

INSPECTION REPORT

CROWN WOODS SCHOOL

Eltham, London

LEA area: 203 Greenwich

Unique reference number: 100189

Headteacher: Michael Murphy

Reporting inspector: Brian Oppenheim
2686

Dates of inspection: 7 – 11 October 2002

Inspection number: 249638

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Riefield Road Eltham London
Postcode:	SE9 2QN
Telephone number:	020 8850 7678
Fax number:	020 8294 1921
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Peter May
Date of previous inspection:	25 January 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2686	Brian Oppenheim	Registered inspector	Citizenship	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9980	Joanna Adams	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
2731	Penny Holden	Team inspector	<p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>Special educational needs</p> <p>English as an additional language</p> <p>P16 Art</p>	How well are pupils taught?
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English	
13067	Alan Quinn	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30825	Keith Hayton	Team inspector	Science	
31114	Ann Power	Team inspector	Art	How well does the school care for its pupils?
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
8244	Brenda Watson	Team inspector	Geography	

30223	Linda Austin	Team inspector	History	
19613	Sue Thomas-Pounce	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
1880	Garry Bignell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8624	Ann Cartwright	Team inspector	Music	
22601	Loo Devine	Team inspector	Physical education	
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education	
32235	Peter Shephard	Team inspector	Business education P16 Business education	
1830	Stuart Charlton	Team inspector	Special educational needs unit P16 Physics P16 Biology	
3258	David Bain	Team inspector	Psychology	
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Leisure & Tourism	
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Media studies	

The inspection contractor was:

icp

360 Lee Valley Technopark
Ashley Road
London
N17 9LN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

7

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Pupils' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

15

The school's results and pupils' achievements
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19

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

21

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

24

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

26

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

27

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

31

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

33

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

35

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

41

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

64

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Crown Woods School is a very large mixed comprehensive school with 1958 pupils aged 11 – 18 including 277 in the sixth form. There are more boys than girls. Many pupils come from the local area but others live as far away as Lewisham. Most pupils come from white heritage backgrounds and just over a quarter from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds including Black, Pakistani, Indian and Chinese. Nearly 10 per cent of pupils speak a language other than English at home. The school receives extra money to support the achievements of 508 ethnic minority pupils. Twenty-four per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals: this is higher than the average for England. Thirty-six per cent of pupils have special learning needs, which is well above the national average. Almost three per cent of pupils have a statement of need: this is similar to national average. There is a new unit which caters for 12 pupils with visual impairment and five with moderate learning difficulties: these pupils take many of their lessons in the main school. There has been a considerable turnover of staff over the past year or so and the proportion of pupils who join and leave the school mid-year is relatively high. When pupils join the school at the start of Year 7 many have standards that are well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Crown Woods School is improving rapidly and is satisfactory overall with some good and very good features. It is well on its way to becoming fully effective. Robust leadership and well-judged management are improving teaching, learning and examination results. However, too many pupils miss school each day. Teaching is not consistently good because there are difficulties in recruiting permanent teachers for a few subjects. This means that not all pupils achieve as much as they should. The school is taking strong action to overcome these weaknesses and this is making a real and measurable difference to the great majority of pupils. Because of this the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The determined way the school is led and managed has led to important improvements since the last inspection.
- The systems the school uses to check on its work, evaluate how well it is doing and take the necessary steps to move forward are very effective: the drive for improvement is raising pupils' standards and making teaching better.
- In places teaching is inspirational and the high proportion of good and very good teaching helps many pupils learn well.
- The support given to pupils who need help with their learning is very effective and means they are included fully in what the school offers.
- The effective way key staff lead and manage their teams makes a strong contribution to the improvements in teaching and learning.
- The provision for media studies and music is very good and it is good in English, mathematics, modern languages, drama and religious education. This is helping to raise standards.

What could be improved

- Attendance is well below average and punctuality in the morning is unsatisfactory.
- Examination results and standards of work in lessons are still not as high as they should be: provision in science in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory and information and communication technology is not used well to support pupils' learning.
- There is too much unsatisfactory teaching.
- The curriculum is not relevant to all pupils because there are few vocational and work-related courses.
- Time at the beginning of each day is not used well and tutors are not yet making a strong enough contribution to pupils' academic and personal development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved significantly since the last inspection in January 1999 but it is over the last year and a half or so that improvement has been most rapid. Nearly all the important issues have been tackled successfully: this is a significant achievement because there were over 20 targets identified by the previous inspection. Attainment has risen over the last two years: standards remain below average overall but pupils achieve well compared with where they started, particularly by the end of Year 11. Leadership and management at all levels have improved very significantly: there is much closer monitoring of teaching and sharper evaluation, the school has a very clear understanding of what it must do to improve and assessment is much better. All this is having a strong impact on pupils' learning. There are still some key areas where improvements have not been achieved. The most important of these is attendance and the use of information and communication technology. These limit pupils' achievements and explain why standards are still not high enough.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	B	A well above average B above average C average D below average E well below average
A Levels/AS Levels	N/A	E	N/A ¹		

Standards at Crown Woods School are below average overall but are above those in similar schools. This is clear from the table above. GCSE standards are getting better. Most pupils achieve well compared with their starting point and make good progress. A detailed look at the 2002 GCSE results shows that:

- results are high compared with the same pupils' achievements in the Year 9 national tests in 2000: the school adds value to pupils' learning;
- the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at the higher grades has increased by nearly six percentage points to 38.4 per cent: this is at the highest level for five years and reflects the impact the school is now having on pupils' achievements;
- results were best in English, drama, history, media studies and physical education;
- results improved in mathematics, science, design and technology and business studies but remain below average.

The school has not been as successful in maintaining the improvements in the proportion of pupils who gain at least five GCSE passes at any grade: this explains why overall GCSE standards have not kept pace with the rise in results nationally.

Over the past three years the school has broadly met its GCSE targets. The targets for the next three years are increasingly tough showing how the school is using improvements in teaching to push standards up year on year. There are also improvements in the results of the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. Here, the 2002 results are also significantly higher than those in 2001: this is evidence of the impact that better teaching is having on standards and the way the

¹ National results for A level and AS level were not available at the time of publication

school is adding value to pupils' learning. Standards of literacy are broadly average but pupils' numeracy skills are below average.

The work seen in lessons confirms that the school has begun to make a steady but real impact on pupils' achievements across the school. Standards are now improving: even in subjects where GCSE results fell in 2002, pupils are achieving more and making better progress. This is because of the improvements made to teaching. More is being expected of pupils and they are being stretched more often. There is room for standards to improve further because pupils who do not attend regularly underachieve. Standards of achievement in information and communication technology are low. There are some small differences between the achievements of different groups of pupils. Girls' performance has not been as good as in other schools but more are now achieving the higher levels in the Year 9 national tests. This is confirmed by evidence from the inspection.

GCE A and AS Level results for 2001 are well below the national average. The results for 2002 and evidence of students' work confirms that standards remain low. This is because:

- students' previous attainment is low making it difficult for them to achieve well in A and AS Level courses;
- there are too few work-related courses to meet the needs and aspirations of many of the students;
- students have not been given enough guidance to help them tackle sixth form courses.

Again, lessons confirm that the school is making a steady improvement in students' achievements by improving teaching and because of better guidance.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Many pupils are interested in what the school offers and support its work but some older pupils are disaffected.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well but where teaching is unsatisfactory or there is not enough supervision in corridors pupils' behaviour is boisterous.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Pupils respond well to the school's moral and social code and their relationships are good.
Attendance	Well below average. Punctuality at the start of the day is poor.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are broadly satisfactory and many pupils have good relationships with their teachers. But attendance is an important weakness because it badly affects some pupils' achievements.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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 is satisfactory overall: the amount of good teaching has improved since the last inspection but there are still inconsistencies. Many lessons are good, very good and excellent but this is offset by a small proportion that is unsatisfactory and means that some pupils lose out. Teaching varies from subject to subject and from year to year. In science in Years 7 to 9, for example, there is too much teaching that is less than satisfactory because of the large number of temporary teachers: the school has

had difficulty recruiting science teachers. Teaching is best in English, religious education, media studies and music but there is good teaching right across the school. There are also examples of unsatisfactory teaching spread across subjects. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and the proportion of excellent lessons is high: this is because classes are smaller and behaviour is easier to manage. Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills are generally satisfactory and there are appropriate plans for improvement. Pupils' learning is similar to the mixed picture of teaching. Again, there have been important improvements over recent years. As teaching has improved so have teachers' expectations of their pupils: the work set in lessons is more interesting and demanding, and pupils rise to the challenge. Most pupils now work hard so that they make good progress. But habits of poor attendance are harder to break and missing school contributes to some pupils' unsatisfactory learning. Pupils respond to poor teaching and discipline by behaving poorly: they learn little as a result. Sometimes pupils find the academic nature of some lessons difficult and the school has few work-related courses to help them learn. However, specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good: this helps pupils to make good progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum covers a wide range of suitable subjects but lacks a vocational element in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. Opportunities for enrichment are good but a relatively small proportion of pupils attend activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Special educational needs are well managed and good teaching overall ensures that all the pupils who have identified learning needs make good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils with English as an additional language have appropriate help and those beginning to learn English make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is good and the school has a clear moral code. The school deals with pupils' cultural development fairly well but not so well with their spiritual awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The way the school assesses pupils' achievements is particularly effective. Teachers are beginning to develop a good understanding of the academic and personal needs of pupils but the contribution of tutors is not yet strong enough to improve key areas such as attendance.

