly meet to discuss administrative, organisational, curricular and pastoral issues. Line managers sometimes attend such meetings and minutes are sent to the leadership group. Middle management meetings take place in different departments in rotation. A brief presentation is given of that department's good practice. This is proving to be a successful way of sharing ideas and expertise. Additionally, the leadership team operates an open-door policy to staff. There is now greater staff involvement in policy formation and there are many opportunities for staff to contribute their ideas and suggestions on whole-school issues. Policy formation is now frequently developed through working parties of appropriate staff. Regular staff meetings also provide a good opportunity to communicate. Each year, a middle manager is seconded to the senior management. This provides fresh ideas for the leadership team and good career development for the individual concerned.
83. In general, the leadership at departmental level is very good, and in some cases excellent. The system for performance management is very well coordinated. It has the support of teachers and is working well. The members of the leadership team monitor the heads of department, who, in turn, monitor subject staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards. Performance management operates in the same way for non-teaching staff. Some areas for concern or development that have been identified by this process have not always been dealt with sufficiently thoroughly by the leadership team. Additionally, many staff within departments observe each other teaching, which helps to spread good practice.
84. Staff development in the school is very effective. Teachers' training needs are identified through performance management procedures, and included in school and department improvement plans. The school's induction of new staff is excellent. There is a comprehensive programme of training sessions at lunchtime and after school to enable new staff to settle in. Appropriate mentors are attached to new staff to help them with their specialist subject or with general matters. The school also has a very successful track record with graduate trainees. The quality of staff management has been recognised and enhanced by the school's gaining of Investors in People status.

85. A governor takes appropriate oversight of provision for pupils with special educational needs. The headteacher takes a close interest in these pupils' welfare and progress. A revised policy is about to be ratified by the Governing body. The leadership of the SENCO is very good. A colleague has been appointed to assist her. Recent developments include an impressive array of modified worksheets in science. Helpful training has taken place for the staff on the demands of the new Code of Practice. Other written guidance is available for them from the SENCO. Special needs issues are regularly discussed at meetings involving senior and middle managers.
86. The financial management of the school's resources is very good. The school completed a very thorough evaluation of its financial procedures just over a year ago, and all of the shortcomings which were identified at that time have since been rectified. All financial matters are now closely monitored by the bursar, leadership team and governing body. All funds are allocated to their designated purposes. Educational priorities are well supported through careful financial management. The upgrading and repair of some parts of the premises and facilities are overdue because of lack of funding. The principles of value for money in this instance are applied to the awarding of contracts for services to the school, such as catering, cleaning and maintenance. The school monitors the work of the contractors very rigorously to ensure quality service. The school does not, however, always compare and challenge its performance sufficiently by using the data available about the performance of other schools locally and nationally.
87. Despite the under-use of computers in class by pupils, the school makes very good use of new technology to ensure the effective management of systems. Comprehensive information about pupils, staff, timetables, attainment and finance is held in databases and is very easily retrievable. Teachers prepare teaching materials of high quality using computers, and use ICT in teaching, for instance through using PowerPoint.
88. The governing body makes a very good contribution to the success of the school. The governors are caring and very committed. They now work in appropriate committees and have clearly designated responsibilities. They work very closely with the school and have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Each member of the governing body is attached to a department and most governors visit the school to attend functions, to talk to senior staff and middle managers or to observe teaching. The headteacher keeps the governing body well informed of all aspects of the school including the achievements of all departments. Members of the leadership team are attached to committees and attend all meetings. The bursar, who is also a member of the leadership team, serves as the clerk to the governing body, and presents a financial statement for each meeting. The governors are well involved at a strategic level in the formation of policy. They receive all draft policy documents and discuss these fully in committee meetings. They participate fully in the strategic planning day with all staff, when the school formulates its improvement plan for the year. The governing body has not, however, fulfilled its statutory duties with regard to the daily act of worship and the teaching of religious education and ICT, which do not meet statutory requirements. The governors have been very actively involved in identifying priorities for the future development of the school, especially with regard to acquiring Specialist College status. The governing body fully shares the headteacher's vision.
89. Overall, the match of qualifications and experience of the teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum is very good. Specialist teachers are deployed well, and on the few occasions that staff are not fully matched to the subject they teach, they are well supported so that there is no adverse effect upon teaching quality. An exception to this is in design and technology where

the school has difficulty in recruiting a full complement of teachers with the full range of expected skills. Laboratory and other support staff work very effectively. In ICT, they give particularly valuable assistance to non-specialist teachers.

90. The quality of accommodation for subject areas varies considerably. Most subjects are taught in suites of rooms, convenient for communication and sharing of resources. Overall provision of accommodation for English and science is very good and for history, geography, art, physical education, and modern foreign languages it is good. It is satisfactory for mathematics, ICT, drama and religious education, but unsatisfactory for music in Years 7 to 9 and design and technology.
91. Music rooms used in Years 7 to 9 do not have practice areas where groups of pupils can work independently, and this affects their progress. Provision for design and technology is unsatisfactory. Rooms are too small and in poor repair, and there is restricted working space around machines, which gives rise to health and safety issues. Some equipment and one playing areas cannot be used for physical education and games because of their poor condition.
92. The library has been developed well. It is well managed and provides a good environment for learning. Resources in subjects are satisfactory overall. Students have access to a good range of books and audio-visual resources in subject areas and in the library and these can be supplemented by project loans. However, not all subjects have easy access to computers, and this restricts their use in lessons.

Sixth form

93. The overall leadership and management of the sixth form are very good, and to a large and appropriate extent, are merged with the main school management. One of the members of the leadership team is designated as head of the sixth form. He has a clear brief and he works closely with the heads of Years 12 and 13 and the form tutors. The leadership and management of subjects are very good and, in some cases, excellent. Considerable improvements have taken place since the last inspection. The school's detailed improvement plan has clear and appropriate priorities for the sixth form. As in the main school, subject plans link closely with the school improvement plan. Each year, an associate member of the management team is appointed from the staff. The current associate member is investigating ways of encouraging sixth formers to mentor younger pupils. Staff development in the sixth form is very effective.
94. Governors' monitor and support the sixth form with the same care that they show towards the main school. However, they have not ensured that religious education is provided for all pupils, and that daily collective worship is provided.
95. The level of staffing is very good. Staff are very well qualified for the subjects they teach.
96. Increasing student numbers are placing very heavy demands on available accommodation and small rooms are restricting the work that takes place in some lessons.
97. Resources are good in quality and range for supporting all subjects taught in the sixth form. The library provides a good research base for students. The availability of computers meets students' needs satisfactorily.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. To build on the existing overall very good standards of provision, the headteacher and governors should:
- (1) Improve the consistency of teaching by sharing the characteristics of the best practice, and in particular:
 - i) give more attention in planning and teaching to the needs of the comparatively lower-attaining pupils, and to those who are gifted and talented. (*paragraphs 26, 42, 123, 132*)
 - ii) make clearer to pupils the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to raise standards, for example by using National Curriculum levels more widely in Years 7 to 9. (*paragraphs 32, 68, 106, 162, 182, 195, 202*)
 - iii) integrate the use of ICT more thoroughly into subjects where at present it is underused, particularly in Years 10 and 11. (*paragraphs 6, 87, 88, 134, 141, 143, 170, 177, 182, 186, 202*)
 - (2) Show increased vigilance over health and safety matters to avoid circumstances similar to those recently remedied as a result of the inspection in design and technology and physical education. (*paragraphs 91, 156, 197*)

In addition, the headteacher and governors may wish to include the following minor issues in their planning:

- i) improve provision for religious education so that it meets statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11, and meet requirements for collective worship throughout the school. (*paragraphs 88, 203*)
- ii) devise more effective ways of seeking the views of parents and working more closely with them. (*paragraph 76*)
- iii) plan citizenship more thoroughly as a subject, and map opportunities for its development across the curriculum, and in tutor time. (*paragraphs 47, 144, 148*)
- iv) as funds permit, improve accommodation in design and technology, in music and in those subjects where overcrowding limits what can be done in lessons. (*paragraphs 90, 91, 156, 190*)

Sixth form

99. In the context of overall very good provision:
- (1) Improve the consistency of teaching by sharing the best existing practice more widely,
 - (2) Increase the use of ICT across the curriculum. (*paragraphs 212, 248, 256, 292*)

In addition, the headteacher and governors may wish to include the following in their planning:

- i) ensure that the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met. (*paragraph 60, 94*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|--|--------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 7 – 11 | 138 |
| | Sixth form | 57 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | | 64 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 7– 11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 11 | 54 | 52 | 19 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 8 | 39 | 37 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 6 | 26 | 19 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 15 | 42 | 33 | 8 | 2 | 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 approximately two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 689 | 298 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 4 | 0 |

| Special educational needs | Y7– Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|---------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 | 0 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 22 | 13 |

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

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 4 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 4 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.5 |
| National comparative data | 7.8 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.1 |
| National comparative data | 1.2 |

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2002 | 79 | 52 | 131 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 79 | 79 | 78 |
| | Girls | 51 | 52 | 52 |
| | Total | 130 | 131 | 130 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 99 (99) | 100 (99) | 99 (100) |
| | National | 66 (64) | 67 (66) | 66 (66) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 95 (94) | 100 (99) | 97 (99) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 45 (43) | 33 (34) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 79 | 79 | 79 |
| | Girls | 52 | 52 | 52 |
| | Total | 131 | 131 | 131 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 100 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) |
| | National | 67 (65) | 70 (68) | 67 (64) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 96 (96) | 100 (100) | 96 (90) |
| | 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 | 48 | 80 | 128 |

| 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 | 47 | 48 | 48 |
| | Girls | 78 | 79 | 79 |
| | Total | 125 | 127 | 127 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 98 (96) | 99 (98) | 99 (98) |
| | National | 50 (48) | 91 (91) | 96 (96) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 68.5 |
| | National | 39.8 |

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 | 79 | 153 |

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|--------|------|
| | | Male | Female | All |
| School | Number of candidates | 74 | 79 | 153 |
| | Average point score per candidate | 19.8 | 22.6 | 21.3 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | 16.9 | 17.7 | 17.4 |

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 871 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 94 | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|-------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 58 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 19.13 |

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 10 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 287 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 78 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 26.1 |
| Key Stage 4 | 25.4 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2001-2002 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 2845310 |
| Total expenditure | 2893984 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2950 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 2 04486 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 155812 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|------|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 20.7 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 25.1 |
| | |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 0.4 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 987 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 236 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 51 | 43 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 53 | 44 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 29 | 60 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 23 | 57 | 15 | 4 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 34 | 58 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 35 | 50 | 12 | 3 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 38 | 45 | 10 | 6 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 71 | 27 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 14 | 53 | 24 | 8 | 1 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 40 | 42 | 8 | 1 | 9 |

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

| | | | | |
|----|----|----|---|---|
| 39 | 49 | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| 33 | 40 | 14 | 5 | 8 |

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

- Teaching is good, and marking in Years 9 to 11 is particularly accurate and constructive
- Teachers have good subject knowledge from which pupils learn about the rich range and heritage of literature, and to apply specialist vocabulary and analytical techniques in their critical work
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good
- The department has been very well led through a difficult period of staffing

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results. Pupils have tended to make less progress in English language and English literature than in most other subjects.
- The variable quality of teaching, which leads to less progress in some lessons than others
- Marking in Years 7 and 8, which does not give pupils a sufficiently clear idea of their current standards and precisely what they need to do next to improve their work

100. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well above average. Results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 were very high compared with the national average. They were in line with those of schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. As in the previous year, pupils did less well in English than they did in mathematics and science. Girls did better than boys to the same extent as nationally. Teacher assessments were accurate. Over three years, results have risen slightly.
101. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is very high compared with the national average. This is good achievement from their standards when they joined the school. By the end of Year 9 higher-attaining pupils have an excellent awareness of the cultural background to English literature and write about it perceptively, often being aware of nuances. Average-attaining pupils write in a range of styles and show very good ability to work under timed conditions. They use technical terms very well and use formal language very effectively, although some critical pieces can be rather stilted. Lower-attaining pupils explain how effects are achieved in texts and express complex ideas well. They are more adept at defining techniques and illustrating their use in literature than they are at appreciating and explaining the effect which the techniques are intended to have on the reader.
102. GCSE results in 2002 were very high, compared with national results, in both English language and English literature. Pupils did better in language than in literature, a reverse of the situation in the previous year. In 2002, there was a significant decrease in the number of pupils gaining A* and A grades, particularly in English literature. Pupils generally made more progress in subjects other than English language and literature. Girls made less progress in English literature than in the other subjects they studied.
103. The evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work and from lessons observed showed that the attainment of pupils presently in Year 11 is very high. Their achievement is good in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9, especially in terms of the proportion of average-attaining pupils who produce work of very high quality. Higher-attaining pupils write with authority, skilfully developing their own interpretations of literature or ideas. They are aware of

symbolism and parallels, and use punctuation, phrasing and vocabulary to create particular effects in their writing. Average-attaining pupils express themselves very well. Essays are skilfully structured and, in narrative writing, detail is very well used to create atmosphere. Lower-attaining pupils redraft work well and develop competence over a good range of styles. Technical blemishes are compensated for by sustained writing which contains good ideas. Tension and character insights are effectively developed. Whilst quotations are well chosen and incorporated into literature essays, too few pupils explain or develop such references adequately.