The school's partnership with parents is broadly satisfactory, but a significant number of parents do not feel the school works closely enough with them and they would like more information. Parents are happy that their children enjoy school and that are expected to work hard. There are not enough vocational courses: this means that some pupils do not benefit as much as they should from school. The school does not comply with the need to hold a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is led with rigour, determination and commitment. It is managed sharply so that everything is designed to improve teaching and learning: this is why pupils' and students' achievements are starting to improve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors have good information which helps them to get a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses but they do not yet have a strong enough understanding of their shared role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The rigorous way the school monitors its work, analyses data and uses this to evaluate how well it is doing means it is making rapid progress in many key areas.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: the budget is used appropriately to support the school's educational priorities.

In most cases the accommodation is adequate and recent building work has improved facilities for some subjects very significantly. However, lack of investment over many years means that other areas are showing their age. There are adequate resources but some subjects do not have enough textbooks to go round. The library is well used but again lacks investment in new books. There are enough staff to cover all the subjects but difficulties in getting permanent staff in science are harming some pupils' learning. Time at the start of the day is not used well to promote learning. The principles of best value are used well by the school.

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 child is expected to work hard. • The children like school. • They feel comfortable approaching the school with concerns. • Improvements to the building. • New systems put in place by the new headteacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about how their children are doing. • Better communication about the work of the school. • Homework should be more consistently set, marked and interesting. • Teaching varies too much.

Seventy parents attended the meeting for parents before the inspection and almost 25 per cent responded to a questionnaire about their views of the school. A number of parents who had had children in the school over the last few years indicated that were finding the changes difficult. Many missed the house system and the traditional parents' evenings. Inspection findings support the positive views of parents and confirm that:

- the new year-group system is beginning to work very well;
- teachers have good recent information about how each pupil is doing academically and are giving a much more accurate steer to individual pupils to help them achieve the most in their learning;
- the new parents' evenings are opportunities for tutors to share this more accurate information about progress but parents need more help to understand it;
- homework is regularly set in lessons and is appropriate. Homework diaries are checked regularly but occasionally some slip through the net;
- there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching;
- communication with parents is not as good as it could be.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM CROWN WOODS SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Crown Wood School has a sixth form of 277 students which makes it larger than most other sixth forms. The ethnic mix of the sixth form students broadly reflects the main school. There is a range of mainly academic subjects but the school is introducing more vocational courses. Examination results at the end of Year 11 are below average and the entry requirements to the sixth form are relatively low. The staying on rate from Year 11 is low but is now beginning to rise. In the past most students have taken AS and A Level courses but there is now an increasing number of vocational courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Standards in examinations are below the average for sixth forms nationally reflecting the below average attainment at the end of Year 11. Better teaching now means that students achieve well given their starting points. The range of sixth form courses is not wide enough to meet the needs of all its students. Many Year 11 pupils do not choose to stay on in the sixth form and those who choose to do not finish their courses, particularly in Year 12. As a result the school has to maintain small teaching groups in Year 13. However, new arrangements mean that students now get better guidance about which courses to study and there is a wider range of courses. This is beginning to reduce the number of students who drop out or change courses. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and improvements in the way it is run means that the school is now promoting students' personal development well. Overall, the sixth form is not as successful as it could be and is only just cost effective.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good: this helps students to achieve relatively well from a low starting point.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and make a real difference to students' learning.
- There are good improvements to the quality of the support and guidance given to students.
- The newly refurbished sixth form accommodation makes a strong contribution to the climate for learning.

What could be improved

- Examination results are still not high enough.
- The curriculum is not wide enough to meet the needs of all students: too many drop out or change courses.
- Students do not get enough help in choosing the right sixth form courses and assessment is not used to make sure they select courses in which they can succeed.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Biology	Satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and there is sound planning. Students generally make satisfactory progress but their achievements in AS examinations in 2002 were disappointing.
Physics	Good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge: this helps all students to make good progress and some, very good progress.
Design & technology	Satisfactory. Good teaching means that students learn well. Standards are broadly average in the AS and A Level examinations and in lessons.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Teaching is sound. Students respond well and are developing productive relationships. The range of courses available enhances inclusiveness and equality of opportunity.
Information & communication technology	Satisfactory. Provision is improving but is not yet fully effective in all aspects. Results at A and AS Level are below average but students achieve well considering their starting points. Teaching is good and often excellent.
Leisure & tourism	Satisfactory. Standards are set to rise because teachers have very secure subject knowledge and are very committed to their pupils.
Art	Good. Very good teaching is helping students to make good progress but examination results are below average.
Media studies	Excellent. Excellent teaching and very good leadership mean that standards are very high.
Geography	Unsatisfactory. Standards are below national averages and below expectations, considering students' starting points. Teaching is inconsistent in quality.
History	Satisfactory. Teaching is mostly good and is helping students to make good progress: this shows in the AS Level course. But standards in the A Level course are not high enough.
Psychology	Satisfactory. Standards are average for the first students taking this new course. Teaching is sound, but students, whilst keen, are too dependent on the teachers' good subject expertise.
English	Good. Consistently good teaching and positive relationships and attitudes mean that students are learning well. Examination results in 2002 were significantly better than in 2001.
Spanish	Good. Examination standards and the quality of work have improved. Teaching is consistently good and students are learning well because of the positive working relationships and attitudes to the subject.

In many cases achievement in Year 12 is better than in Year 13. This is because teaching has improved over the past year and students make better progress. Often, teachers have to fill in gaps in students' learning in Year 13: this is why achievement in A Level courses is below average. The new systems for

selecting students for courses are also more effective: Year 12 students are more likely to be studying courses for which they are suited.

The work in other subjects reflects a similar pattern and achievement is broadly better in Year 12. Vocational courses are becoming increasingly successful: in information and communication technology, for example, students are beginning to make real and sustained progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. The new tutor system provides much improved educational and personal support and guidance for students. However, this is new and is only just starting to have a positive impact on students' learning. Initial guidance for students choosing courses has been limited but, again, is improving. In some subjects teachers do not take enough account of individual students' learning needs.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Broadly, the sixth form is led and managed well but because things are very new the impact on standards and quality are still fairly limited. However, the systems for monitoring and evaluating performance are good and the school knows exactly what steps it must take to improve 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"> • The good teaching. • That they are helped and encouraged to study. • The new sixth form accommodation. • They feel valued and treated as young adults. • The interest of the headteacher and senior managers in the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advice they receive on what to study in the sixth form • The advice on what to do when they leave school. • More information on their individual progress. • The length of school lunchtimes.

Students enjoy being in the sixth form and those who were spoken to were very positive about the recent improvements. They enjoyed working and studying in the new accommodation and like the early start to school but would like longer lunchtimes. The inspection team agree with their positive views and that there is not enough advice and information about individual progress: however, the school is improving this and there are now proper systems to provide students with better information. The inspection did not find that the length of lunchtime had a significant impact on sixth form provision.

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. Overall standards of work at Crown Woods School are below the national average. The results of the 2002 GCSE examinations, taken at the end of Year 11, are below the average achieved by pupils in England. However, when the 2002 GCSE results are compared with schools that have characteristics similar to Crown Woods performance is good. When the GCSE results are compared with the same pupils' achievements in the 2000 National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, performance is high. Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and that the school adds value to pupils' learning.

2. A more detailed analysis of the 2002 GCSE results shows that the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* - C increased by nearly six percentage points in 2002 to 38.4 per cent: this is a significant improvement and is at the highest level for five years. This reflects the impact the school is now having on pupils' achievements. On the other hand, the school has not been as successful at maintaining the improvements in the proportion of pupils who gain at least five GCSE passes at grades A* - G. In 2002 the proportion of pupils who gained at least five GCSE passes at grades A* - G was 84.2 per cent, down from 88.5 per cent in 2001 but similar to the 2000 results. This is why the overall trend in GCSE has not risen as fast as the national results. The proportion of pupils who gain just one GCSE is much lower than the national average and the average for similar schools. This reflects the proportion of pupils who are absent and miss too many lessons because they are disaffected from school.

3. The GCSE results also show that girls outperform boys in nearly all subjects, which is not uncommon in many schools, except in German and mathematics. However, the gap between boys and girls is not as large as it is nationally. In 2001, for example, boys' results were close to national average for boys but the girls' results were below the national average for girls. In other words, girls do better than boys at the school but perform below those of girls at other schools. The reason for this is twofold: there are fewer girls at the school than boys and boys tend to be better motivated by subjects such as science. The school's own, detailed, analysis of the 2002 results shows that boys did better in mathematics than girls but that girls outperformed boys in English. Again this is not uncommon. Evidence from the inspection shows that the performance of girls is improving: this is clear, for example, in the larger proportion of girls getting the higher levels in the Year 9 national tests.

4. The GCSE results for 2002 were strongest in English, drama, history, media studies and physical education. In English the percentage of pupils getting the higher grades is above the national average and in science the percentage is average. They are improving in mathematics, science, design and technology and business studies. In science and mathematics the percentage of pupils getting the higher scores remains below average. In other subjects GCSE performance is below average and standards in information and communication technology are low.

5. Over the past three years the school has come very close to meeting its GCSE targets: in 2001 it exceeded them by one percentage point. The targets for the next three years are increasingly tough showing how the school is using improvements in teaching to push standards up year on year. This is also illustrated by improvements in the results of the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 9. The results of the 2001 tests show that results were well below the national average and well below those in similar schools. In 2002, however, results are higher in English and mathematics. Overall results remain below the national average but are in line with those in similar schools and are above in mathematics. Again this is evidence of the impact that better teaching is having on standards and the way the school is adding value to pupils' learning.

6. The work seen in lessons confirms that standards are improving: even in subjects where GCSE results fell in 2002, pupils are achieving more and making better progress. This is the case in geography, for example: GCSE results fell in 2002 but pupils' achievements in lessons are now beginning to improve

in Years 7 and 8 and in Years 10 and 11. Much of the reason for this improvement is the corresponding improvement in teaching: in the great majority of lessons teachers are clear about what pupils are to learn and the pace of lessons is often brisk. Another reason is the impact of strong leadership: more is being expected of pupils and they are being stretched more often. However, the work in lessons also confirms that standards need to rise and that some pupils, particularly those who do not attend regularly or are taught by temporary teachers, still underachieve.

7. Standards of literacy throughout the school are generally average. The school's approach to teaching literacy is helping to raise standards. In business studies, for example, Year 10 pupils discussed and shared their views well and work in drama was very good. Pupils are confident and fluent when speaking and understand the range of writing they meet in all subject areas. There are some pupils in all years whose listening skills are not well developed but the majority can concentrate throughout a lesson. Most pupils are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum but a significant number of pupils have difficulties with grammar, spelling and punctuation, and as result their writing lacks fluency and accuracy. Pupils from varied ethnic backgrounds make significant contributions in lessons and progress well. Some of the most original creative work was produced by these pupils. There has been an improvement in the range of writing undertaken since the last inspection.

8. Skills in numeracy are below average but in view of the low attainment levels when they start school, and the effectiveness of teaching, pupils make satisfactory progress. Calculations, scales and the gathering of data are used regularly in science, design and technology and geography. In other subjects opportunities come up from time to time; for example, in a physical education class the pupils were involved in working out the dimensions of a playing pitch and in English the rhythm of a sonnet was analysed.

9. Pupils who have identified learning needs, including pupils with visual impairment, make good progress in their learning especially in improving their skills in reading and writing. Their progress is enhanced when they work with specialist support in lessons and the teacher has planned work using the individual learning plans to guide them.

10. Standards achieved by bilingual pupils are similar to those of other pupils. They take full part in lessons and learn particularly well where teachers teach key subject words in lessons. Pupils who arrive at the school still require help to speak English fluently make good progress because they are supported well by the Inclusion Faculty and because they are very well motivated and work very hard.

11. The school has a good range of data with which to make judgements about the value that it adds to pupils' learning and uses this well to evaluate the performance of different groups of pupils and subjects. What this shows is that pupils with special educational needs, those that took part the Saturday School and Black pupils all performed well. This is confirmed by evidence from the inspection. Some of the most original creative work in English, for example, was produced by pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Sixth form

12. GCE A and AS Level results for 2001 are well below the national average. The results for 2002 indicate that they remain low but are showing encouraging signs of improvement. The low standards are partly because students start the sixth form with relatively low attainment: the school currently allows students to start an AS Level course with a GCSE pass at a grade C. This makes it difficult for students to achieve well in A and AS Level courses because they do not always have the background knowledge and understanding.

13. Another reason for the low standards is that there are too few vocational courses to meet the needs and aspirations of many of the students. The school estimates, for example, that the demand for vocational and work-related courses in the sixth form this year was somewhere in the region of 180 places: however, only 60 places are currently available. A third reason is that students have had, in the past, limited guidance about what to expect and how to tackle sixth form courses. Indeed, the school reports that until this year students have had a relatively free choice of subjects with little guidance about

which course best suits their needs, aspirations and prior attainment. Moreover, the ongoing guidance available to sixth formers depended too much on individual teachers and there was a lack of clear assessment to keep students informed about how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve. Here, the school has made good progress and there are new systems for tracking progress and attainment effectively: these are beginning to have a positive impact on standards and explain why achievements in lessons are now better than in past examinations.

14. In 2001 the best results were in drama and geography although the number of students taking the examinations was small. In 2002, however, geography results indicate that standards have fallen. Results were broadly average in art, biology, communication studies, social studies and sport. In mathematics, English literature, computer studies, history, design and technology and Spanish students' achievements were low but in most, standards show some improvement in 2002. The school's analysis of results indicates that students made just satisfactory progress in 2002 and that it adds some value to students' learning, an improvement on the poor results in 2001.

15. The work seen in lessons indicates that the school has begun to make a slow but real impact on students' achievements, particularly in Year 12, and confirms that progress is beginning to rise too.

16. It also confirms that some subjects are improving and are beginning to do well. In Spanish, for example, standards of work show encouraging improvements while in history students are now doing better and attainment is close to the average. As with GCSE results much of this improvement is due to better teaching: higher expectations, better targets and greater emphasis on outcomes are all helping to push up standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Overall, pupils' attitudes are satisfactory. The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes to school but for those who do not attend school regularly, particularly in Year 11, attitudes are not nearly as good. Many pupils express strong support for the school and show interest in the activities offered. In discussion, pupils spoke enthusiastically about their teachers and were keen to take up positions of responsibility such as representatives on the newly formed school council. The pupils attending enrichment classes, such as the art class, are keen to learn and achieve. In many lessons, particularly where teaching is very good, pupils are very keen to work hard, gain all they can from the lesson and achieve well. In a Year 11 business studies lesson, for example, pupils learning how to draw up a profit and loss account showed high levels of enthusiasm because the lesson had been brought alive by the teacher. In another excellent lesson Year 10 pupils looking at the impact of different ethnic groups on British society were quick to engage in the task, to discuss their views and to participate in discussion. However, where teaching is less successful pupils easily become distracted. They are not keen to participate in the lesson or to make contributions.

18. Behaviour is broadly satisfactory and the concern at the last inspection about the behaviour of some Year 9 boys is no longer evident. In some lessons and during assemblies, pupils behave very well: they are attentive, listen constructively and show respect. There is a clear link between the quality of the teaching and the behaviour of the pupils. Where teachers are skilled at managing their pupils and where the tasks are interesting and well taught, the pupils respond accordingly. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or particularly where teachers do not have, or use, effective strategies for managing pupils, behaviour deteriorates. In lessons where this occurs, the learning is disrupted for all members of the class as noise escalates and it becomes difficult to concentrate or apply oneself. There has been a high level of exclusions over the last few years because of the need to get to grips with behaviour. However, there are now significantly fewer exclusions because the new behaviour policy and systems for monitoring behaviour are having a positive impact. Last years' exclusion figures suggest that pupils from mixed or Black ethnic backgrounds were more likely to be excluded than other groups. However, when these figures are analysed by the number of pupils, the proportion of Black pupils is similar the proportion of White pupils. Individual pupils whose behaviour causes concern are closely monitored and pupils are supported well in their re-integration into school after exclusion. This is helping these pupils achieve appropriately and explains why exclusions are falling. The headteacher and senior management team

are very closely involved both in monitoring exclusions by groups and in ensuring procedures are correctly followed.

19. Behaviour around the school is mixed: at lunchtimes, in the dining room, pupils behave well, queuing sensibly and socialising well. Between lessons some of the movement around the corridors is rough and over boisterous and sometimes there is an element of shoving and pushing. Two incidents of particularly unkind behaviour were observed during the inspection and records show that there is some bullying taking place: however, managers deal with these effectively. That they do is demonstrated by the high degree of racial harmony and pupils from all different ethnic groups work well together.

20. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall. Pupils often respond well to the school's provision for moral and social development: many show a willingness and level of maturity in expressing their views on ethical issues. They respond well to opportunities for them to reflect on important issues of right and wrong. This was particularly evident in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. In Year 9, for example, pupils ask sensible questions about HIV and AIDS and their mature response is impressive. Similarly Year 7 pupils show a high level of respect for different points of view in PSHE. Their social development is usually good; they appreciate the rights and responsibilities afforded within society.

21. Pupils' spiritual development is not as strong as other aspects of their personal development but there are examples of them responding well. For example, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds show respect for each other's views. In some lessons, for example religious education in Year 10, pupils understand the wider impact of issues such as evil and suffering and pupils in a Year 11 history lesson showed very good empathy when studying North American beliefs. This is not always evident across all subjects, however. In Year 11 pupils are not always able to respond appropriately to sensitive issues. In PSHE, for example, responses to work on refugees lacked a real understanding of the issues. The problem here was not the attitudes of pupils: talking to them in small groups revealed that they could be sensitive. Teaching was not effective in drawing out these issues or getting the class as a whole to consider the views of others with compassion. Opportunities are not always taken to extend the learning to wider issues and pupils' response to the promotion of spiritual awareness is not well developed overall.

22. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. A good example occurred in assembly. The presentation by Black pupils of the work of Black writers, as part of Black History Month, was listened to intently by pupils. Those Black pupils spoken to during the inspection were very positive about their role in the assemblies. They felt that recognising Black History Month had helped others to see Black pupils in a positive light and gave them the opportunity to take a lead role. Not only did the assembly help pupils to understand the cultural heritages of others it also challenged their understanding of racism and equality. In music pupils listen, compose and perform work over a wide range of styles and cultures including those from China, Africa and Latin America.

23. Relationships between pupils are generally good; they support one another and can work together effectively in pairs and groups. Relationships with their teachers are often good and where particularly good, this is an important factor in promoting learning; pupils are confident to express views and ask questions. These positive relationships are not always so well promoted in tutorial time when tutors miss opportunities to support pupils' personal development.

24. Attendance at school is poor. There are high levels of unauthorised absence particularly in Year 11 where last year attendance was below 75 per cent. In all year groups, attendance fell below 90 per cent for the year and this has a serious impact on learning and achievement. There are also large numbers of pupils arriving late to school every day which disrupts the start of the day and use of time during registration. Lateness to lessons was a serious problem at the time of the last inspection but this has improved and most pupils arrive on time. The problems of poor attendance are complex; some pupils arrive late and miss registration, others arrive for registration but then leave the school and there are many with high levels of unauthorised absence. Poor attendance is not linked to any particular group of pupils but it is highest in Years 10 and 11.

25. Poor attendance was a key issue at the last inspection and continues to be so. However, the school has focused very strongly in the last year on introducing systems and practices to promote attendance. Whilst there has not been time for these to become well established in practice there is evidence that they are beginning to impact on attendance. Attendance in Year 7 for the start of the year is 93 per cent and is three percentage points higher than at the same time last year. This shows how the school's procedures are beginning to bite. In addition, staff in the inclusions faculty are working very effectively with pupils who have a history of long term absence to encourage them back into school. One Year 10 girl, for example, has her timetable divided between lessons and private study in the inclusions faculty and over the year, the balance shifts so that the proportion of time spent in lessons increases. The use of Truancy Call has meant that parents are regularly contacted if their child is absent and this has helped the school to work with parents in raising attendance. Overall however, poor attendance remains a major issue for the school as it is having a negative effect on standards attained.

26. Pupils with special educational needs value the help they are given by the faculty. They know the targets in their Individual education plans and feel responsible for playing their part in achieving them. They have excellent attitudes to the centre, enjoy working there and work productively. For some pupils with low self esteem or who lack self confidence the centre offers them a quiet, safe place to be during lunchtimes and breaks. Most pupils are very thoughtful towards those with special educational needs although pupils with visual impairment feel vulnerable between lessons and are fearful of being pushed or knocked over.

Sixth form

27. Students in the sixth form have good, positive attitudes to school; they appreciate being members of the sixth form and enjoy their lessons. To some extent their involvement with the rest of the school is limited; they have few opportunities to work with younger pupils or to contribute to the running of the school as a whole. Where students do support younger pupils, for example in the enrichment classes in art and through the sports leadership scheme, there is a very positive impact on both the younger pupils' learning and on their own personal development. The sixth form committee organises social events and fund raising and this helps them to develop the sense of a sixth form community.

28. Students develop satisfactory learning skills; they can work independently and persevere to overcome problems, although some students find this harder. Relationships are good both between students and between students and teachers. The sixth form common room has a positive and supportive atmosphere. In some lessons, for example media studies Year 12, students have developed very positive attitudes to the subject and their studies as seen studying stereotyping; they have a good awareness of rights and obligations within society and the impact some actions have on other people.

29. In discussion, some students have a good idea of their next steps but quite a number were still uncertain and unsure about how to move on to the next stage. There are new systems in place to offer informed advice and guidance and these have been introduced to the Year 12 but they have not yet had time to impact fully on the confidence of the students in making choices.

30. During the inspection, levels of attendance in lessons were satisfactory; most students attend their lessons but attendance at registration times is lower. New systems are being introduced for signing out and allowing students to work off site but these have not yet been fully implemented.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. Teaching in Crown Woods has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory overall but there are important variations within this judgement.

32. There are now a good number of lessons, seven in 10, where teaching is good or better. Teaching in nearly three lessons in 10 is very good or excellent which is high. Teaching is very good in media and music. However, there are still too many lessons where it is unsatisfactory or poor. This quality varies from subject to subject and year to year. In science, in Years 7 to 9 for example, nearly five lessons in 10 are unsatisfactory or worse and linked to the large number of temporary teachers in the

department, as the school had had difficulty recruiting science teachers. Whilst the school has a support mechanism for the department too many pupils get a poor deal in science. Teaching in the sixth form is generally better than in the rest of the school. Here, for example, in over one lesson in 10 teaching is excellent.

33. The school's streaming system also appears to have an impact on the quality of teaching in some years. In Year 8 all the excellent teaching was observed in express classes. It may well be that these pupils are better motivated than some of the other Year 8 classes. Indeed there are several Year 8 non-express lessons where pupils' poor behaviour and teachers' inability to keep discipline meant that teaching was unsatisfactory. However, well motivated pupils are not the only reason for the excellent Year 8 lessons, there are several other factors: all the planning is detailed and includes challenging work for all; lessons move at a swift pace; all pupils actively take part and have opportunities to reflect on their learning. This was true in a physical education hockey lesson, a Spanish lesson where pupils were learning to say and write birthdays and in an English lesson looking at the shape of sonnets. The best teaching seen throughout the school was observed in well planned, interesting lessons that made everyone in the class including the teacher really think and learn.

34. Other characteristics of the excellent lessons observed include:

- teachers using a good presence, a respectful and confident manner to command attention of pupils, expecting them to be learners;
- putting what is to be learnt in the lesson into a wide context so pupils understand why they are studying;
- explaining to pupils what they are going to learn at the start of the lesson so that they know what they are expected to achieve;
- short timed tasks, especially where pupils have shorter attention spans;
- using interesting ways of presenting the work to pupils and mixture of paired work, group work and individual tasks that ask pupils to think in different ways in order to understand new information;
- questions chosen for and asked specifically of named individuals so everyone has to stay alert and participate.

35. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is generally satisfactory and these are more consistently taught than in recent years with appropriate plans for improvement. Where teaching is good, teachers make helpful links with literacy and numeracy that help the pupils improve their skills. For example, in art lessons teachers emphasise the spelling and use of technical language which will assist pupils when completing course work.

36. The quality of pupils' learning is as mixed a picture as teaching. Again there has been improvement over recent years. As teaching has improved and teachers have had higher expectations of their pupils, pupils have risen to the challenge of the more interesting and demanding work set. Most pupils, boys, girls, pupils from different ethnic groups and pupils with special needs, now work hard and progress well. The link between good teaching and good learning and correspondingly poor teaching and poor learning are very strong at Crown Woods; few pupils have the motivation or study skills to persevere when teaching has weaknesses.

37. Habits of poor attendance are harder to break and contribute to some pupils' unsatisfactory learning. Pupils respond quickly to bad teaching and poor discipline by behaving poorly and learning little. The most common characteristics of less than satisfactory teaching are:

- poor management of pupils' behaviour;
- poorly planned work that is not challenging enough for all pupils in the class.

Weaknesses in planning mean that teachers set work that is too easy to badly behaved classes to occupy pupils. This makes work boring, and pupils respond by not getting involved and behaving poorly. As a result their learning is limited

38. Some pupils find the academic nature of a small number of lessons difficult and the school has few work related courses yet to help them learn. However, specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good and helps them make good progress in their learning. This is because both special needs teachers and learning support assistants use the information contained in pupils' individual education plans well to focus on the most important aspects of their learning needs. Pupils respond to this informed teaching well and in turn know what they need to work on to improve and take their learning seriously. This is particularly true of the visually impaired pupils who are very aware about their learning needs and keen to do well. On occasions the teaching special needs pupils receive is less effective. This is when they are in class lessons and where subject teachers have not looked at individual education plans and have not planned work, including homework, specifically for pupils of varying abilities. The school has given teachers training to help them do this and expects all teachers to set appropriate work. Some teachers still find this difficult and because of it some pupils make poorer progress than they should.

Sixth form

39. Teaching in the sixth form is generally better than in the rest of the school. Here, for example, in over one lesson in ten teaching is excellent. Most of the excellent teaching in the sixth form was to groups of 12 or fewer students, a smaller group size than elsewhere in the school. The majority were also in media studies where students were highly motivated by the content and the teachers used their excellent subject knowledge to enrich the lessons. Teachers use their knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses very well to question, challenge and set individual or small-group tasks which help them to take the next step in their learning. For some students these steps need to be quite small as some find the course work difficult. This is because some students have been accepted onto courses in subjects they have not done well enough in the past. Teachers are effectively planning work and restructuring courses to help students overcome their holes in understanding and knowledge wherever possible. A good example was a Year 12 art lesson looking at the work of the artist Cryssa, the work was carefully structured to help students start with simple analysis building up to recording a more personal response to the work. Many students take these opportunities well and work hard to overcome their weaknesses. The vast majority of students are serious learners, beginning to study more independently and the more capable are developing their thinking and analytical skills well.