104. The very few pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers discreetly make sure that they understand the nature and purpose of work. Additional time or a different focus is given so that pupils confidently tackle work which they find difficult. For example, a Year 7 pupil was given guidance about how to make a table for taking notes neater and therefore more useful.
105. The overall quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well, and the scrutiny of work confirmed that this has been the case for some time. During the week of the inspection the quality of lessons seen included some that was excellent to a small amount that was unsatisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. As a result, pupils learn about the historical and cultural background to literature, and are keen to read widely to extend their knowledge. Lessons are well planned and usually contain challenging tasks or ideas, but a relative weakness is that it is not always made clear to pupils what they are to learn rather than merely what they are to do. When tasks, purpose and time are made clear, progress is very good. This was the case in a Year 9 lesson where the teacher used the context of a murder trial to stimulate ideas about how to make a case persuasively. Sometimes, teachers do not plan adequately how they are going to enable the highest-attaining pupils to demonstrate their full potential. However, this was done very successfully when Year 9 pupils prepared their speeches for the prosecution or defence. They used excellent resources on computer to research the evidence. The teacher reminded them of the need to incorporate certain skills in a formal speech. Higher-attaining pupils began to realise the need to bring potential counter-arguments into speeches, to give the impression of knowledge and balanced viewpoint.
106. Pupils learn to examine language use, including their own, because of teachers' expert questioning. This enabled a Year 7 class to propose words like 'aimlessly' and 'heartlessly' to make a script more vivid, and to realise that 'torrid' was an excellent word but too strong for the context. All lessons contain a good and appropriate range of activities so that learning is stimulating, but, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not give adequate guidance about the purpose of the task, or acceptable levels of conversation. A Year 11 class enjoyed preparing scripts with a theme of 'fate or destiny', but the results were predictable and the value as preparation for text study limited. Homework is well used to extend pupils' learning. It is very helpfully marked in Years 9 to 11, but too much marking in Years 7 and 8 is generalised. As a result, many younger pupils have an insecure understanding of their level of achievement, and only a vague idea of what specifically they should be working on to improve.
107. Pupils' attitudes to English are very good, as is their behaviour. They respond very well to the range of tasks provided, and pupils of all ages show the ability to work independently for long periods. Written work is completed with much care and pride; books and files are very well organised. The responsive, diligent, and committed attitudes of the majority contrast with those of a minority of older pupils, who can be unsettled and show a lack of respect and cooperation if they find a task dull or the teacher lacking firm control of the class.

108. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have shown some improvement, but the quality of teaching is more variable. Accommodation is now very good, most lessons taking place in attractive classrooms. The curriculum gives good opportunities for learning about, and making pertinent use of, ICT skills. A very good range of out-of-lesson activities is available. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has successfully led the department through a period when staffing turbulence affected teachers' workload, and the standards attained by some pupils. The department does not yet make adequate use of data to compare pupils' performance in English examinations with their achievement in other subjects and so to identify issues and inconsistencies. Morale amongst the current team of teachers is good, and they are keen to effect the further improvements which are within their grasp.

Key skills across the curriculum: literacy

109. On entry pupils have very good literacy skills, particularly in terms of their reading and speaking. Teachers accept the importance of further developing literacy skills, and the head of English has taken the lead in reviewing and extending the development of literacy in the classroom. Regular professional development has taken place towards promoting good standards of literacy. All schemes of work include suitable planning to achieve these. Practice is more consistent than in most schools.
110. Excellent use is made of class and group discussion by most teachers, so that pupils use their very well developed speaking skills to clarify and develop ideas. Most subjects focus strongly on the understanding and correct use of technical terms and specialist vocabulary. In science, literacy boards in classrooms emphasise these. Key concepts relating to painting style are stressed in art. In religious education, lessons often end with a whiteboard competition, where pupils have to come up with quick and accurate definitions for key terms. In personal and social education, Year 7 pupils are expected to become familiar with the exact meaning of words like 'obese', 'proteins' and 'diabetes'. However, the spelling of specialist vocabulary is not sufficiently emphasised. In a minority of lessons, even including some in the sixth form, chances to develop speaking skills are overlooked; teachers are over-directive and allow too little discussion.
111. Reading for information and research is widespread. Note taking skills are taught and used in technology and science. In geography and history, texts are carefully chosen and worksheets thought about for their accessibility for pupils. In mathematics, pupils follow detailed written instructions to guide them through the formation of questionnaires. Many pupils read aloud very well, and quickly pick up complex meanings and inferences from new texts.
112. Pupils take detailed and extensive notes. Many teachers diligently make sure that pupils do not merely copy out. Extended writing is very well used in science and design technology, and imaginative writing is a feature of geography and history. In general, however, marking across the school pays too little attention to the correct spelling of specialist terms and to correct grammar.
113. The library, poor at the time of the previous inspection, is now an asset to the school. It is well organised with a good range and quality of books. There is, however, some lack of books to stimulate the younger or more general reader. Good systems are used for familiarising pupils with the library, and effective links with heads of department enable priorities new purchases to be determined. ICT is very effectively used for administration. Activities, such as workshops by professional authors, book signings, competitions, and visits by poets, stimulate

awareness of the value of reading for pleasure and research. As the library is no longer the centre for obligatory sixth form private study, it is more generally available to the whole school than was previously the case.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Excellent teaching challenges and supports pupils through well-planned and varied lessons that hold their interest
- Pupils' excellent enthusiasm and commitment to work leads to rapid progress in lessons and over time

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for development

114. In 2002, GCSE results were very high. All candidates over the last three years have gained A* to C grades. In 2002, more than half gained A* or A grades. Less than one quarter of those entered are boys, so that boy-girl comparisons are not valid.
115. By the end of Year 9, pupils' standards are very high, particularly where they discuss and evaluate ideas cooperatively in small groups. They work with energy, commitment and interest as they share ideas and suggestions for devising improvised scenes. Pupils analyse each other's work with insight and a sense of mutual support. The standard of speaking and listening in small and whole-class discussion is very high.
116. Standards remain very high, so that, by Year 11, pupils demonstrate high standards of dramatic understanding, acting ability and interpretative skill, as they work in teams to act, for example, scenes from contemporary plays. Teachers stimulate pupils well to maintain a brisk pace of work. Pupils are challenged to think independently how they may refine their work. For example, a group of sixteen-year-old pupils in a scene from John Godber and Jane Thornton's 'Shakers' responded very well to the teacher's suggestions about voice, body language and timing. As a result, they conveyed more graphically the tensions experienced by their characters. Across the age range, boys' standards are similar to girls'.
117. Teaching is excellent as is pupils' learning. Teachers exhibit very good knowledge of improvisational techniques. Lessons have a sense of urgency which results in the productive use of time. Pupils benefit very well from well-planned teaching which creates a proper balance of time to work independently and time to receive instruction or to have work assessed. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations of them. Lessons are interesting because of the good variety of activities that are planned around each theme. They hold pupils' attention well, arouse their curiosity and harness their enthusiasm.
118. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent. The sense of fun and bubbling enthusiasm in lessons, coupled with mental effort and concentration, all contribute to the rapid progress pupils make and to their excellent achievement throughout the subject.
119. Visits to the theatre, visits to the school by professional actors, and an ambitious series of extra-curricular productions all serve to build pupils' confidence and expertise. Leadership and management are excellent. Very good lesson planning and well-focused assessment procedures play an important part in sustaining the very high standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and their attitudes are very good. They are enthusiastic learners who work hard
- ICT is used very well in Years 7 to 9 to promote a range of skills
- Assessment and tracking are very effective in enabling underperforming pupils to be identified

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching styles is narrow in Years 7 to 9
- Some lessons in Years 10 and 11 lack challenge for the highest-attaining pupils, and pupils are too reliant on calculators

120. Attainment on entry to the school in mathematics is very high in comparison with the national average. Since 1998, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been well above average, with every pupil achieving at least Level 6 in 2002. There is little difference between boys' and girls' attainment. The school's results at Level 6 are well above the average for schools with a similar percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and above average for the percentage reaching Level 7 or 8. Overall, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving very well.
121. The work seen during the inspection reflected the teacher assessments and the examination results. The introduction of the numeracy strategy at Key Stage 3 is encouraging more varied teaching and learning styles to be introduced in the classroom. For example, a Year 8 lesson started with a mental agility activity which involved everybody and stimulated their learning. In Year 7 the introduction of an ICT element to the mathematics scheme of work is enabling pupils to use previously-learnt skills in problem-solving activities using computers.
122. GCSE results are well above the national average. In 2002, the results exceeded the department's target, set on the basis of the students' previous work. Over half of the pupils gained A* or A grades, and all pupils gained at least grade D. Boys did better than girls.
123. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well and standards are well above average. The higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of demanding topics, but the ablest pupils are not challenged consistently highly enough. For example, a higher-attaining Year 11 class, when presented with vector notation and the rules for addition of vectors, were given little challenge or problem solving in follow up questioning. The lower-attaining pupils complete work which is appropriate to their level. In a good Year 11 lesson, the class was grouped so that they were learning from one another as well as the teacher. All work is well presented. Constructive comments are made by teachers to aid learning, but there was little evidence of pupils doing corrections. Some Year 10 and 11 pupils are too reliant on calculators.
124. The teaching and learning of mathematics are good. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and a good understanding of the National Curriculum requirements, even though they are not all mathematics specialists. The majority of lessons are well planned and the teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. In Years 7 to 9, lessons follow the national numeracy strategy, although the oral starter activity does not always develop pupils' mental skills in a sufficient variety of lively ways. Challenge is used to good effect in some lessons. For example, in Year 9, the pupils were divided into two groups and given algebraic fractions, during the plenary session, which they had to answer in a short time. This

led to an animated and competitive discussions as each group tried to arrive first at the correct solution. Some concluding plenary sessions do not allow enough of an opportunity for rounding off the lesson by reviewing and consolidating what has been learnt.

125. Throughout the subject, pupils' attitudes are very good. They work hard and learn enthusiastically.
126. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory, with some significant recent developments in provision in Years 7 to 9, including some very good developments in the use of ICT. The head of department has a good awareness of the strengths of the department through monitoring colleagues' lessons, but inconsistencies in teaching still exist. Overall the range of teaching methods used in Years 7 to 9 is narrow. Staffing is good, accommodation is satisfactory, and resources are appropriate with suitable provision of books in the school library. The good assessment and tracking system which has been introduced for Years 7 to 9 enables those pupils who are risk of underachievement to be identified and given extra support. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Skills across the curriculum: numeracy

127. The teaching and development of numeracy across the curriculum are good. For example, in science in Years 7 to 9, the pupils handle data, draw graphs and calculate percentages. In drama, pupils study metrical forms, such as iambic pentameter, and in music, they use numeracy when studying rhythm and metre. Science and geography provide scope for pupils to work out percentages and to express information in graph form. Despite overall good provision, opportunities are not systematically incorporated into most schemes of work.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well and results are very high at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE level
- Teaching is very good; teachers are very well qualified and have very good subject knowledge
- Leadership and management are very good

Area for improvement

- To identify and provide for pupils who are underachieving
- Increasing the use of ICT

128. Pupils' standards on entry are well above average. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, standards were very high, being in the top five per cent for all schools, which was slightly higher than the teacher assessments predicted. The attainment of pupils was well above that seen in schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The trend has been upwards over the past five years. When compared with the other core subjects, pupils do as well in science as they do in mathematics and slightly better than they do in English. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
129. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Overall, the standards seen were well above those expected nationally at the end of Year 9. They explained in a detailed and accurate manner the relationship between surface area and force in calculating pressure. They made very good use of microscopes for observing cell components, and showed considerable discernment when discussing their observations.

130. The proportion of pupils obtaining A* to C grades at GCSE is very high compared with the national level. At the end of Year 11, in 2002, all pupils took double certification GCSE or the three separate sciences. Ninety-three per cent gained A* to C grades, compared with the national figure of 54 per cent. Of these, over half were at the highest grades possible. The standard has been maintained over the past six years. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
131. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good, and the standard of work seen was very high. This represents very good progress. In Year 11, pupils undertake a range of activities including the accurate calculation of the molarity of solutions, discuss antibiotics and antibodies, and the behaviour of ions in the electrolysis of copper. All of these activities were performed accurately and in great detail.
132. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good throughout the subject. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour resulted in the most efficient working in those lessons where excellent planning produced a very purposeful classroom atmosphere. Pupils' learning was enhanced in these lessons by a high degree of co-operation between teachers and pupils. This was especially conspicuous amongst the higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils of all abilities work in an enthusiastic and safe manner when carrying out practical work, and enjoy this aspect of the subject. A good example of this was in a Year 11 class working on bacterial growth and the effect of antibiotics, where the procedures were followed with great care. Most pupils have complete notes and, overall, achieve a very good standard of presentation. However, a small number of pupils have notes that do not provide a good revision source and are incomplete. The department has strategies to provide additional support for these underachieving pupils to raise their attainment.
133. Teaching and learning were very good, overall, and pupils achieve very well. In a substantial majority of lessons observed, the teaching was good or better, and in half, teaching was very good or excellent. The review of pupils' books indicated that teaching over time is very good. Lessons had good pace, there was very good classroom control and the activities were planned at suitable level for the pupils. One very effective lesson with a Year 11 class, based on motors, involved an interesting starter activity, demonstration and practical session. The projection of a computer display onto a screen presented information in a striking way, and was a very good example of the effective use of this new, and rapidly developing, resource. Homework is well thought out and an integral part of the lesson plans and is used as an effective means of reinforcing learning. Teachers mark tests in detail and add constructive comments and praise. The department acknowledges the need to provide further for pupils who are found to be underachieving. The stock of books in the library is very good and gives good support for independent learning.
134. The assessment of pupils' attainment and the monitoring of this against target levels or grades is effective. Pupils are regularly made aware of their progress from these assessments. The few pupils with special educational needs are well supported in science and make very good progress. Staff are aware of their needs and provide suitable activities and resources. Higher-attaining pupils are also very well supported, make very good progress and gain excellent GCSE results. A wide range of opportunities is provided for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills, both in written work and class discussions. The department has successfully introduced the literacy strategy, using key words in a range of writing styles and other support materials well, and this has been of benefit to pupils. A similarly positive approach has been seen with numeracy. The use of computers is not widespread in science. When used, they are employed to very good effect, especially in the co-operative approach with the ICT

department in Year 8. The staff use computers confidently. The use of data-logging is restricted by the lack of sufficient computers, but this is soon to be remedied.