40. The reason for the unsatisfactory teaching observed was that teachers had not understood their students' learning needs and had planned lessons poorly assuming everyone would be able to do the same task. This poor use of students' previous learning means these teachers do not give effective guidance to individuals, which leads to them making unsatisfactory progress.

41. In most very good or excellent lessons teachers often include discussions of spiritual, moral, cultural or social issues. This is one of the characteristics that make lessons inspirational rather than just very effective. It also helps students to become reflective and thoughtful learners. In media studies, for example, topics that have strong moral and social content, such as homelessness and bullying, are intentionally selected to provide students with real food for thought. Moral dilemmas are covered in a Year 12 religious education: should someone who is given £27,000 by a cash machine keep the money? Students were able to discuss this as though they were the philosopher Kant who they felt would be tempted to keep the money. In drama in Year 13 students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work in mixed groups with respect, trust and honesty: several work on subjects that have cross-cultural themes. In humanities, the teachers asked Year 13 students to look at Christianity in South America rather than the more traditional European view contributing well to their cultural and spiritual development.

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

42. Pupils are taught the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education but there are not enough opportunities for them to study work-related courses such as GNVQ. As a result some pupils are not motivated by the traditional curriculum and the school does not currently provide courses

that meet their needs fully. This is a significant point because it links together the most important challenges the school faces: poor attendance and pockets of unsatisfactory teaching which both lead to some pupils not achieving as much as they should. Arrangements for teaching information and communication technology mean that computers are not used well to support pupils' learning in subjects. Some pupils use their information and communication technology skills to improve the presentation of their coursework, for example in design and technology, but this is not common and therefore is a weakness in the school's provision. Provision for pupils' literacy needs has improved and is becoming more consistent. The school has, for example, developed a framework to support the teaching of literacy skills: this approach is raising standards of literacy and achievement is generally satisfactory although pupils' written accuracy is still not as good as it should be. The strategies for teaching numeracy skills are just about satisfactory at present but are not consistently followed across all subjects. This explains why standards in numeracy are below average. There are plans to improve the provision for numeracy: for example a co-ordinator has been appointed, and a school policy and an action plan have been drawn up.

43. The school provides a wide range of out of school hours activities: pupils' experiences are extended well by the wide range of enrichment activities at the end of each day. The development of out of hours learning is one of the strategies the school is using to raise pupils' motivation and achievement. Summer schools, residential weekends for gifted and talented pupils and study support are all examples of the school's approach to extending learning opportunities for all pupils. Attendance at the enrichment activities shows that the majority of pupils take up the opportunities to do something at the end of the day. At the start of term about 50 per cent of all pupils had signed up for at least one enrichment class: inspection evidence indicates that attendance is lower than this but is still, nevertheless, promising. The school is currently monitoring attendance to check outcomes. Activities range from ceramics, where sixth form students work with younger pupils, to music, drama, a choir, languages and sports. In addition, the school provides what it calls "catch-up" classes in subjects like English, mathematics and science.

44. For many pupils the personal, social and health education (PSHE) course is providing a good experience. The programme includes good modules on sex education, drug misuse, citizenship and racism and equality: in Year 11, for example, pupils look at attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees while in Year 8 HIV and AIDS are taught sensitively. Careers education is good with work in lessons supported by a comprehensive programme of visits; including speakers from the local business community. There is range of opportunities for pupils to become involved in community activities: the sports leadership programme is a good example.

45. The school has some helpful links with the community. Art, drama and media studies, for example, use visits to museums, galleries and theatres to enrich pupils' experiences. Links with local businesses help pupils to get work experience placements although there is no centralised system for arranging these placements or monitoring the impact of these opportunities. Last year, Year 8 pupils took their production of 'Bugsy Malone' to the local primary schools.

46. Provision for special education needs is good. The school has a good special educational needs policy and the extra support given to pupils with learning needs by the faculty staff is good. Members of the support staff work together well as an effective team. Much of this is because the individual education plans are good and set clear targets for pupils. The targets written on individual education plans match very closely the needs identified on individuals' statements. These plans are circulated to staff and are now available on the school's intranet. Where the pupil has support in class this is very effective as the plans are used to guide the learning, however as staff are aware of the need to challenge and encourage independence as well as to give help. However, where the pupils are not being supported by an extra adult during a lesson, individual education plans are not always used well by subject teachers. Some do not always use them to plan appropriate work and some do not plan for individual needs at all.

47. Some pupils find the bustle and noise of school life difficult to cope with. The faculty of learning support offers a calm and protective environment where pupils can with agreement take time out, prepare for lessons, complete work and receive one to one help. This support is also effective for those pupils who have been long-term school non-attenders. Several pupils who have not been in school for over 18

months are being introduced back to school life through a mixture of faculty support and ordinary lessons. Over time pupils will spend all their time in lessons but will be able to use the faculty for support if needed. Staff are careful to ensure the centre is not used by pupils to hide from work but as a stepping stone back to class.

48. Pupils with English as an additional language are identified and supported well through the Inclusion Faculty. Additional support is given when pupils arrive at school with little English. Their progress is also carefully monitored by the heads of year who are the learning managers. All subject teachers are asked to plan specifically for the needs of these pupils and have received training in helpful strategies to use. This planning is evident and effective where teaching is good or better but is a weakness the school has identified for improvement in unsatisfactory teaching.

49. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. In the same way that teaching is not consistently good, the provision of each of these aspects of pupils' development varies: in PSHE, for example, the course provides some very good opportunities for pupils to explore moral and cultural issues and develop their social skills. Similarly, some of the teaching of PSHE is good but there are some lessons where it is unsatisfactory which waters down the overall impact. Across the school there is a developing approach, and all subjects now have a policy, but as yet no clear strategy across the school to ensure that pupils have a consistent experience. This is why provision is satisfactory but not good.

50. Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good. The personal and social education programme covers a wide range of social issues and moral questions well. In Year 7, for example pupils look at bullying while in Year 9 they learn about HIV and AIDS. Older pupils, in Years 10 and 11, look at the contribution made by ethnic minorities to British society and issues related to asylum seekers and refugees. It is here that some of the inconsistencies are evident: the course provides for pupils' spiritual and moral development well but the teaching is not as effective in helping pupils to discuss and come to terms with the important issues. English, media studies and drama all make a good contribution to social and moral development. In drama, for example, work provides good opportunities for pupils to consider issues about gender stereotyping and last year a production of *Bugsy Malone* by Year 8 was performed for local primary schools. In religious education moral issues are dealt with well and are related effectively to real life. In a very good Year 7 lesson on Islam, for example, pupils were helped effectively to understand how religion is used to guide daily life.

51. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Music and art both give pupils an insight into different cultural backgrounds. In religious education there are good opportunities in lessons to explore cultural issues: in one lesson the teacher used Arabic music very effectively to introduce Islam. Educational visits provide further opportunities for pupils to extend their cultural development and broaden their experiences. These include visits in history to First World War battlefields in France and Belgium and to major art galleries in London such as the Tate Modern and the Matisse Picasso exhibition. Through drama and music pupils have opportunities to go to theatre productions and concerts. Music and art also make helpful contributions to pupils' cultural development. Pupils perform music from China, Africa and Latin America and in art pupils use Aboriginal art, Indian textile design and Oriental art as reference material.

52. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory overall but there are pockets where it is good. Religious education is effective in introducing pupils to the beliefs and values of other different religions. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, for example, are able to recognise how Christians have distinctive views on issues such as evil and suffering or sex and marriage. There is little evidence of a whole-school approach to spiritual development: the school has recognised the importance of this aspect of its work and has recently appointed a teacher to co-ordinate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At present, the impact of this work is limited because it is early days.

53. The school does not meet the legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship but the quality of assemblies is good and contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection, for example, the school used Black History Month to raise pupils' awareness. This was effective in providing opportunities to develop pupils' cultural and moral awareness and tackle issues of race and discrimination. What is also significant is that this was planned to deal with

these issues and was a conscious move to raise race equality with all pupils. As a result pupils felt they had become more confident and outgoing.

54. An area of weakness is the use of tutor time at the start of the day. Sometimes this is used well to check pupils' targets, support their progress and set the tone for the working day. But too often tutor time is used only as time to administer the attendance registers and opportunities to contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are missed.

Sixth form

55. The range of subjects offered at GCE A and AS Level and the small number of vocational subjects provides a broad and balanced curriculum but it does not meet the needs of all students. The vocational courses the school offers include AVCE and GNVQ courses in business studies and leisure and tourism and GNVQ courses in information and communication technology.