135. The management of the department is very good. The department is organised by a manager for each subject, and they are co-ordinated by the head of science. He leads the department by setting an excellent example. The last inspection identified the need for the separate subjects to work together in co-operation, and this has taken place. This co-ordination has been assisted by the recent appointment of a lower school science manager. Useful resource material and assessment procedures have been introduced to assist in a common approach to lesson planning and teaching. The departmental system of monitoring the teaching and learning is well established, and has helped the identification of examples of good practice. The department has improved well since the last inspection, and has good priorities for development.
136. Accommodation for science is very good. The laboratories are grouped together, allowing good co-operation. The department has sufficient resources. The support staff are very efficient and very well organised and contribute well to the efficiency of lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Attainment is very high, and pupils work very well independently
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding
- Standards of teaching and learning are very good, with a good emphasis on the development of research and study skills linked to assessment objectives

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT as a creative medium
- Resources to develop ceramics

137. Standards of attainment of pupils on entry are above what is found nationally. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average. This was reflected in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 and in work seen during the inspection. GCSE results are well above the national average, as are the standards of pupils' current work. Results have improved over the past two years, particularly the proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades.
138. Overall, teaching is very good in both key stages, with some excellent teaching observed in KS3. Teachers have obvious enthusiasm for the subject, demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of art and design, and expect high standards from pupils. Characteristics of the best teaching are the use of a wide range of teaching methods, good use of source materials, a high degree of concentration on the development of research and study skills. This was exemplified when a Year 7 class used their Haiku poems very effectively as the stimulus for an abstract narrative project, based on Australian Aboriginal painting. Pupils learn very well. They are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve through the effective way teachers incorporate assessment objectives into their planning. When teaching is less successful, there is a tendency to misjudge the pace of lessons and over-extend some activities. At times, some pupils lose concentration when lesson introductions are too long.

139. Pupils achieve very well in relation to their starting points at both key stages and in all aspects of art. A key feature is the high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers maintain a good balance between a supportive formal structure and opportunities for pupils express personal views. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent, and are an important factor in their very effective learning. They enjoy lessons, show pride in their work and respond to challenges with enthusiasm. In particular, they demonstrate a high level of critical awareness. One pupil in a Year 9 class had considered different styles of Cubism, and explained in some depth why some artists used tonal values as opposed to bright colours. By the end of Year 9, the emphasis on developing investigation skills has enabled pupils to become very good independent learners. This is particularly evident in the quality of work in sketchbooks. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress at both key stages. They have opportunities to receive extra tuition and use facilities and equipment outside curriculum time. The very small number with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. Pupils' development of literacy through art is very good, and can be seen in the high level of language used in classroom discussions and the quality of the written work in their sketchbooks. The use of mathematical terminology is underlined and reinforced when they have to measure and make calculations. For example, when a Year 8 group were scaling up their preliminary sketches in a mask-making project, pupils spoke about ratio and proportion.
140. Pupils follow a broad and varied programme of study, which covers all aspects of the National Curriculum. They have access to a suitable range of materials and processes including painting, drawing, printmaking, photography and sculpture. Much of the work in Years 7 to 11 involves combining and exploring different materials and media. Year 11 pupils had made some very exciting large sculptures based on natural forms. They used willow canes and a variety of papers laminated with glue.
141. Pupils use ICT to gather information from the Internet and sometimes to support project work in the classroom. Some pupils in Year 9 have used digital cameras to help investigate the effects of light on different surfaces, and groups have worked in the school network room with advanced software. Insufficient equipment prevents its regular use as a creative medium, but firm plans exist to improve this situation. The lack of a kiln to fire pupils' clay work is preventing development in ceramics.
142. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop the spiritual moral and social aspects of their lives through the emphasis the department places on talking about personal feelings and emotions. This is often done very effectively when they explore artists' work. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils discussed very perceptively how artists from different periods expressed their ideas about similar concepts. Pupils develop cultural awareness when they explore the art and artefacts of different peoples. These range from investigating Native American totem poles, as a starting point for a sculpture project in Year 9, to looking at Japanese stone gardens to explore how simple forms and the manipulation of scale can generate a sense of awe and wonder. Art makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. Accommodation is good, has a beneficial effect on the scope of work pupils can undertake, and has in this way contributed to raising standards.
143. The staff in the department work well as a team due to very good leadership and management. They share common values, and are appropriately qualified and experienced across a range of media. Consistency in standards of teaching and learning is maintained through effective monitoring by the head of department. This includes lesson observations and regular meetings. Teachers have attended a variety of appropriate training courses in recent years and are well informed about developments in the subject. The departmental development

plan is good. It identifies appropriate areas for development and is linked to whole-school targets, although plans for developing the use of ICT as a creative medium are not specific enough. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The school's rich extra-curricular programme provides many opportunities for developing citizenship skills
- In lessons which contain aspects of citizenship, pupils' understanding and learning of relevant issues are very good

Areas for improvement

- The school lacks a curriculum plan for the subject
- Opportunities for developing citizenship in lessons are rarely identified

144. Standards are in line with national expectation throughout Years 7 to 11. During the inspection, three PSHE lessons linked with citizenship were observed. While pupils achieved well, and sometimes very well, in individual lessons, the current inconsistency in provision means that overall achievement is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 7 show good recall of prior learning, both of material covered in Year 6 and recent lessons. All pupils were knowledgeable about the dangers of drug misuse and the majority was aware that caffeine in Coca-Cola was addictive. In Year 9, pupils showed very good awareness of the procedures of renting and buying property and were able to state clearly the advantages and disadvantages of both methods. Without prompting they identified a category of people – those who live in tied housing - for whom this would not be an immediate problem, and gave several pertinent examples. In Years 7 to 9, although pupils are able to identify what citizenship signifies in its narrowest sense, they have as yet little awareness of what it means in their studies.
145. In Year 11, pupils have a better appreciation of citizenship as a term, and can, for example give reasons why crime rates might be higher in the town than in the countryside. They resolve apparent contradictions in evidence and data, and suggest convincing reasons why crime is more prevalent now than in the 1950's. They construct and justify their own hierarchies to explain cause and effect, for example in investigating the factors behind the death of Damilola Taylor.
146. No overall judgement can yet be given of the overall quality of teaching and learning. Common factors of successful teaching are careful preparation, good questioning techniques and skilful use of the board to consolidate learning. In Year 9, this enables pupils to understand that young adults have to weigh up and resolve many competing factors before making choices. In Year 11, teaching challenges pupils well to advance their understanding, for example by justifying apparent anomalies in crime graphs.
147. The school's rich extra-curricular provision provides a large number of opportunities to develop citizenship skills. The Junior School Council is a good example. The senior teacher who conducts meetings has, over time, enhanced pupils' negotiating skills. Pupils understand that negotiation is the best way to make sure their voice is heard, and to bring about the changes they want to see in school. As several of their ideas have been put into practice, they see that they have a part to play in school development, and this encourages them to further efforts. Pupils can see beyond their own immediate self-interest to wider social issues. They debate how best to raise awareness of recycling in school, and what talents they need to call upon to publicise their ideas. Pupils are being encouraged to raise funds to assist in the development of a partner school in South Africa in ways that will heighten their appreciation of that country's

- culture. Other initiatives which benefit pupils include the Year 9 Industry Day and well-established pupil mentoring schemes. Planning is well in hand for a Year 10 Citizenship Week.
148. The provision for citizenship in the curriculum has been reviewed and gaps have been identified, some of which have been remedied. The school has yet to develop a curriculum plan for citizenship. There is insufficient distinction in schemes of work between citizenship and subject-specific work. Attention has not been given to planning how pupils' values, skills and understanding will be gradually developed. There is no indication in the documentation of what expectations might be appropriate for the different age groups. Assessment criteria have not yet been established for the subject.
149. It is not possible to make a judgement on leadership and management of the subject as the co-ordinator has only very recently been appointed to the post.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils attain consistently high standards and are good at thinking creatively
- Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement by all pupils
- Leadership and management are very good

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum provision for Years 7 to 9
- Accommodation and resources
- Staffing, to secure enough suitably trained and experienced staff
- Closer monitoring of health and safety risk assessments

150. Attainment in entry to the school is above national expectation. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been consistently well above the national average, and, in 2002, they were very high. Current work indicates that standards continue to be very high for both boys and girls. All pupils, including those who have special talents are achieving well when compared with their attainment on entry to the school.
151. By the end of Year 9, all pupils are developing a suitable range of knowledge and skills through a good range of projects, which enables them to work to design briefs, carry out research, make choices about some aspects of their work and evaluate what they produce. They use good recording and drawing skills and include a significant amount of computer-generated work in both recording and practical work. By the end of Year 9, all have experienced a wide range of compliant materials, ingredients and electronic components. They have produced working models in wood, useful tools and sculptures in metal, recipes, creative and individually-designed cushions in fabric, and electronic devices housed in self made plastic containers. All of these items are made to a very good standard.
152. In 2002, GCSE examination results overall were well above the national average for all pupils, and both boys' and girls' results were well above their respective national averages. The proportion of both boys and girls gaining A* and A grades is well above the national average and pupils do as well in design and technology as in the other GCSE subjects they take. Pupils continue to achieve well, compared with their previous standards of attainment. The standard of work currently in Year 10 and 11 is well above national expectation. Pupils research their work thoroughly, analyse existing products, and develop their own, often creative, solutions.

They skilfully produce working drawings and subsequently evaluate their work critically. Standards of presentation in folders are very high and pupils often use computers very effectively to enhance their designs. They confidently use computer-aided manufacturing techniques. Pupils produce often complex products to a very good standard. They use a very good range of both hand and machine techniques well, and, with the help of teachers, are applying their good levels of technical knowledge and understanding in a wide variety of technically demanding situations. Overall, pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well.

153. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good. In Years 10 and 11, they are very good. Teachers' planning is good in Years 7 to 9 because it is based on well-prepared schemes of work, which encourage high expectations and enable effective teaching methods to be applied. As a result, time and resources are used well. Throughout the subject, pupils develop good levels of knowledge and understanding of the materials they use. They show high levels of interest in their work and produce creative solutions in their design work. They work efficiently in practical lessons, show high level of concentration, and are developing well their independent learning skills. Pupils have very good understanding of what they have to do to improve their work because of teachers' very good assessment procedures and advice. Homework is used effectively to enhance coursework. All pupils spend considerable time and effort outside lessons in developing their work, and this plays a major part in raising the standards of work.
154. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and often excellent. Pupils enjoy design and technology. They work with individual commitment and collaborate together well.
155. The curriculum for design and technology, in Years 7 to 9, is adversely affected by lack of some specialisms amongst the teachers, and the crowded conditions in some classrooms. However, by the end of Year 9, all National Curriculum requirements are broadly met. The teaching deals satisfactorily with moral, social, cultural and environmental issues as part of work related to the role of the designer and the use of technology in society. Opportunities to include citizenship exist, for example when pupils are designing buildings which are environmentally friendly. However, at present, these opportunities are not sufficiently planned.
156. Assessment is used well to set targets, inform pupils about the ways in which they can improve their work and to inform curriculum planning. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The department copes well with cramped accommodation. Aspects of health and safety, resulting from crowded workshops, which were a concern at the start of the inspection, were immediately remedied. Very effective support has been given to teachers new to the subject. The teachers are a committed team with a good capacity for further development. Improvement in teaching and standards since the last inspection has been good.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning leading to high standards and very good achievement
- Very good development of literacy and numeracy skills
- Excellent attitudes and relationships
- Very good leadership and management
- Good opportunities for using ICT for research and presentation

Areas for improvement

- The use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 to make assessment more effective

- Opportunities for field work

157. In 2002, all pupils were assessed at Level 6, which is very high in comparison with the national average. Teachers' assessments show an increase in higher levels from 2000 to 2001, with all pupils in both years gaining Level 5 or higher. However, in work seen in books and lessons attainment is well above the average, boosted largely by the highly developed skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' attainment on entry is well above average and very good teaching has maintained well above average standards, representing very good achievement.
158. Standards overall at the end of Year 11 are excellent, with examination results very high. Standards in work seen in books and lessons were well above average. GCSE results have improved considerably since the last inspection. In 2002, all candidates gained A* to C grades, and over half gained an A* or A grade, an improvement on the previous year's very good results. Boys gained a higher percentage of the highest grades than girls. The number of highest grades has continued to rise, and from 2001 to 2002 there was a ten per cent increase. Over the five years from Year 7 to Year 11 the department is able to continue the development of a wide range of skills and the final examination successes confirm very good achievement. In 2002, two out of three pupils exceeded their predicted examination grade.
159. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 gain a good knowledge of basic geography and number skills. They can measure line and angle, use coordinates and latitude and longitude. In Years 7 to 9, writing skills are very well developed, and in a variety of styles. Some pupils produce extended and imaginative writing, as in a Year 7 exercise on 'Why was the Marlow site chosen?' in settlement studies, and in travel brochures for South Africa created by Year 8 pupils. Pupils use a good vocabulary in written work and discussion. From the beginning, pupils learn research techniques and acquire a good knowledge of case studies. They become familiar with examination skills, which they continue to refine in Years 10 and 11, with excellent results. Skills are well honed in fieldwork, but opportunities for this are not at present available to all year groups.
160. In Years 7 to 9, pupils gain a good grounding in number work. They construct and interpret a range of graphs and, in Year 9, pupils use ranking procedures to relate Olympic medals to Gross National Product.
161. Geography is a popular option choice at GCSE level. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to develop a variety of skills. They hypothesise, gather and analyse data and reach correct conclusions in projects and coursework on the local area. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of geographical patterns and processes. From Year 7, pupils extend their knowledge and use of ICT, and, by Year 11, confidently use the Internet for research and word processing to improve their already high standards of presentation. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged through the provision of additional, challenging tasks.
162. Teaching and learning in geography are very good as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge and careful planning. Lessons are enjoyable and good relationships evident between teachers and pupils. The methods and skills of the teachers ensure high levels of concentration and the pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour help them to stay on task and work at a good pace. Much of the department's success is due to the high levels of expectation of both pupils' behaviour and learning. Objectives are clearly explained and recorded at the beginning of lessons. Pupils' knowledge is constantly checked and reinforced and progress confirmed in good plenary sessions. Literacy and numeracy are strongly promoted by teachers, and all pupils are equally valued and encouraged to contribute to lessons. ICT and audio visual aids are fully exploited to add interest and clarity to lessons. Teachers use a good range of activities to stimulate interest and concentration, but, very

occasionally, in a long lesson, some momentum is lost. Day-to-day assessment is very good. Marking is regular and teachers' comments are constructive. Pupils know how well they are doing and have targets for improvement. The full implementation of assessment procedures related to National Curriculum levels of attainment is planned for Years 7 to 9, to improve further target setting, monitoring of progress, and pupils' awareness of their progress.

163. Pupils display excellent attitudes. They work hard, and behaviour is very good. The very good relationships allow for a lot of humour in lessons, and pupils work productively, both individually and cooperatively. Good relationships and efficient collaboration enhanced learning in a Year 10 lesson, in which groups prepared presentations on flood prevention.
164. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department is providing new ideas and thoughtful management and has introduced a good development plan designed to build on the department's current success. He is supported by an expert and enthusiastic team and, together, they have the capacity to maintain the present excellent provision, producing geographers, not just teaching geography. Improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and in the standards pupils attain has been very good.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well and attain very high standards because the teaching is very good and sometimes excellent
- Pupils display very good attitudes to their work
- History makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills
- Leadership and management are excellent

Areas for improvement

- More consistent opportunities to use ICT
- More systematic contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to numeracy

165. Pupils' standards on entry are well above national expectation. Teacher assessments of pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 were very high in 2002. The standards of work of pupils currently in Year 9 are also very high. All pupils use sources very well to derive information about the topics they are studying and analyse and compare them as representations of the past. For example, in work on newspaper reports on conditions in the trenches in the First World War, pupils were aware of the need to treat the sources with caution, because the information in them might have been influenced by propaganda, or the fallibility of memory. Written work is generally of a very high standard. Pupils wrote very well-balanced essays, when examining arguments for and against claims that the Battle of the Somme was a victory for the Allies, and when producing a detailed and evocative reconstruction of life in the trenches.
166. In comparison with other maintained schools, the 2002 GCSE results were very high. The great majority gained at least a C grade and a very high proportion secured A* or A. The school's analysis showed that many pupils gained better results than expected on the basis of their earlier attainment. There was no marked overall variation between the results of boys and girls. Although girls succeeded better at gaining A* grades, boys secured a slightly higher

proportion of A* to C grades. History is a very popular subject, with double the proportion of pupils choosing to take it at GCSE level than in most schools.

167. Current Year 11 pupils showed very high standards in lessons observed and written work sampled. A considerable strength is the standard of source analysis. In addition to classifying sources, for example as primary or secondary, they relate them carefully to the motives of the people who created them. For example, pupils questioned the reliability of United States newspaper reports on the treatment of Vietnamese civilians in the Vietnam War. They made reference to letters written by American soldiers and to the political arguments made at the time to justify the war and the tactics used. Points of view are argued lucidly in essays and extended answers to source-based questions.
168. The overall standard of pupils entering Year 7 is well above average. By the end of Year 9, they achieve very well in securely reaching very high standards. Pupils continue to maintain these standards and to achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.
169. The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good in all years and sometimes it was excellent. Most lessons are planned to secure a good pace of work so that, even though many lessons are only of forty minutes duration, much is covered and achieved in the time. Work is very well pitched to challenge pupils and build upon their existing levels of learning, for example by providing many opportunities for independent thought and creativity. Teachers ensure that the very small number of pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for, and that the highest-attaining pupils are suitably challenged. Teachers use challenging questions very successfully in almost all lessons to help pupils to improve their spoken answers. They provide very good role models through their own enthusiasm for the subject and their academic discipline. Marking provides very clear guidance on how well work has been carried out and what could be done to improve it.
170. A major strength of teaching is the contribution that it makes to pupils' skills in literacy. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to speak and listen in small groups and whole-class discussions. Teachers focus strongly on helping them to improve their essay writing techniques. The school library provides a very valuable resource for pupils' individual research. Although some opportunities were missed for encouraging the development of numeracy through history, good opportunities were observed. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils estimated the size of a modern bow and were asked to compare this with the dimensions of a longbow at the time of Agincourt. Generally, teachers use ICT very well to enhance learning. For example, PowerPoint presentations often enhance the quality of descriptions and explanations of events and topics. Some good opportunities are provided for pupils to use computers, although the provision of opportunities across the subject is inconsistent. One history room contains twelve computers, but a temporary problem prevented the department's very good stock of CD ROMs from being seen in use during the inspection. Some very good opportunities are provided for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although these are not systematically identified in planning. A good example was observed in a Year 9 lesson, for example when pupils took part in an excellent debate on whether war can ever be justified.
171. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons are very good, and often excellent. In most lessons, they make a very strong contribution to learning. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject. They listen with interest and are very willing to answer questions and take part in extended discussions. They respond very well to opportunities to think independently. For example, they often ask questions, challenging the opinions they hear.
172. The leadership and management of history are excellent. The department is extremely well organised. Schemes of work provide very clear guidance to teachers, but leave room for their individual creativity. Leadership is characterised by a very high commitment to the school and

department and genuine enthusiasm for the subject and topics chosen to be taught. The department is healthily self-critical and therefore aware of where further improvement is required. The department displays consistent levels of capability and commitment and a shared enthusiasm for the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology as a separate subject is **very good**.

Overall, the quality of provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**

Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress because of very good teaching and learning, and standards are very high
- Teachers are very committed and well organised
- Teachers give strong support to non-specialist teachers
- The department is very well led and managed

Areas for improvement

- The provision of ICT across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11

173. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are above national expectation. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2002, indicated that standards are very high, and pupils' work observed during the inspection confirmed this. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' word processing is very accomplished. They use formulae in spreadsheets, practise control and animate web pages, using software of professional standard. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment. Pupils achieve very well in Key Stage 3. The teaching of ICT in Years 7 to 9 through specialist lessons is now supplemented by some lessons being taught through ICT in English, mathematics and science. This has provided valuable help for participating staff to develop their knowledge and skills. In Years 7 to 9, pupils benefit from a clearly thought out and well implemented programme. For example, in one Year 9 English lesson, pupils worked in pairs to draw up a two-page advertisement, using Microsoft Publisher. In another lesson, skills in ICT were effectively developed alongside English language skills when pupils used computers to change the style of writing from information into a persuasive speech, when they composed speeches for a murder trial by selecting and adapting evidence. A member of the English department taught the lesson with an ICT teacher providing technical support. This arrangement produced very effective results.
174. GCSE results in ICT are very high, with over half of the entry gaining grades A* or A. Very few girls opt for the subject. Current standards of work are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good.
175. Within specific ICT lessons, teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are taught at a good pace and with high expectations. Well-qualified subject specialists enable pupils to make very good progress. Lessons have clear objectives, and instructions are clear. Pupils work hard and they receive constructive feedback on their work. They behave very well and relationships are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and adopt effective class routines. For example, screens are turned off and pupils move to the front to receive whole-class teaching without distraction. Varied teaching methods include group and individual work. Teachers give carefully-targeted one-to-one support, which helps to maintain pace and motivation. In several

- lessons, very well prepared PowerPoint presentations from the teacher were followed by time for pupils to practise new skills, with the teacher monitoring and advising. The teacher then brought them back together to review their learning and introduce further developments.
176. Leadership and management of ICT as a separate subject are very good. The head of department provides a very good role model, who supports and encourages newer members of the department. Staff are well organised and deployed, and imaginative use of staffing has enabled support to be made available to teachers outside the department. In one meeting, the head of department gave a very clear demonstration of a new program on 'control', and advised on what pupils were likely to find difficult. The head of department displayed a very good knowledge of ICT packages, including those used in primary schools. The department works very well as a team and confidently shares information and good practice. The head of department monitors and supports the work of colleagues and provides well-focused and effective developmental feedback after observing lessons. Opportunities are given to more junior colleagues to take responsibilities, for example through creating the school web site and chairing the whole-school ICT steering group which includes governor participation. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.
177. ICT teachers help colleagues to use computers in their teaching in other subjects. However, standards across the curriculum in ICT are inconsistent and therefore provision across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, except for those pupils taking the subject at GCSE level. There has not yet been a planned and systematic approach to ensuring that all pupils receive their National Curriculum entitlement in Key Stage 4. Provision is good in some subjects, for example design and technology and drama. Very effective use of data projectors was seen, for example in science, physical education and careers education. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory in other subjects both for enhancing these subjects and also for developing pupils' general computer skills. Some departments have their own computer suites, while others cite access to computers as a problem.
178. The department is planning improvement of the provision for Years 10 and 11. Some pupils, who do not opt for the subject in Year 10, are given assistance to take the subject as an additional GCSE. Currently, most pupils leave Year 11 with no externally validated certificate in ICT. The school is planning to remedy this lack of provision as part of its current review of the curriculum for Years 10 and 11. Improvement in provision since the last report has been good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and excellent linguistic competence
- Very good teaching that leads to high standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4
- The excellent programme of trips and exchanges to France and Germany provided pupils with very worthwhile social, cultural and linguistic opportunities

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT
- The use of National Curriculum criteria to make assessment more systematic and specific
- Library resources to promote more independent learning

179. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils learn two modern foreign languages. They choose from French, German and Spanish. In 2002, teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 show that nearly all pupils reached the expected standard, Level 5, and most attained above this level. Teacher assessments have risen progressively over recent years and indicate that standards at the end of Year 9 are very high. The standards in French, Spanish and German in Year 9 observed in lessons and from a scrutiny of pupils' written work are well above the national average. In all three languages, pupils generally have very good listening skills and cope well with lessons almost entirely in the foreign language. In a Year 9 Spanish lesson, pupils successfully picked out details about food from recorded texts spoken at normal speed. Speaking skills in all three languages were very high in most lessons. Pupils generally asked and answered questions accurately, fluently and with good pronunciation. In a Year 9 French class, pupils talked accurately about their strengths and weaknesses in school subjects. In a Year 9 German class pupils successfully took part in role plays about the disadvantages of smoking. Pupils' reading skills are very good in all three languages. Many pupils deduced the meaning of unknown words from the context. Writing skills in all three languages are very good. In all three languages, pupils in Year 9 write dialogues, short letters and essays, which contain a variety of vocabulary and past, present and future tenses. Spelling and punctuation are generally good. Achievement in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9 is very good.
180. The school enters all pupils for GCSE in either French or German. Spanish is not currently taught in Years 10 and 11. Some pupils take two modern foreign languages. GCSE results in French in 2002 were very high. Nearly all pupils gained at least a grade C and nearly two thirds gained grades A* and A. Results in previous years were of a similar standard. Results in GCSE German in 2002 were well above average with nearly four fifths of pupils gaining above a grade C and nearly two fifths of all pupils gaining grades A* and A. Results in German over the previous two years were of a higher standard, however. Results are generally in line with departmental predictions, and pupils' achievement is very good.
181. Standards seen in lessons and observed in pupils' written and recorded oral work are broadly in line with the GCSE results in each languages, and were very high in French and above average in German. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are very well developed. In a Year 11 German class, pupils successfully identified details in an extended recorded text about holidays, and answered questions accurately. The reading and writing skills of pupils in French and German are very good. Pupils' written work contains compositions, letters and dialogues on a range of GCSE topics. Most pupils accurately use past, present and future tenses and a variety of structures and vocabulary. Their writing is generally accurate and well presented. Achievement in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall.
182. Overall the teaching and learning in modern languages are very good. Teachers' linguistic skills are excellent. This very high quality of linguistic competence very occasionally drops when teachers teach a language outside their specialism. Teachers have a very good knowledge of National Curriculum and GCSE criteria. They have high expectations of pupils. Lessons are well planned and have clear aims. All lessons provide opportunities to practise listening, speaking, reading and writing. Homework effectively consolidates and extends class work. Teachers correct pupils' oral work positively and mark their written work conscientiously. The high quality of marking has a big impact on improving pupils' learning. No use, however, is made of National Curriculum levels when assessing home work or class work to give pupils a more structured idea of how well they are progressing. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils are well supported and stretched. Most pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and quickly set to work on written tasks, and work well in pairs to practise dialogues. They listen very attentively to the teacher and to recorded texts to pick out details.