56. However, like the main school, the sixth form is not as relevant to all students because the number and range of the vocational courses is limited. For example, the school's analysis of the present Year 12 students' needs indicates that about 200 would benefit from vocational courses although only 80 places are offered. This, in turn leads to some students choosing courses that only partly meet their needs: sometimes they start AS Level courses without having achieved high enough grades at GCSE. This means that quite a lot of students either change courses mid term or drop out of the sixth form altogether. Nevertheless, the new vocational courses in, for example, information and communication technology, are an appropriate step forward and this is beginning to meet the needs of more students.

57. The school offers sound opportunities for students to develop their key skills in English, numeracy and information and communication technology: the school is planning to use psychology to teach these skills in the future which should improve provision. The range of out of school activities available to sixth form students is appropriate. The range of enrichment activities at the end of the day provides good opportunities for students to follow areas that interest them. Some students take up school-wide responsibilities: those studying sports, for example, are able to become involved in the sports leadership scheme and other help with enrichment activities: in a Year 7 ceramics enrichment session, for example, two sixth form students helped the teacher with the 39 pupils who attended. A number of students have signed up to become mentors of pupils in Years 7 and 8.

58. Overall, the provision of careers is satisfactory. There are opportunities, for example, to attend the careers evening at the school where businesses, universities and further education colleges show their work and provide advice.

59. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Teaching often contributes well to students' awareness and they are helped to become reflective and thoughtful learners. In media studies, for example, topics raise strong moral and social issues: homelessness and bullying are used to provide students with helpful opportunities to think about questions of real meaning. Similarly in religious education real moral dilemmas are covered well: the Year 12 lesson on moral dilemmas is a good example. So too is the Year 13 drama lesson in which students worked on subjects that had cross-cultural themes. In humanities students have looked at Christianity in South America rather than the more traditional European view contributing well to their cultural and spiritual development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

60. Arrangements for the care of pupils are good overall and include a well-organised and effective pastoral system. Procedures for pupil personal development, devised by senior managers, are now managed by heads of year, or year learning managers, their assistants and tutor teams. The transition from a 'house' system to a year-based pastoral structure is integral to the focus on pupil personal development. The role of the tutor has been considerably enhanced and includes responsibility for attendance and punctuality, liaison with parents, also the mentoring and counselling of pupils whose behaviour gives cause for concern. They also monitor the setting and marking of homework. However, this enhanced tutor role is inconsistently taken up by all staff and explains why the time at the start of the

day is not being used well to support pupils' learning. Most staff know the pupils well and understand their educational, social and personal needs. Teachers are beginning to develop a good understanding of the academic and personal needs of pupils but the contribution of tutors is not strong enough to improve key areas such as attendance.

61. There is a named Child Protection Officer for the school and clear procedures for internal referral of pupils. The school is a safe working environment with good supervision of pupils in the classroom and during break times. Health and safety issues in science, physical education and design technology identified in the last inspection have been tackled appropriately.

62. Procedures for promoting high standards of discipline are good: they are clearly stated and understood by all. The great majority of adults are very good role models who set high standards throughout the school but a few teachers do not use. There are incidents of bullying but they are dealt with effectively.

63. Attendance is unsatisfactory and too many pupils miss school: this remains a key concern. The school has now introduced rigorous procedures to ensure accurate attendance registration, along with monitoring and pupil tracking: as a result some improvement is already evident. In Year 7, for example, attendance is up significantly from last year.

64. Procedures for monitoring pupils' achievements and promoting their academic progress are good. With the help of a working party established in September 2002 the school has introduced some effective measures for recording assessment and monitoring pupils' progress. The real strength of the system is that as well as providing lots of evidence of how well different groups of pupils, and individual pupils, are achieving, it is used to help predict where pupils should be at the end of a key stage. Thus, the school can use its assessment procedures to both check how well it has done by looking back over a pupil's record and, more significantly, use the assessment information to track progress and take any necessary remedial action. This is a relatively new system and it is not always a part of day to day practice. Nevertheless, the school is taking the right action which is beginning to be effective: in time this is likely to become very effective. Another use of the assessment is that it is given to subject departments, and teachers, in the form of how much value they add relative to national expectations: this is used to set targets for teachers. What all this means is that the assessment system is used to improve the quality of learning by linking assessment directly to teaching. Parents are now fully informed of the progress of individual pupils but some felt that the information was difficult to understand: inspection evidence shows that this information is quite complicated.

65. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises closely with junior schools and parents in order to provide continuous and appropriate levels of support for all pupils. Individual education plans are in place and nearly always used to inform lesson planning. There is a wide range of curriculum opportunities and community links for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The inclusion unit provides a supportive environment and is effective in the re-integration of long-term absentees. Pupils appreciate the service offered and it helps them to have a positive attitude to the school.

66. The systems for identifying pupils in need of extra help are good. The school monitors pupils' reading abilities early in Year 7 and quickly arranges small group support for those in need. This support is regularly reviewed and help is continued or dropped according to need. This boosts pupils' literacy skills very effectively so they can take part fully in lessons. Where primary schools, tutors, subject teachers or parents raise concerns the faculty assesses need and makes appropriate provision. The arrangements for reviewing the progress of pupils with individual education plans and statements of special educational need are appropriate. Careful, dated notes are kept of these meetings so that parents' and pupils' views are recorded to help inform future plans. On occasions the funds available to the school for statemented pupils does not pay all the costs of meeting the statements and the school tops up the money where possible. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress in small withdrawal groups is good and target setting for individual pupils is becoming established. There is effective liaison with external agencies, for example, the expertise of specialist teachers for visual impairment and moderate learning difficulties is sought regularly.

67. A significant number of pupils speak English as an additional language and planned provision for their support in the classroom was an integral aspect of staff training on lesson planning.

Sixth form

Assessment

68. Procedures for assessing student attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. As with the main school teachers are developing new systems to both track students' progress and set targets. Tutors meet on a regular basis with students to discuss progress in their chosen courses. At present these assessment procedures are not always applied consistently in all subjects and the school recognises that this is an area for improvement. What this means in practice is that sometimes students do not have enough information about their progress.

Advice, support and guidance

69. The advice and guidance given to students is satisfactory overall. Several developments have been introduced recently including advice and guidance for choices, transition procedures, taster days, and the monitoring and reporting of progress. These are beginning to have an impact on the students' achievements, especially in Year 12, because teachers are better able to track students' progress and set clear targets for them. The new tutor system is much improved and gives students better educational and personal support and guidance than in the past. The new personal development folders illustrate this well. However, these systems are very new and in some subjects teachers do not take enough account of individual students' learning needs. In biology and physics, for example, the needs of individual students and the next steps that they need to take in their learning are not always clearly identified. Similarly, in information and communication technology, information about students' progress is not always used effectively to set targets for future attainment.

70. The school has introduced new systems for students to sign out and to allow them to work off site but these have not yet been fully implemented. As a result attendance records are not always accurate and procedures for late arrival and early departure are still not working as well as they should.

71. There are a wide range of visits and activities involving the local community including voluntary work. In sports, for example, students are involved in the leadership scheme and there is a new scheme for mentoring younger pupils to which some students are starting to become involved in. Although at an early stage of development, these initiatives are proving successful in helping students to take greater responsibility and become more involved in the life of the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

72. Overall, parents are supportive of the school but there were some quite distinct contrary opinions expressed both by the 25 per cent of parents who returned the questionnaire sent to parents prior to the inspection and at the parents' meeting. Most parents responding said that their child liked school and they felt they were making good progress. They felt that teaching is good and that their children are expected to work hard. However some felt that teachers did not have sufficiently high expectations of their children and that the high staff turnover had caused problems. In general, most parents feel the school is well managed and many appreciate the changes that have taken place, others have concerns about some of the new systems and procedures introduced. One of the main areas of concern rests around the information provided for parents as to how well their child is getting on. Whilst some appreciate the new academic review days at which each child's progress is discussed with their tutor and targets are agreed, others feel that they would prefer to meet the subject teachers. A significant number of parents do not feel the school works closely with parents.

73. From the returns to the questionnaire sent to students in the sixth form, of whom 19 per cent responded, most feel that the school helps and encourages them and that they are taught well and challenged in their work. Their main concerns related to the help and advice given when making choices

about what to study or for future careers. A number of students feel that they are not sufficiently well informed about their progress. These concerns are confirmed by the inspection.

74. The information given to parents in their annual report does give a picture of the standards achieved by their child and how these compare to national standards but the presentation is very statistical and there is less qualitative comment about the child's progress or knowledge and understanding. The school has sought parents' views on the new reporting system and the response was very positive but they are aware that the sample was small and that this is an area to be reviewed to ensure that parents feel sufficiently clear about their child's work. The school sets aside two days a year to review progress, one to set targets and the later one to review how well these have been achieved. The timing of these is not always suitable for Year 11 and the school is considering how this can be overcome.

75. In the sixth form the school has recently introduced a personal development folder for each student which is to be regularly completed by subject teachers to give a clear picture of standards being attained and targets for improvement. The progress checks can be shared with parents to keep them informed about their child's progress.