The department encourages pupils to use ICT and most staff have had training in this area. Access to computers is not easy, however, and the use of ICT needs further development. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They behave very well and are enthusiastic about their work, which enhances their learning.

183. The modern foreign languages department is very well led and managed. The monitoring of teaching and learning is very good. There is scope, however, for a more systematic sharing of ideas, approaches and materials. Accommodation is good, as are resources with the exception of those for ICT. The library provision needs to be increased to provide more resources for students to use when developing their learning independently. The visits and exchanges abroad are excellent; they increase motivation and raise standards of oral work and provide pupils with good opportunities for social and cultural development. The French and German assistants help significantly to improve oral fluency. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good and lead to attainment that is well above average
- Pupils are enthusiastic and display excellent attitudes in class
- Performance skills are very well developed
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities in which pupils reach very high standards

Area for improvement

- The use of ICT

184. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is above average. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9, in 2002, showed that standards were well above the national average, with almost all pupils gaining higher than the expected Level 5. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average, with eighty seven per cent of pupils gaining A* to C grades. Results in previous year have been well above the national average, with all pupils gaining A* to C grades.
185. Current work in Key Stage 3 is well above national expectations. Pupils sing well and maintain good pitch. Their experience of composing before joining the school is varied and not as well established as other skills. However, by the end of Year 9, they compose confidently and in a variety of styles. They have a firm grasp of primary chords, and use composing techniques, such as ostinato and ground bass, as a foundation for their creative work. Pupils' improvisation skills are good. Improvisation is often used by pupils as a basis for their composing. This was most noticeable during a Year 9 topic on film music. Here, pupils used their instrumental skills to improvise short musical phrases to fit with the actions.
186. Standards of current work in Years 10 and 11 are well above average, and GCSE pupils achieve very well. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very highly. Pupils have a clear awareness of the many different periods and styles of music and their place in historical developments. This knowledge is used effectively as a basis for their compositions that are well developed in a good variety of styles. Their work demonstrates a high level of creativity with compositions that have a clear structure, for example a clear introduction, and phrases to link verses of a song. Pupils produce compositions for a good variety of instrumental

combinations. More complex compositions incorporate variation of tempo and a change of the style during the piece. Higher-attaining pupils use their knowledge of harmony to include modulation. This represents a high level of skill and understanding. Pupils' performance skills are very well established. Older pupils make effective use of ICT to support their composition. However, too little use is made of computers in Years 7 to 9. A reason for this is the lack of resources in the lower school music room.

187. Pupils' attitudes are very good. Pupils confidently discuss their work and perform with assurance, individually or in a group. They are very well behaved, settle quickly to the task and enjoy the challenging tasks. They are attentive when other pupils are performing, often spontaneously applauding the performances of others. They respect the assistance they receive from teachers. Older pupils show a very good level of commitment, working independently with confidence and a strong sense of purpose
188. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and highly developed performance skills, which are used well for demonstration and to suggest ways of improving pupils' work. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher suggested to pupils that they could compose a piece of music in either a Viennese Waltz or a Samba style using the Blues formula. The outcome of this was that pupils developed a deeper understanding of styles of music leading to very good learning. Here, the teacher's practical assistance helped the pupils to be very productive. The planning of lessons is very good. Teachers choose styles of music that appeal to pupils, and they challenge all pupils appropriately. Teaching generates a brisk pace of work, although the pace relaxed occasionally in practical sessions.
189. The extra-curricular provision is excellent. The wide variety of musical activities provides a rich musical experience that is challenging and rewarding for all musicians, including the gifted and talented. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the activities in which they are proud to participate. The recent school production of 'The Mikado' was singled out as a source of particular pleasure and satisfaction. The school mounts an extensive annual programme of performances in the school and the community.
190. The leadership and management of music are excellent. The head of department is very committed and hard working and has ambitious plans for developing music further. The department is making an important contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils, including the large number who receive instrumental tuition at school. The accommodation has drawbacks. The lack of quiet areas for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to practise and rehearse their performances leads to restrictions in what pupils can attempt, which reduces their overall achievement. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils which leads to very good learning and standards that are well above average
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes enhance their achievement
- Excellent extra-curricular provision enables gifted and talented pupils to reach very high standards
- The department is very well managed

Areas for improvement

- The use of data from prior attainment to measure progress

- Sharing assessment information with pupils so that they are more aware of their achievement and areas for improvement

191. Pupils enter the school with skills and understanding which are above average. In 2002, teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were above average compared with schools nationally. Teacher assessments indicate that pupils are achieving well by maintaining above-average standards.
192. GCSE results in 2001 and 2002 were well above the national average, with pupils gaining a hundred per cent A* to C pass rate. In 2001, well over half of the pupils gained an A* or A grade. In 2002, results A* and A results were slightly below this.
193. The work seen during the inspection confirms that the standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Pupils achieve well. They learn and apply new skills readily. In a Year 9 athletics lesson, pupils quickly acquired the skill needed for successful shot putting.
194. Standards in the GCSE lessons observed in Year 11 are well above average. Year 11 GCSE theory work shows that pupils have a very good understanding of calculations involving inhaled and exhaled gases during exercise. Higher-attaining pupils show good understanding in their written work on the different order of levers, and calculations of effort and load. Standards of presentation are high. In non-examination physical education, pupils' achievement is good with pupils working at standards above national expectation, well exemplified by their skilful basketball performances in Year 10.
195. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They are always clear in their explanations and give good guidance. Teaching and learning were very effective in a Year 8 girls' rugby lesson, where pupils responded well to the excellent and well-paced teaching, identifying the essentials of attacking and defending play. Pupils related what they had learned to tackling opponents in the subsequent game. Teachers review what is learned through very good questioning to check pupils' understanding before moving on in a topic. This is done well at the end of practical sessions. Sometimes they use the school's video camera to show good examples and record, assess and analyse performance. The quality and pace of teaching are sometimes affected by the short single lessons but standards are not affected. Teaching and learning are not as effective when areas for improvement are not properly identified and work is not related to national criteria or to pupils' previous levels of attainment.
196. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils assist one another to progress by offering feedback and enforcing teaching points. Opportunities for learning are enhanced by the excellent provision of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are offered a wide range of activities, including team matches. Some pupils are involved at county and national level. In some lessons, non-participants contribute well and are engaged in helping others to succeed.
197. Leadership of the department is very good. The curriculum is designed to make the best use of the facilities available. Good opportunities exist to challenge gifted and talented pupils. Some of these pupils assist with warm up sessions and practices, and demonstrate during lessons. Senior pupils assist with the extra-curricular programme. Developing literacy and numeracy forms a part of some lessons, but planning for these is not systematic in all lessons. Opportunities for supplementing the teaching of citizenship occur, for example in the compliance with rules of games. Staffing is good, and planning makes very good use of the individual strengths of teachers. There is strong teamwork and teachers have the expectation, capacity and will to succeed. Teachers are very dedicated and give unstintingly of their time to

organise extra-curricular activities. Occasionally, however, some practices are cancelled at short notice, because the staff are over-committed, which indicates a need for more forethought. The department is well supported by the library where books for independent learning are available for examination courses. Outside facilities are good, but accommodation inside barely meets the needs of the curriculum. Some facilities cannot be used because of the need for funds to repair or replace minor equipment and major pieces of apparatus lie idle, as teachers respond to the result of health and safety checks and await further funds. One hazardous outside surface has been improved as a result of inspection findings. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department is very well placed to build on its present high achievement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning are resulting in above average standards of work
- Good initiatives by the new head of department are having a positive impact on the development of religious education

Areas for improvement

- Marking is not related to the levels of attainment specified in the local Agreed Syllabus
- The amount of time that is allocated to religious education, which is inadequate in most years for meeting requirements
- Insufficient resources, particularly of books and ICT

198. Pupils enter the school with knowledge and understanding that are above average. No evidence is available of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002. The GCSE results in 2002 of the small number who followed the course were well above average. There are high expectations of the similar number entering in 2003. Other pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not study religious education.
199. The current work observed in lessons in Year 9 and examined in exercise books is above average. Some written work is of very high quality, both in its purely factual knowledge about religion and in its perceptive personal response to belief. The great majority of the work shows care, effort and interest. Examples of high quality work include responses to the work on moral issues surrounding the sanctity of life, and work where pupils are challenged to write as though they were holding a particular religious view.
200. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. They show growing maturity in their personal responses to the challenges posed by imaginative work on issues of faith and belief. Pupils produced good written work in connection with an imaginary discussion of arranged marriage, a piece called 'Meeting Jesus', and an excellent piece entitled 'My Chador'.
201. The standard of work of Year 11 GCSE pupils is well above expectation, and pupils are achieving very well. In Year 11, GCSE pupils responded very well to the challenge of presenting themselves to their peers as a 'Christian fighting Prejudice', for example Martin Luther King or Oscar Romero.
202. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in the small amount seen in Year 11. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is characterised by good planning, good questioning and constructive use of praise. Lessons have clearly-stated objectives and conclude with useful summaries to consolidate learning. Tasks are presented in challenging and imaginative ways, such as the 'word bingo', 'hot-seating' and exercises to develop empathy. Learning is good because pupils' imagination is engaged and they work well, contribute well orally and listen attentively. A lively activity to test and reinforce key ideas and vocabulary at the end of lessons stimulated an excellent response. Pupils' work is marked regularly with encouraging comments. However, pupils' understanding of the standard of their work is inhibited by lack of use of the levels suggested by the Agreed Syllabus. In Year 11, the teacher's searching questioning and high expectations resulted in very good learning. Pupils speaking and listening skills were developed very well in whole-class and group discussions.

203. Day-to-day management is satisfactory. The new head of department is having a beneficial effect on overall provision for religious education. Resources of textbooks are limited, and the lack of computers in the department limits the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Since the last inspection, the positive features of the department's work have been maintained. Teaching and learning have improved, as have the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, which are now very good. The organisation of religious education has improved. The potential for further improvement is good, and the school has firm plans to raise the profile of religious education by providing an accredited course for all pupils. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, although all pupils do not yet receive their full entitlement of religious education.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

GCE A-level courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Mathematics | 51 | 90 | 87 | 39 | 43 | 5.9 | 5.8 |
| Chemistry | 24 | 92 | 90 | 54 | 43 | 6.4 | 5.9 |
| Biology | 29 | 100 | 88 | 69 | 34 | 7.9 | 5.2 |
| Physics | 17 | 94 | 88 | 29 | 40 | 5.5 | 5.7 |
| Design and technology | 14 | 93 | 91 | 29 | 30 | 5.7 | 5.4 |
| Business studies | 39 | 100 | 92 | 59 | 32 | 7.1 | 5.5 |
| Economics | 11 | 91 | 89 | 45 | 36 | 5.8 | 5.5 |
| Computer studies | 17 | 100 | 86 | 53 | 23 | 7.2 | 4.6 |
| Sports studies | 14 | 100 | 92 | 64 | 25 | 7.3 | 5.1 |
| Art and design | 27 | 96 | 96 | 78 | 46 | 8.5 | 6.6 |
| Music | 7 | 100 | 93 | 43 | 35 | 7.1 | 5.7 |
| Classical studies | 2 | 100 | 95 | 50 | 49 | 5.0 | 6.5 |
| Geography | 50 | 100 | 92 | 72 | 38 | 7.9 | 5.7 |
| History | 29 | 100 | 88 | 66 | 35 | 7.9 | 5.5 |
| Other social studies | 45 | 100 | 87 | 49 | 34 | 6.9 | 5.3 |
| English literature | 21 | 100 | 95 | 76 | 37 | 7.9 | 5.9 |
| French | 20 | 95 | 89 | 65 | 38 | 7.2 | 5.6 |
| German | 17 | 94 | 91 | 41 | 40 | 6.5 | 5.8 |
| Spanish | 1 | 100 | 89 | 100 | 39 | 10.0 | 5.7 |
| Other languages | 1 | 100 | 93 | 100 | 56 | 10.00 | 6.8 |
| Communication studies | 5 | 100 | 93 | 40 | 31 | 7.2 | 5.5 |

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

204. The focus was on the A-level courses in mathematics, including further mathematics, biology and chemistry. The school also teaches A-level courses in physics and geology, which were sampled.
205. Results in physics were average in 2001, but better in 2002, with a significantly higher percentage of students gaining A and B grades. In the physics lesson sampled, teaching was excellent. The teacher helped students to revise essential principles of electric fields and the linear accelerator with expert questioning, carefully targeted to match the needs of students in a group with a wide range of ability. PowerPoint displays and the teacher's enthusiasm conspicuously helped consolidate the students' knowledge.
206. Geology is a new course with no examination results to report. In the lesson seen, teaching was very good. Students learned very well because of the teacher's patient, skilled questioning, which focused sharply on methodically building confidence and understanding. Students' knowledge and skills are good and consistent with above average standards.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are fully aware of examination requirements
- Relationships between students and teachers are very productive
- Students are very committed and have positive attitudes

Areas for improvement

- Greater development of independent learning skills
- Better use of data to set challenging targets and to check students' progress against their potential
- The use of ICT

207. A-level results in 2001 were slightly above average, although 10 per cent of students failed the examination. Results fell between 1999 and 2001, and improved in 2002. Boys perform better than girls. Students' overall performance was significantly lower in mathematics than in their other subjects. Some students took A-level further mathematics, but numbers are too small to make meaningful comparisons against national averages.
208. On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 13 are now well above national averages, as a result of the emphasis now given to revision and practice to ensure that students are better prepared for the examination. Overall, students achieve well. They make use of differentiation to find tangents to curves and integration to find areas under curves, but their manipulation skills in algebra are not so secure. For example, some students in Year 12 had difficulty factorising $x^2 - 25$. In mechanics, students make good use of vectors to resolve forces, while in statistics, they can identify binomial and normal distributions. Higher-attaining students, following the further mathematics course, solve first and second order differential equations, and use quick-sort and bubble-sort algorithms confidently.

209. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and a good awareness of examination requirements. They enjoy positive and productive relationships with students which are both supportive and good humoured. Students are very grateful for the additional help which is freely given outside lesson time. Teachers have a good informal awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses, but information is not always recorded and data is not sufficiently used to set challenging targets for students and to check their progress against potential. Teacher-talk and excessive teacher-direction tend to dominate lessons. As a result, students have insufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills, and improve their knowledge beyond that contained in the examination syllabus.
210. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are very good. Students show commitment, enthusiasm and interest in their work. They enjoy productive relationships with their teachers and with each other.
211. The curriculum includes modules in pure mathematics, mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics, leading to certification in mathematics and further mathematics. The provision for literacy is satisfactory and students' folders display high standards of presentation. The provision for ICT is satisfactory, but inconsistent across the department, so that too few opportunities are provided to develop skills, such as the use of graphical calculators or the Internet.
212. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has a good awareness of the strengths of the department through monitoring, but inconsistencies in teaching still exist. Staffing is good, accommodation is satisfactory and resources appropriate. Schemes of work need further development to identify suitable resources and opportunities to use ICT. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Attainment remains similar to that reported in the last inspection and standards of teaching and learning have been maintained.

Numeracy in the sixth form

213. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is good. Number systems are developed well in ICT and students calculate heart rates before and after exercise in physical education. Algebraic skills are used for writing equations and substituting in formulas in chemistry, where support for students, through additional numeracy lessons, is provided. Statistical skills are developed well in biology. For example, students make good use of the Mann Whitney test to investigate whether there is any significant difference in bluebells growing on two sites.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Attainment is well above average and students achieve very well
- Teaching and learning are good and take very good account of examination requirements
- Good opportunities exist for independent work
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good and teamwork is well developed amongst staff
- Students show very good attitudes towards their work

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of some lower-attaining students is not high enough

214. Results in 2001 were very high, as they had been in previous years. They dipped slightly in 2002. Boys' and girls' attainment is similar. Both boys and girls perform significantly better in biology than in the other subjects that they take, and biology A-level results are higher than those in the other sciences. The proportion staying on from AS to A-level is high, and biology is one of the more popular sixth form subjects. Results in 2002 showed that value had been added between GCSE and AS-level and maintained between AS and A-level.
215. Current standards of work are well above average, and particularly where students practise examination questions. Higher-attaining students produce work of very good standard that is very well structured and organised. A few students had more difficulty in organising their work and their study skills needed more development. Clear progress was demonstrated by most students, for example by the higher grades gained in the later biochemistry work in Year 12. Good use of teaching materials was seen in some sections of work, such as cell ultrastructure and cell division. Higher-attaining students in Year 12 made very good progress, for example in work on enzymes. ICT was used effectively to research information, and some very good examples of numeracy occurred in statistical work, although the range of graphical work was limited. Year 13 students produced work of above average standard in topics such as animal diversity and ecology, with good numerical work on population estimates and species diversity.
216. The work samples included work of very high quality, with very well organised notes and detailed practice examination questions. Students are encouraged to work independently, which is a valuable feature of the department, although some opportunities for promoting this are missed. In addition, opportunities are missed for developing communication skills through discussions and through developing further the use of the Intranet.
217. Students display very good attitudes. They concentrate well in lessons and collaborate very productively with each other.
218. Teaching and learning are very good, as is students' overall achievement in relation to their starting points. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Lessons are very well organised, with appropriate resources. Individual support for students is very good. In Year 12, for example, students showed good laboratory skills in the investigation of the effect of pectinase. Students worked well together, follow an instruction sheet carefully, and made predictions on the likely effect of the enzyme. Higher-attaining students took the discussion further, relating the expected enzyme action to the exact position of pectin and juice within the apple tissue. In their work on biotechnology, Year 12 students were above-average in their understanding, but could have been further challenged in the rigour and precision of their answers, for example on the issue of secondary metabolites.
219. Learning was very good in Year 13, where students showed good and very good understanding of manipulating and controlling variables in independent work on yeast respiration, given a range of substrates. In a lesson on examination questions on the eye and synaptic potentials, high-attaining students were very adept in identifying the areas of their knowledge necessary to answer examination questions. Other students found it difficult to identify the critical knowledge required. Overall, some lower-attaining students' achievement is below what might be expected.
220. The leadership and management are very good. A strong sense of teamwork has been built up amongst staff over the past four years. Curriculum and assessment are strong, with enrichment built into the course, including the biology Olympiad for gifted students. Library resources are good, including books, articles and texts of an undergraduate level. The

laboratories are very good, and resources are enhanced by good technical support. By its nature, biology makes a good contribution to social issues. Students are very well supported on examination techniques. The previous report made little mention of biology, but it is clear that maintenance of the subject position has been good.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Results are above average
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and students' attitudes are very good
- Teachers are very well-qualified; they plan lessons well and teaching is good

Areas for improvement

- More support for underachieving students

221. In 2001, A-level results were above average and standards were maintained in 2002. Results are higher than at the last inspection. Departmental data from 2001 and 2002 indicates that over half of the students reach their expected grades, and, in many cases, exceed them. However, some students that do not do as well as they should. Most students continue the course into Year 13.
222. The standards of work seen were above course expectations. Year 12 students named and drew organic compounds. Year 13 students confidently discussed oxidation and the reduction of transition metals. They used this knowledge to explain the detailed mechanisms involved in the reaction of iron with air. Overall, achievement in both Years 12 and 13 is good, with the higher-attaining students achieving very well.
223. Teaching is good overall, and some is very good, and students' learning corresponds with this. The lessons observed were taught with enthusiasm by teachers with very good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and efficiently resourced. Their good pace and structure maintain the interest and involvement of all students. In a very good example of this in Year 13, students worked very productively on electrode potential, in a lesson that included a theoretical introduction, a practical session and a summary that used Internet data. Students joined confidently in class discussions. Their responses were detailed, in response to the high expectations of the teachers, and the teachers' very good management of questioning. Modular tests and homework are marked in great detail, with many constructive comments that help the students improve and clearly indicate the attainment of the students. The department has started to use this information to identify students who are under-achieving, and have strategies to increase support for these students to raise their attainment.
224. Very good relationships exist between teachers and students as well as amongst the students. The attitudes and behaviour of the students are very good, which ensures a very pleasant and cooperative working atmosphere in lessons. Teachers are supportive of all the students and check that they understand the work by asking well-targeted questions during lessons. When students do not fully understand a topic the teachers patiently offer further explanation. In discussions, students appreciated the teachers' guidance and assistance.
225. The leadership and management of the department are good. The recently-appointed head of department is determined to raise attainment further. The teachers are very well qualified and effectively supported by a specialist technician. The department is aware of the need to

further enhance the assessment of students' progress, especially the lower-attaining. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and students achieve well
- Teaching and learning are good, and working relationships are very good
- Marking and assessment procedures are very informative and help students improve their work
- Students' development and use of independent learning skills are excellent

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and resources
- Greater awareness of health and safety hazards

226. A-level results in 2001 were average. In 2002, results were higher. All candidates gained A to C grades, with a high proportion of A and B grades.
227. Current standards of work are above average. All students make good advances in knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through the course. They skilfully analyse existing products and develop and evaluate their own creative ideas. For example, in Year 12, students develop their knowledge of materials and how they can be used and then apply this understanding, together with designing skills, to produce well-researched folders and substantial modelling and practical work. In Year 13, students use well-annotated sketches and drawings to express and communicate ideas and their work shows depth of content as well as independent and creative thinking. Presentation of work is a particular strength. Students use a wide range of graphical techniques to express their ideas, and computers are used extensively for computer-aided design and some aspects of computer-aided manufacture.
228. Students show a very positive attitude to their work and make good progress. Working relationships in lessons are excellent. Students and teachers work very well in partnership. In addition students' development and use of independent learning skills, is very good.
229. Teaching is very good. Two teachers very effectively share the teaching of the product design course. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan and teach well-structured lessons. Teachers have very high expectations of students and their work. Regular monitoring and assessment of work, with individual feedback to students in lessons, is very effective in reinforcing learning and enabling students to improve their work. A good range of teaching methods is used and time is used very effectively. For example, team teaching of practical work enables the teachers to use their individual knowledge and skills in supporting the wide range of practical activities taking place. Learning is very good. Students concentrate well and are keen to achieve good standards. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and work at a good pace.
230. Leadership and management of the course are very good. Courses are carefully structured and provide interesting assignments for students. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. Rooms are small for the numbers of students, and this makes access to some resources difficult. Several health and safety hazards noted during the inspection were

immediately remedied. The department's routine awareness of such matters has not been an adequate priority.

231. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards are now above average. Plans to develop accommodation and resources have yet to be implemented, and this is affecting the range of work that can be attempted and the standards that students attain.

BUSINESS

232. No course in this area was a focus subject, but lessons in business studies and economics were sampled.
233. Results in A-level business studies were well above average in 2001. Results were similar in 2002. In both years, all students gained at least a grade D, and over half gained A or B grades. In a good Year 13 lesson observed, the teacher's knowledge and explanations enabled students to gain a good understanding of the topic of government intervention in the free market. The effective use of PowerPoint, and a related worksheet, suitably reinforced the effectiveness of the teacher's presentation. Students showed good question and answer skills; they were attentive and fully involved.
234. Results in economics at A-level were average in 2001. In the 2002 examination improvement was significant, with well over half of students gaining A or B, and all passed. A Year 12 economics lesson on negative externalities was good. It was introduced with a question and answer session that linked well to previous work. Effective use was made of a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the ideas covered and stimulate good responses from most of the students. Very good relationships were a significant factor in the effective learning. Students' good understanding of the topic was clear from their response to the teacher's perceptive questioning, and they recalled prior learning accurately.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

235. The inspection did not focus on a subject in this area. Lessons in A-level computing and the newly-introduced information technology AS course were sampled.
236. Results in computing in 2001 were high, and similar in 2002. Students build on the high grades anticipated from their GCSE performance. The AS-level course in information technology has not yet been examined. In the computing lesson observed, there was systematic building on previous knowledge and clear guidance with methodical note taking. In the AS-level lesson, very good relationships enabled students to take advantage of the teacher's very good subject knowledge, and new skills of writing 'macros' were learnt. Students made good progress in a friendly but very purposeful working atmosphere. Teaching was very good in both of the lessons observed.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

237. The inspection focused on the A-Level course in sports science. In addition, the provision that the school makes for all students to take part in sport and recreational activities was sampled.
238. Very good provision is made for sixth form students to take part in sport and recreational activities. A wide variety of activities is offered. The programme is very well organised and managed with good flexibility to meet student preferences and interests. Students have very good opportunities in a variety of sports, including rowing. Some students represent the country

in rowing and hockey. Students are dedicated to their sport, and large numbers across the school participate in fitness-related programmes.

Sports science

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

Strengths

- Results are consistently above average, and students achieve very well
- Excellent extra-curricular provision enhances the opportunities for learning and gives the department a high profile
- The very good range of teaching methods employed result in very effective learning
- Students are very well motivated and display very good attitudes to their work
- Very good management results in a very productive working environment

Areas for improvement

- The use of examination criteria to make students, and particularly the lower-attaining, more aware of their levels of attainment

239. In 2001, A-level results were well above average. In 2002, results were similar. More boys were entered than girls, but girls did slightly better than boys. There has been an upward trend since 1999. In 2002, over half of the entry gained an A or B grade at AS-level. Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.
240. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above average. Students in Year 12 convey their views very effectively; for example when analysing the influence of the media and sponsorship on sport. Students understand the impact of the visual image on the popularity of activities, and how this attracted funds from advertising. Political and commercial influences on professional sport, and the subsequent possibility of corruption, are also understood. Some gifted and talented students' research is excellent and their analytical thinking is at a very high level. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, a student identified and explained physiological and behavioural factors in stress in sport, and gave good examples, relating this very well to performance and technique. Students use graphs, calculations and tables confidently to illustrate their work. High-attaining students produce comprehensive written work, they use correct terminology, and structure and present their work very accurately. Lower-attaining students do not organise their work as effectively for revision, and essays are not as well structured.
241. Gifted and talented students are given opportunities to extend their knowledge in lessons and also contribute by leading and demonstrating. They assist with training in extra-curricular activities and in preparation for matches and house activities.
242. Teaching is very good. Teachers plan and organise very well and have very good subject knowledge. Questioning is used very well and lessons have good pace and variety. This results in very effective learning. Students make good use of ICT for research and a digital camera is available for analysis of performance. Teachers make sure that all students take part in discussions. However, the learning, particularly of lower-attaining students, is not as effective when marking and assessment are not closely linked to individual students' targets and expected grades.
243. Students' very responsible attitudes and very good relationships increase the effectiveness of their learning. Students work well independently and together. They work very hard and enjoy the courses, and are fully committed to high achievement. Several represent the county and

country, providing very good role models for pupils in the school. Very beneficial links with local clubs are maintained.