76. In some regards the school has developed effective links with parents particularly in regard to the needs of individual children when there are problems to be addressed. The school has also sought parents' views about the new style reporting and review system and also about the use of homework. There was some dissatisfaction with the setting and marking of homework and the senior managers have involved themselves in following up parents' concerns.

77. The general information provided for all parents is satisfactory but could be improved. There are regular letters sent home from the headteacher keeping parents informed about forthcoming events but occasionally there is insufficient notice. There is little information for parents about the curriculum or developments within the school. The school holds evenings for parents to let them know about Year 9 options and choices at 16 but there is little curriculum information in other years. This is an area that the school is reviewing. The combined school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents is attractively presented and easy to read. It is generally informative about arrangements at the school and the curriculum offered. It celebrates achievements but does not include a clear statement of the school's ethos or aims.

78. The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory; the PTA organises a number of events in the school to raise funds, for example, the forthcoming classic car show and Festival of Nations. Many parents support their children at home with homework, regularly signing their planners. This is not consistent however and some parents are less involved. The large numbers of pupils not attending school or taking unauthorised absences indicates that some parents need to be more involved in their child's education and ensure they attend regularly and arrive on time.

79. The partnership with parents of pupils with special educational is very good. The school has had notable successes with some pupils who have through the support they have received achieved very well. Parents phone, or pop in to, the faculty with information or for advice regularly. Most parents take up the invitation to attend the annual reviews of statements and participate well. One or two parents would like the school to provide more for their children but the school takes pains to do the best they can within available resources and that matches need.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. Crown Woods School is led with rigour, determination and commitment. It is managed skilfully so that the new systems and procedures for monitoring its performance, identifying strengths and weaknesses and taking strong action are having a measurable impact. As a result teaching and learning are improving and this is helping to raise pupils' and students' achievements. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection particularly over the last year and a half or so. This is illustrated by the background against which these improvements have been made:

- the last inspection in 1999 judged leadership and management to be unsatisfactory;
- there has been a large turnover in staff including the headteacher, senior managers and other key people;
- many key managers have been appointed within the last year or so and are new to the school;
- the true scale of the challenges the school faces has only become clear in the last year as a result of the new staff. Attendance, for example, is estimated to have been lower than reported and up to 2001 achievement had not improved as much as nationally;
- there are difficulties in recruiting permanent teachers in some subjects, particularly to science, which keeps the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching too high.

81. These factors are not excuses but provide the benchmark against which improvements should be measured. These show that the school has made rapid progress in getting to grips with the underlying weaknesses identified by the last inspection and by the school, particularly in the last year or so. It also shows that there are still significant challenges and there is more to be done to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who miss a lot of school, achieve as much as they should. However, there is strong evidence to show that the action the school has taken is right and is beginning to raise pupils' achievements.

82. One significant piece of evidence is the improvements in teaching and learning since the last inspection. The previous report judged that teaching was at least satisfactory in nine in 10 lessons and was at least good in half. Now, two thirds of the teaching is at least good and the proportion of very good and excellent is nearly three in 10, or 30 per cent. Thus, more pupils are gaining a good experience at Crown Woods School.

83. Of course, this still leaves about eight per cent of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory but this is where the astute management and robust leadership come in. The school has developed a very rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of its work and its performance. This is a strong example of what the school is doing to improve. Part of this programme is the way senior managers and heads of faculty observe lessons and check lesson plans: much of this is detailed and very professional giving teachers clear advice about how to improve. Another part of the programme is the way test and examination data and teachers' assessment information are used to monitor and evaluate performance. This analysis is used in a variety of ways to:

- predict individual pupils' achievements, set them targets and track their progress;
- check how well different groups of pupils are doing and how well the school as a whole is performing;
- provide information for tutors and for parents about progress in different subjects;
- set teachers targets for the achievements of their class and the value they add to pupils' learning.

84. What is also significant is that senior managers are supported very effectively by middle managers, by those key staff who are heads of faculty and year learning managers. In nearly all areas and subjects, these key managers are also taking rigorous action to raise pupils' achievements. English, for example, has revised the curriculum and schemes of work for Years 7, 8 and 9, and this has resulted in improved lesson planning. Despite difficulties in science, the department is now led and managed well: the new head of science is supported by a core of experienced and enthusiastic teachers. Design and technology, history, modern languages, music, media studies and religious education are all examples of subjects that are led and managed well. So are the year groups: year learning managers are very rigorous in the way they monitor pupils' academic and personal achievements. Although some of these middle managers are relatively new they are already having a strong impact on pupils' learning.

85. Another area that illustrates the effective leadership is financial management. Here, senior management has ensured that the school is able to set a balanced budget and has eliminated a previous overspend. This means that the school is now able to set its budget more closely to its educational priorities.

86. Special educational needs provision through the faculty for learning support and inclusion is well managed. The school tops up the money given for special needs to ensure pupils are receiving the best support possible. The needs of the large number of pupils with statements of special educational needs, and those with other learning needs, are identified each year. Once the school knows the needs of its pupils it can calculate how many teachers and learning support assistants are needed. During the inspection, for example, interviews were held for seven new learning support assistants to match the needs of this year's pupils. Responsibilities in the faculty are well understood and carried out. As a result the requirements on statements are reflected in the targets identified in individual education plans and appropriate support is given to each pupil.

87. There remain, however, some weaknesses in leadership and management. The difficulties of recruiting permanent staff in science and in reducing pupils' absence, and some teaching that is still not as good as it should be, mean that the edge is sometimes taken off the impact of improvements. In addition, many of the improvements in leadership and management are relatively recent: there is a time-lag between action and impact. There is little doubt that middle managers are effective but the impact of their work is only just being felt: this explains why provision in many subjects is satisfactory while they are led and managed effectively. Similarly, the role of the tutor is still inconsistent and explains why the time at the start of the day is not being used well to support pupils' learning.

88. The school's involvement in national and local initiatives is becoming increasingly successful in helping to improve what the school provides for its pupils. The teacher training partnership is providing good opportunities for the school to develop its long-term approach to teaching and learning. What is significant here is that it also provides a strategy for training and recruiting good quality teachers. Another example is the partnership with the University of the First Age which is aimed at helping develop learning outside of normal school hours. Although still a developing initiative, 64 Year 9 pupils and 76 Year 11 pupils took part in last year's Saturday School. The outcomes were positive: at 82 per cent, attendance was respectable for a Saturday and the school's evaluation of the impact on pupils' achievements showed that the school added significant value to pupils' learning.

89. The way the school evaluated the impact of the Saturday School on pupils' achievements gives another example of how well the school is led and managed. The evaluation showed two significant issues. The first was that able pupils found the provision least satisfactory: as a result the school is using a residential weekend to give extra support to gifted and talented pupils. Second, the school found that when it compared those pupils who went to the Saturday School with those who were mentored, the Saturday School pupils performed best and the mentored pupils performed poorly. This has led the school to consider again its mentoring programme.

90. All this illustrates how good the school is at monitoring and analysing its work, evaluating how well it is doing, identifying weaknesses and taking action to make improvements. This is one of the reasons why the school has a well-structured and concise school development plan. This provides a good tool for improvement. It links its educational priorities carefully to the available resources and uses additional funding effectively. The use of the money allocated for special educational needs is a good example. There is room to improve the involvement of staff and governors in helping to identify priorities but there is absolutely no doubt that the priorities are the right ones to take the school forward.

91. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. It is given a good range of information by senior managers about how well the school is doing and also receives reports from heads of departments about their subject. As a result, it understands the school's strengths and weaknesses and can account for its performance. Governors take a keen interest in the school but sometimes lack an understanding of their corporate role and responsibilities: occasionally governors act as individuals instead of taking a shared responsibility for the strategic direction of the school. The governing body meets most of its statutory responsibilities except for the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. The principles of best value are used well by the school. For example, parents have been consulted about the changes to the timing of the school day and the cleaning and catering contracts have enabled the school to get better value for money. The way the school compares its examination results with other schools is very effective in supporting improvements to pupils' and students' learning

92. Broadly, the accommodation is adequate but a lack of investment over many years means that many parts of the school are showing their age and look tired. This presents the school with another challenge because it makes it difficult to create a positive and encouraging climate for learning. But the school has begun to make in-roads and has started a programme of improvements which are part of its strategic building plan. This has already paid off: temporary huts have been removed and the sixth form area and the inclusion unit have been upgraded to a high standard. This has also allowed the school to improve the drama facilities and they are now very good. This £1.1 million building programme shows clearly how the school is making improvements on lots of different fronts: the newly refurbished areas have a strong impact on the quality of the school's provision.

93. The quality and quantity of resources is adequate. In some subjects, however, there are not enough text books for every pupil in the class and they have to be shared: this sometimes adds to the challenges facing teachers. Also, pupils are rarely able to take text books home: too many text books have gone missing in the past. Resources for information and communication technology are adequate and the ratio of computers to pupils is about average. But computers are mainly in dedicated rooms, which teachers can use by booking in advance, with few available in other classrooms: in mathematics, for example, the computers have been removed and set up in these dedicated information and communication technology rooms. The problem here is that these dedicated rooms are not used well which, in turn, means that information and communication technology is not being used well to support pupils' learning.