244. Leadership and management are very good. Great determination and commitment exist to improve on existing high standards. Good opportunities exist for teachers to continue their professional development. Careful analysis of teaching, facilities and examination performance takes place to monitor progress. A wide variety of activities is available for students, including rowing. The planned increase in specialist facilities will benefit sixth form examination students. Resources are satisfactory and the library has very good provision for the subject. A-level was not mentioned in the last report. However, results have risen and extra-curricular provision is now excellent. Recent improvements are good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

245. No courses are offered in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Independent study skills are very well developed through the subject
- Planning is very effective and clearly linked to assessment objectives
- Students are enabled to engage in a wide range of individual work in a good variety of media
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are very enthusiastic

Areas for improvement

- The creative use of ICT

246. A-level results in 2001 were very high, in the top five per cent nationally. In 2002, they were a little lower. However, AS results for 2002 were significantly lower than in 2001. These results indicated a failure by students to meet one of the assessment objectives, to make adequate connections between their own work and that of others. The department is aware of this and teachers reacted quickly, by increasing the emphasis on written work in sketchbooks. Planning is now closely linked to assessment objectives.
247. Standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are well above average. As a result of teachers' excellent subject knowledge, enthusiasm and communication skills, students develop mature attitudes to the subject. Students show a high degree of commitment to their work both during lesson time and in private study periods. They achieve very well. They are encouraged to explore the professional world of art and design, and have access to a wide range of gallery and study trips. Year 13 students have recently been to Florence, and their sketchbooks show very good levels of recording and investigating. They contain drawings, collected memorabilia and photographs interspersed with written comments and observations. When they talk about the trip, students show they gained a great deal from the experience in terms of source material for their project work and in their personal and social development.
248. Teaching is very good. Students receive very good guidance from their teachers, which enables them to achieve very well. Within a well-structured course, students have access to a wide range of media and stimulus material. They are encouraged to exercise a good deal of informed personal choice when selecting source material and artists to study. Drawing skills

are very well developed through a wide range of different techniques and materials. A particular feature is the presence of large-scale paintings on canvas. Students discuss spiritual, moral social and cultural issues when they explore the attitudes, ideas and values of artists from a range of cultures. For example, Year 13 students discussed issues associated with life in Renaissance Italy and broadened the topic to look at the contemporary context. All students learn very effectively. Gifted and talented students make very good progress due to the high level of challenge they receive in class and tutorial sessions. Students develop communication skills well through lively debate, and the annotations they make in their sketchbooks. This work is often of a very high standard. The use of ICT is under-developed. Although students use computers at home, mainly for research, a lack of appropriate equipment at school means there are few opportunities to use it as a creative medium.

249. Accommodation is good. A small private study area for the sixth form is in regular use by three or four art students for most of the day. This enables them to keep their work out, and to reflect on, and develop, ideas in a mature way, appropriate for their age.
250. Students enjoy working in the art department. They are enthusiastic and self disciplined, and take pride in their work. They receive very constructive individual support in lessons and outside the school day. They are confident independent learners and respond well to the enthusiasm of their teachers.
251. The positive working atmosphere and standards of individual achievement are the result of very good leadership and management by the head of department. He provides a clear vision for future developments, including attracting more boys onto examination courses in art. The staff work well together and are committed to raising standards still further. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.

Music

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

Strengths

- Students' attainment and achievement are well above average, helped by their excellent attitudes
- Teaching is very good. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm very well and provide a high level of individual support
- Students have extensive musical knowledge and a very good grasp of style in their performing and composing
- The curriculum is enriched by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT

252. A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average. In 2002, results were similar, but national comparators are not yet available. Music is a popular subject. The retention rate from the AS-level to A-level is good. The school supplements its very good curriculum provision with excellent opportunities for extra-curricular music-making. These provide appropriate challenges for all musicians, including the gifted and talented.
253. The work seen in lessons, examination of previous work and discussion with students in Years 12 and 13 show that standards are well above average. Students in Year 13 have good harmonic knowledge. They have a good knowledge of all the rules and restrictions of harmony, well demonstrated in their stylish harmonisations of chorales in the style of J S Bach. Students

have very good performing skills. They are well advanced in their special studies. Performers have advanced techniques and mature musicianship. Composing is technically very assured and in a consistent and individual style. Students have a good understanding of historical developments in music. They confidently discuss different periods of music, and talk about their preferred listening with a deep understanding of the styles of a wide range of music. This was well demonstrated in a lesson listening to Stravinsky's 'A Symphony of Psalms', where students discussed with understanding the musical characteristics and the instrumentation of the complex score. Students' achieve very well.

254. Students are highly motivated and their attitudes to the subject are excellent. They play a full part in the outstanding range of extra-curricular musical activities organised by the school. They provide good role models when working with younger pupils in choirs and instrumental ensembles. Some students gain valuable practical experience by conducting and accompanying groups of singers. Students take full advantage of the open-house policy of the department, using the resources of the department responsibly during break-times and after school, which contributes well to their independent development.
255. Teaching is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge using their individual skills well to demonstrate styles of music. They have high expectations of students, planning work that is challenging, extending students' knowledge and understanding. As a result, students learn and achieve very well. They are highly motivated naturally and respond very well to the teachers' enthusiastic approach, commenting very favourably on the individual help and guidance that teachers provide, and the personal interest shown in their musical development. Questioning is very good, builds well on students' responses, and challenges them to extend and justify their answers.
256. The management of the department is very good. The head of department is enthusiastic and dedicated to raising further the high standards already established, and he has a clear vision for future developments. The curriculum is very good. It reflects the musical interests of the students and enables them to build on their strengths. Resources are very good, despite a lack of equipment for ICT. The school's musicians take part in an extensive programme of musical performances in the course of the year. These provide outstanding opportunities for developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Very high results at A-level
- Excellent teaching that is very well planned and led, based on expert knowledge of dramatic texts and practical stagecraft
- Students' excellent attitudes that enhance their achievement

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement

257. All students have passed in the two years that the courses have been offered. Numbers taking the courses are too small to allow meaningful comparisons to be made with national averages. The school's students gain very high results at A-level. Overall, students' achievement is excellent.

258. Standards of work seen in lessons were very high. Boys and girls perform equally overall. In their AS-level course, students acquire a good working knowledge of the practical requirements needed to bring dramatic literature to life on the stage. For example, they demonstrated a very thorough understanding of the text and performance demands of the *Mechanicals*' scene from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', by explaining how to dress characters, and how to direct their speech and movement to exploit key comic elements. Students acquire very good practical acting skills, and develop the ability to structure dramatic scenes convincingly and to construct characters with subtlety and awareness of the demands of an audience. This was particularly successful in one lesson because the teacher judged aptly when to be directive, and when to allow the students to rehearse independently and evaluate each other's work.
259. In Year 13, students acquire further skills and greater sophistication in the analysis of texts and planning stage productions. As a result of thorough teaching, well aimed at their level of development, they understand the implications and differences between the theories of major historical theatrical practitioners, such as Stanislavski and Brecht. One group analysed a National Theatre presentation of Brecht's 'The Threepenny Opera' with authority and insight, readily identifying significant features of the style of production and the methods of acting. They went on ably to demonstrate their grasp of theory and appreciation of the performance in well-judged practical performance work of their own.
260. In both years, work benefits from the use of computers to present written pieces, and the Internet is used well for independent research and background reading. The quality of teaching is excellent. It is founded on excellent subject knowledge, very good planning to ensure thorough teaching of all aspects of each topic, and assessment procedures which provide expert prompting, and very beneficial comments on students' coursework. The work rate in lessons is very rapid because of the consistently high level of challenge. Students appreciate and take full advantage of teachers' authoritative coaching and evaluation of their acting exercises. On some occasions, teaching could be refined further by extending the time for which students are asked to act, to balance more appropriately the time spent on actually performing and the time used for analysing the performances.
261. The quality of students' learning is excellent. Written assignments are presented with considerable pride and very high standards of attention to detail. They discuss ideas and productions they have seen, with a high level of astuteness and independence of thought. Students learn from and support each other's spoken contributions consistently, leading to very high standards of group work.
262. Leadership and management of drama are excellent. Planning is excellent, as are procedures for assessment. As a result, lessons are imaginative and well-structured, so that students participate fully in stimulating experiences of practical theatre. An extensive programme of visits to theatres, visits by professional actors and opportunities to take part in extra-curricular productions, enables students to consolidate and extend well their understanding and performance skills. No comparison is possible with drama at the time of the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

263. The inspection focused on A-level courses in history and psychology. Courses in art history, geography and government and politics were sampled.
264. In 2001, examination results at A-level in art history were well above average. In 2002, all students passed, but a lower proportion of students gained A or B grades. Results in 2002 reflected difficulties in staffing at the time. Standards of work seen during the inspection are

well above average and students are on track to do very well in this year's examinations. In a lesson observed in Year 13, students achieved very well because the teaching focused sharply on helping them to improve their critical studies thoughtfully, with very clear reference to the demands of the examining board.

265. In 2001, geography A-level geography results were well above average. Results were very similar in 2002, with almost three quarters of students succeeding in A or B grades, and all securing at least an E grade in each year. A very good Year 12 lesson, on alluvial land forms, was well planned and began with an effective brainstorming process stimulating good contributions from students. A very good presentation on levee formation by students was very well prepared and illustrated. Teaching was enthusiastic and very effective. It included very good questioning to extend students' knowledge, and furnished them with useful information about examination technique.
266. There are no previous examination results to refer to in government and politics. A Year 12 lesson, involving the use of sources to construct a critical analysis of the British electoral system, was excellent. Enthusiastic and very knowledgeable teaching allied to very good planning and a clear focus on improving students' answering technique led to highly effective learning. Students contributed intelligently and willingly to the session, and showed their very good grasp of the issues. There was very imaginative use of the media coverage of the previous day's reporting of the Iraq crisis debate.
267. The school offers a course in critical thinking and entered a small number of students for the AS-level examination in 2002. All succeeded in gaining Grade A. In the two Year 12 lessons seen during the inspection, there was more variation in attainment, but standards are above average. The quality of students' thinking is higher than their use of reflection and ideas to pose challenging questions during lessons. Teaching and learning during the lessons was good. As the focus was on factors affecting university applications, teaching was more successful in extending students' understanding of financial issues, than in deepening their critical thinking and questioning skills.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching, resulting partly from teachers' excellent subject knowledge
- Excellent support for students and a high standards of marking assist students to attain high standards and to achieve very well
- Students' excellent attitudes enhance their achievement

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement

268. In 2001, A-level results were very high in comparison with other maintained schools. The majority of students gained A or B grades, with none lower than C. A higher proportion of boys than girls gained the highest grades, but boys gained better results than in their other subjects. The school's 2002 results were very similar. The school's analysis of results shows that most students achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment.
269. Current standards are well above average and students achieve very well. The overall level of attainment of students entering Year 12 is well above average and includes students who join the sixth form from other schools. Most students present lucid arguments in essay form in

which they analyse particular events in the context of general principles, for example when they considered the inevitability of the Cold War. While generally well above average, many essays show that some students have not yet fully mastered some of the techniques of essay writing, such as ensuring that introductions and conclusions have maximum impact.

270. By the end of Year 13, students attain standards that are well above average. Work samples show that students make significant gains in their essay writing skills during the course. Work on topics, such as the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, is rigorous and standards of debate are challenging. Most students show considerable skill in putting the events into a wider historical context when, for example discussing whether the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars can be seen as the first ‘modern wars’.
271. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is sometimes excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and are very well prepared for lessons, in terms of both their own approach to the topics covered and the activities that they plan for students. Their clear enthusiasm for their topics has a considerable impact on the students’ response. In most lessons, teachers ensure that all students are involved in discussions. When questioning, teachers maintain a very good balance between accepting volunteered answers and directing questions at individuals. Very strong support is given to improving important skills, such as extended writing, analysis of sources and personal study skills. For example, teachers provide students with specific approaches for answering different types of examination questions. As a result, students make considerable gains in both their historical and learning skills. Excellent marking provides detailed critical feedback on the quality of students’ written work, and specific guidance on how to improve.
272. Students’ attitudes are excellent. They readily contribute to their own learning, for example by making substantial contributions to discussions and by asking thoughtful questions. The quality of their contributions is enhanced by thorough preparation for classwork. Students work very well collaboratively. Students spoke candidly and very positively about the provision of history at the school. They enjoy the topics, and spoke highly of the quality of teaching, valuing the stimulus given by the different styles represented in the department. The helpfulness of teachers’ comments in marking was particularly valued, as was the emphasis on helping students to ‘organise for success’, by developing a well disciplined and systematic approach to learning.
273. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement. No significant areas were identified as in need of improvement, but standards are now even higher, the quality of teaching is better and achievement continues to be very good. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Day-to-day management is highly organised and longer-term development is directed very effectively towards improving the achievement of students, by identifying key areas for improvement and the means of tackling them.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Standards are high, students achieve very well, and their attitudes are excellent
- Teaching is very good, with excellent teaching materials, including very good use of ICT
- Stimulating approaches to learning include very good opportunities for independent work
- Effective assessment procedures result in very good support for students’ learning

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement

274. Results in 2001 were well above average as they had been for the previous three years. They further improved in 2002 and are now very high. Girls tend to do better than boys, as is the case nationally, but the proportion of boys taking the subject is higher than the national average. The proportion staying on from AS to A-level is very high, and psychology is one of the most popular sixth form subjects.
275. Standards observed at the school were well above average. Written work was excellent and very well structured. Year 13 work included a series of very good essays on such topics as 'schizophrenia', including its biochemical component and research evidence, and on 'depression and anxiety disorders'. Students were highly skilled in comparing different psychological approaches and reflecting on sources of bias. Standards that were well above average were contributed to by very effective teaching methods and by detailed and constructive assessment. These were further promoted by students' excellent attitudes to the social relevance of the A-level course. Very good achievement in Year 12 leads to the very good standards attained in Year 13. Very good progress was strongly evident in the improvement seen in the module on research methods. Where essays were less good, there were voluminous, helpful teacher comments, which led directly to improvement in standards. The emphasis on independent work in both years led to marked development in independent learning skills. For example, the students researched information and put together PowerPoint presentations on such issues as 'day care' and 'eye witness testimony' in Year 12. Teachers made excellent use of students' independent work in discussions, presentations to whole groups, and by publication on the school Intranet, all of which improved communication skills. Students are less good at presentational skills and paired work than might be expected from their very high examination results at GCSE. The sixth form psychology course does much to remedy this lack, so that achievement overall in psychology is very good.
276. Teaching and learning are very good. The department makes a consistent effort to assess students' knowledge and understanding at the start of each module. This concept mapping allows teaching to be closely related to students' needs. A Year 12 lessons observed gave evidence of very good independent research, and deepened students' understanding and insight on issues such as 'stress and abnormality'. The excellent quality of teaching materials provided support for lower-attaining students, without constraining the achievement of the highest-attaining students. The high quality of constructive marking and general dialogue with students about their learning, including e-mail correspondence, all contributed significantly to the very good learning. In Year 13, the highest-attaining students used a high degree of empathy when simulating chat room relationships, being able to enter into role play with keen insight into their virtual characters. In addition, they understood the roles in which those characters, such as a silver surfer and a teenage girl, might wish to project themselves. Not all students operated at this high level, and occasionally teachers had to modify plans because students learned better in plenary situations than in the planned pair or group work. Nevertheless, the depth of knowledge about teaching methodology, as well as psychology, led to very good gains in learning. Literacy, communication skills and ICT are very well promoted throughout the course and numeracy skills very well developed in the research methods component and investigatory coursework. Students with special educational needs are very well supported by the teaching materials and general methodology. The psychology Intranet gave very strong additional support to some students. Their evaluation of the subject as 'excellent' was based on very

mature evaluation, particularly of the degree of support they were given in understanding their own achievement.

277. The management of the subject is excellent. A very strong team has been built up over the past three years. Curriculum and assessment are very strong, with enrichment built into the course through visiting speakers, such as magistrates, psychological social workers and clients. Library resources are very good, including books, articles, videos and the excellent psychology website, which offers links with world-wide learning resources, the examining board, the complete school curriculum, student work and the perceptions of past students. These provide very good insights into higher education and career choices related to psychology. By its nature, psychology makes a very strong contribution to social, cultural and citizenship issues, as well as providing informed leadership on ethical and inclusion issues. The department is currently researching the impact of its own teaching particularly in relation to the independent work that is such a strong feature. The previous report made little mention of psychology, but it is clear that improvement over the last few years has been very good.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

278. The school offers A-level courses in English literature, French and German, all of which were focus subjects for inspection.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average because teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, and students respond well to the challenge
- Teaching is consistently very good, and students develop a very good understanding of the social, cultural and historical background of texts
- Teachers' marking is very good, and students receive detailed comments on the standards they are attaining and how to make improvements
- The course is very well managed, organised and staffed

Areas for improvement

- Students do not always support their views with precise references and quotations
- Some students do not participate enough in class discussions

279. In 2001, A-level English literature results were well above national average, with a high proportion of students gaining A and B grades. In 2002 there was a further improvement. These results represented good progress from students' standards when they began the course. Boys and girls did equally well. Retention rates are very high from AS to A-level
280. Lesson observation and a scrutiny of students' written work confirm that their attainment is well above average. They have good experience of a wide range of literature, which they use to illuminate their study of set texts. This enables many to develop their own views about texts so that they speak and write with authority, being able to balance broad statement with precise reference. By Year 13, all extend and probe ideas and explain how language is used to create effects. This was apparent in a very good lesson on Jessie Pope's pre-World War 1 poetry, where students were confident in discussing motive, technique, cliché and sincerity. The vocabulary of lower-attaining students is often better than their clarity of expression. Students have a clear understanding of literature, and use good technical vocabulary in analysis.

Sometimes, however, they do not incorporate quotations and the critical opinions of others into their essays adequately.

281. The achievement of AS and A-level students is good. Teachers model and encourage the development of discussion, comparison and analysis. This helps students make good progress in coming to an understanding of how a writers' values and techniques relate to the cultural and historical circumstances surrounding them. A group studying 'The Rivals' realised the need to temper their own presumptions about attitudes in the play, when the teacher highlighted ways in which social attitudes might have changed. Those students who are less confident in discussion show a limitation in their ability intellectually to challenge received ideas, or to offer alternative interpretations.
282. Teaching is very good, and students learn very effectively. In lessons and in written work, teachers have high expectations of what students can and should achieve. This leads to lessons which are stimulating and demanding. Students respond to, and increasingly use, very demanding critical vocabulary, because of the quality of teachers' questioning. This was the case when Year 12 students were expected to analyse, defend, and counter opinions about how contemporary television culture might need explanation to a future audience. Very good assessment systems inform, but do not restrict, the style of work. There is very good dialogue in lessons and marking about what standards are being attained, and how and where improvements can be effected. Students become very well informed about literature because teachers have very good subject knowledge. Rather than being used in a 'dry' background way, this is introduced, at its most useful, to extend discussion or provide new perspectives. For example, Year 13 students, studying World War 1 poetry, made very good progress in understanding the changing attitudes in both society and literature reflected in the poems. This came about because of the teacher's skill in relating the poems to contemporary views and events, and expecting students to clarify whether Brooke remained self-indulgent, and how his religious views might have changed. A relative weakness is that students are not generally expected to support their views in discussion with precise reference to texts or to reconcile conflicting interpretations.
283. Students work very hard. They are receptive, thoughtful and attentive. They are very positive about their English studies, many intending to continue the subject in higher education. Files show a high level of commitment and concern to do well. Some students are keener to write than to debate, and do not make full use of discussion opportunities.
284. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching quality has been sustained. Better staffing arrangements enable teachers to follow their interests and expertise, and students to benefit from a variety of approaches and opinions. Extra-curricular opportunities are regular and very good. They range from theatre visits to talks and workshops with visiting authors, poets, critics and actors. Accommodation is much improved. Very good leadership of the course has resulted in an increase in students, who now number 77 on English literature courses, rising examination standards, and a healthy philosophy of teaching students to accept and explore uncertainty and ambiguity.

French

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

Strengths

- Results are well above average

- Teaching is generally very good, and teachers have excellent linguistic skills and knowledge of the courses

Area for improvement

- The attitudes and motivation of a few students

285. Results in French A-level, in 2001, were well above the national average, and two thirds of students gained A or B grades. In 2002, these high results were broadly maintained. The current achievement of students is very good.
286. Year 12 students have very good listening and speaking skills, and participate without difficulty in lessons taught entirely in French at normal speed. In one class, students listened to an extract from a French film, and then described the main features of the 'New Wave' cinema. Subsequently, they took part in a creative role play relating to the plot of the film. In another class, students successfully picked out much detail from a recording about the tourist attractions of Paris, and then successfully took part in a fluent group discussion about a planned day's visit to the capital. The pronunciation and accuracy of a few students was weak, however. Year 12 students' reading skills are very good and they quickly understand long texts on various topics. Students' written work is of a very high standard and their course work contains a good range of essays in preparation for the examination. Year 13 students have well-developed listening and speaking skills. They discuss topics, such as 'crime and punishment' with great confidence, fluency and accuracy. Most students have an excellent knowledge of general and specialist vocabulary and a very good command of grammatical structures. Most Year 13 students have written very good course work on the A-level topics, which is generally well presented and very accurate.
287. The teaching and learning of French are very good. Most students work conscientiously and with enjoyment, and the atmosphere in lessons is generally very positive. Occasionally, however, one or two students lacked motivation. Generally, working relationships with staff are very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and their linguistic skills are excellent. Lessons are very well prepared and have clear aims which help students to know what they need to learn. The lessons are completely in French, which has a very positive impact on students' listening and speaking skills. The teaching of shared classes is very well coordinated. The correction of errors in lessons is very good, and the marking of students' work, using examination criteria, is very effective. Clear targets are set to help students improve. Students are encouraged to use ICT to research topics on the Internet and some students word process essays. Lessons are brisk and challenging, and students often work in pairs or groups. Grammar is presented in a structured way, and good opportunities are provided for practising it in both controlled and freer situations. The schemes of work cover syllabus requirements very thoroughly. Good use is made of the resources in the library. The French assistant helps to raise standards of oral work. The visits to France and the Language Awareness Day also raise standards and increase motivation. The management of the subject is very good. Improvement since the last report has been good.

German

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

Strengths

- Results are above average
- Very good monitoring and assessment procedures help students raise the standard of their work
- Students have good opportunities for developing their own ideas in oral work

- Teachers are very committed and work very hard

Areas for improvement

- Extra-curricular opportunities for students to develop language skills
- The use of ICT to raise standards
- Greater involvement of some reticent students in discussions
- The allocation of time for A-level German

288. Results have remained in recent years above the national averages both at grades A and B and A to E. This was also the case in 2001 and in 2002. Usually girls outperform boys, but in 2002 boys' performance was in line with the girls'. Students do slightly less well in German than in their other subjects, as is the case nationally. The combination of increased subject choice and national changes to sixth form provision has led to a decline in numbers for A-level German. As is the case generally, there are more girls in the current groups.
289. The evidence from lessons observed and students' files indicates that current standards are above the national average. The Year 13 students are on course to meet their target grades of B and C. Teachers have advanced skills in oral German, which results in all students having well-developed listening skills. They recall vocabulary very well and are given ample opportunity to develop speaking skills in role-play exercises. These provide them with good opportunities to develop creativity in the use of language. Students in both years speak German fluently, and display the good command of the higher order vocabulary expected at this level. Their grasp of grammatical structures, however, is often shaky, which reduces the overall confidence of some students in Year 13. Most students enjoy the opportunities to contribute orally, but the more reticent are not always included sufficiently in discussions. The quality of written work is above average. Over the two years, students learn to organise their good ideas more coherently, and write more accurately, not least in the area of literature, where much work is very good. Most students commence the courses with A* or A at GCSE. They build on these very good standards and their achievement is good.
290. Overall, teaching and learning are good, and some aspects are very good. Teachers are very committed and work very hard. The best teaching shows impressive subject knowledge and a good understanding of what students need to know. As a result, students gain fluency in expressing and developing their ideas. Students are clear that they must come to lessons prepared to contribute ideas. Students' first essay drafts are corrected in depth, and students compare their efforts with those of their fellows. Following group analysis, students incorporate their teachers' suggestions, and ideas from the others, to produce an improved second draft. Students have a clear idea of the standards that can be reached, and learn well from each other. Teachers are adept at helping students organise their ideas in class discussion. They capitalise on students' reasoning skills, by providing analogies to challenge them to infer and deduce meanings. A good balance is maintained between teacher input and opportunities for students to contribute ideas. Lessons are well-paced, and planned to give students appropriate practice in the requisite skills. Students become very well versed in examination requirements. They use examination criteria to evaluate their own work and to justify the marks they award to themselves, before their teachers' marking is revealed to them. This raises students' awareness of the importance of assessment, and reinforces the notion of continuous improvement. Marking is often highly detailed and reflects the high standards the teachers set themselves and their commitment to the success of their students. Students develop useful independent learning skills. They show initiative in consulting dictionaries, and in taking notes, which the teachers correct and return for improvement, which furnishes students with good materials for revision.

291. Students' attitudes are good overall. Year 12 students are particularly positive and enthusiastic. Students show very good levels of concentration and listen to each other carefully, picking up and developing points. Preparation for lessons is often extremely detailed and the close monitoring of their work is a strong motivation for them to complete tasks to the best of their ability.
292. The contributions of the independent learning programme and the foreign language assistant compensate in part for the slightly limited teaching time. Worthwhile opportunities for extra-curricular enrichment are provided through the work experience programme, but more could be done to develop their language skills and to raise further the profile of the subject. Students make too little use of ICT because the department lacks equipment, but some use computers at home.
293. Leadership and management are good. The head of department, appointed to the post eighteen months ago, leads by example, analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the performance of examinees. He uses this information well to inform curricular planning, for example by devoting more attention this year to improving s to increasing the use of the Internet as a stimulus for independent study. The monitoring of teaching and some aspects of professional development require further development so that the standard of teaching becomes uniformly very good. The schemes of work are good, and provide a solid framework for effective teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection is good.