94. Broadly, time is used appropriately but there are weaknesses with the way tutor sessions at the start of the day are used. Too often they are simply about taking the attendance register and a chance for pupils to talk amongst themselves. There are too few opportunities for pupils to talk to tutors about their work and achievements. There are two issues here: the first is that this is wasted time that could be used more productively; the second, that it is part of the reason why so many pupils are late to school each morning. Interestingly, they are not usually late to lessons.

95. The library is used well by pupils and is very welcoming. However, like the building as a whole it lacks investment and there are not enough new books. It is relatively small for the size of the school.

96. Staffing is adequate to cover all the subjects of the National Curriculum and the other subjects that the school is able to offer its pupils: the school is relatively unique in being able to provide specialist teachers for courses in media studies, classics, law and psychology, for example. But currently the school has temporary teachers covering for permanent staff in science and this is having an adverse impact on teaching and thus pupils' learning. What is particularly difficult for the school is that the real impact of this may only become evident in the future: without better teaching, results in science are likely to dip in the future.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

97. Broadly, the sixth form is led and managed well but because things are very new the impact on standards and quality are still relatively limited. The head of the sixth form is new but has already begun to improve and develop the way it works. There is, for example, a much better system for providing advice to students when they are choosing their AS Level and vocational subjects.

98. Systems for monitoring and evaluating performance are good and the school knows exactly what steps it must take to improve the sixth form. The way sixth form performance is monitored and evaluated reflects the systems for the main school: examination results are used effectively to track individual students and the head of the sixth form carries out a value-added analysis, which is used to check that students are meeting their targets.

99. The sixth form is just about cost-effective and most of the money allocated for students' education is used for students' education. However, a small proportion is used to help fund pupils in Years 7 to 9:

The relative lack of vocational courses means that some students do not have an appropriate range of subjects from which to choose. This is recognised by the school and there are plans to introduce a broader range of vocational courses next year. Nevertheless, this remains a significant area for development and explains why the sixth form is only just cost effective.

100. Overall, the governing body is fulfilling its responsibilities appropriately but does not have as clear an understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form, partly because it has had its focus on other more pressing issues. However, the governing body is appropriately involved in budget planning and carries out these responsibilities satisfactorily.

Resources

101. There are sufficient learning resources for the sixth form courses including information and communication technology. There is reasonably good access to computers in the two rooms at each end of the sixth form block. Accommodation for the sixth form is good in the newly refurbished sixth form block and adequate where students have their lessons in the main school. Students have appropriate access to the library but it is rather small and the range of books is relatively narrow. Teachers are well matched to the subjects they teach and the school has specialist teachers for quite a wide range of courses such as law and media studies. This contributes well to pupils' learning and is one of the reasons why teaching is good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

102. In order to raise examination standards further the school should:

i. improve attendance and punctuality by:

- ensuring that the tutor session at the start of the day is used effectively and purposefully to contribute to key areas such as attendance;
- continue to use the new systems for monitoring and encouraging attendance;
- providing a broader range of vocational subjects that motivate pupils.

(paragraphs 2, 18, 24, 25, 53, 54, 63, 87, 94)

ii. improve provision in science in Years 7 to 11 and information and communication technology in all subjects by:

- improve the quality of teaching in science;
- ensure that subjects have sufficient resources and training to use information and communication technology effectively;
- ensuring that all subjects include information and communication technology in their schemes of work and in their teaching plans.

(paragraphs 32, 42, 87, 93, 96, 134-138, 180-185)

iii. improve teaching by:

- ensuring that all teachers understand and implement the school's behaviour management strategies consistently;
- ensuring that work is demanding enough so that all pupils are challenged effectively;
- ensuring that the good systems for monitoring teaching, and following this up with professional development, are used in all subjects.

(paragraphs 31-38, 64)

iv. making the curriculum relevant to all pupils by providing more vocational and work-related courses.

(paragraphs 38, 42)

Sixth form

In order to improve examination results at AS Level and A Level the school should:

- i. Broaden the curriculum to meet the needs of all students by:
 - offering a wider range of vocational courses;
 - ensuring that students are given good guidance about the sort of courses for which they are best suited.(paragraphs 55, 56, 69)

- ii. Use assessment to help students select courses in which they can succeed by:
 - improving the use of assessment and examination performance to guide students' sixth form subject choices;
 - ensuring that all subjects take sufficient account of individual students' learning needs to guide them through their course.(paragraphs 40, 68, 69)

Other issues which should be considered by the school

- Meet the legal requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship.
(paragraph 53)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

Background

103. The special educational needs unit has been re-organised into the faculty of learning support and inclusion. This faculty has a full-time head of faculty, a teacher-in-charge of each of the two designated special provision units, one for pupils and students with visual impairment and one for pupils and students with moderate learning difficulties and a teacher-in-charge of the learning support unit. There are three and a half full-time equivalent staff working in the faculty with a wide range of learning support assistants. The faculty provides specific support for 12 pupils and students with statements of educational need related to visual impairment and another five pupils whose statements identify moderate learning difficulties. In addition it makes provision for 50 other pupils with statements of special educational need covering a range of medical and learning needs. Most of the support for these pupils and students is provided on a one-to-one basis by the learning support assistants in mainstream classes. The faculty also provides extra literacy support and some numeracy support on a withdrawal basis for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 whose scores on the National Federation for Educational Research reading tests are in the lower quartile. The provision for these withdrawal groups is based on reading-recovery strategies and caters for 81 pupils in Year 7, 87 in Year 8 and 47 in Year 9. A small group of school-phobic pupils and those with severe problems with their attendance also receive part or all of their provision in the Centre.

104. The faculty has its own dedicated suite of rooms usually referred to as the Centre which is well-resourced. The resources include five networked and three stand-alone computers which are used regularly. The Centre has recently been re-furnished to a high standard with appropriate brightly coloured walls and fabric to help the visually impaired pupils and students.

Provision

105. Overall, the quality of the provision made by the faculty is good. The quality of teaching provided by the teachers and learning support assistants for the withdrawal groups and within lessons is good. This enables all the pupils for whom the faculty makes provision to make good progress in their learning.

106. The planning of work for the withdrawal groups has clear objectives and there is a very effective system for recording the achievements of pupils in each session. This enables the progress of pupils and students to be tracked effectively. However, the plans do not explicitly identify the specific needs of each pupil in the group and the use of assessment information in planning for future sessions is not sufficiently specific. As the faculty only opened in September 2002, pupils have only attended for one or two sessions and the process of establishing the extent of the skills of individual pupils is not yet complete.

107. Planning for pupils in mainstream sessions is the responsibility of the subject teacher. This is shared with the learning support assistant to determine the extra resources and support which individual pupils will need in a particular lesson. For example, the resource materials and handouts that will need to be magnified into large print for the visually impaired pupils and students. The effectiveness of this planning is directly related to the quality of teaching for the mainstream group. For example, in a Year 10 design and technology lesson, the good links between the teacher and the learning support assistant enabled a visually impaired pupil to make good progress by ensuring the pupil was able to use all the resources available to the group. However, in other lessons, particularly those in science, the planning was not sufficiently explicit for resources to be prepared and pupils were withdrawn by their assistants from the mainstream lessons, back into the Centre and taught on an individual basis. This was entirely appropriate and enabled them to make gains in their learning. However, the system to link the learning of the individual in the Centre and the learning of the mainstream pupils is at an early stage of development and is not sufficiently robust to ensure continuity and coherence in pupils' learning. The planning by subject teachers does not clearly identify the learning needs of individual pupils or how these will be met. Again this means the links to ensure that a need which is not met in one lesson will be addressed in the

future are tenuous and too dependent on the subject teachers' knowledge of the needs of individual pupils.

108. The faculty fully meets the requirements of the revised Code of Practice for Pupils with Special Educational Needs. The areas of support identified in statements of special educational need are well-matched to targets identified in pupils' individual education plans and these are updated on a regular basis.

109. The faculty is well led and managed. There is a clear policy and a developing but good quality staff handbook. The head of faculty and other staff in the faculty provided regular training sessions for mainstream colleagues. There is a recently established forum which meets on a regular basis through which the faculty staff and mainstream staff meet to discuss issues relating to individual pupils. Many of the systems which the faculty has established have only recently been brought into operation and there has not been sufficient time to judge the impact. However, a clear and rigorous strategy for monitoring with timescales and defined success criteria against which effectiveness will be evaluated.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	210
	Sixth form	76
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
--	-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

Years 7 – 11

Number	10	43	84	56	14	2	1
Percentage	5	20	40	27	7	1	0

Sixth form

Number	8	20	29	14	3	1	0
Percentage	11	27	39	19	4	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,676	282
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	404	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	64	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	401	6

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	210

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	121
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	136

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	13.0
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	208	150	358

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	98	124	104
	Girls	98	84	82
	Total	196	208	186
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (42)	58(43)	52 (42)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	10 (11)	18 (22)	12 (11)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	81	88	67
	Girls	79	56	53
	Total	160	144	120
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	47 (61)	41 (55)	34 (43)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	13 (25)	12 (23)	13 (12)
	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	176	142	318

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	66	146	163
	Girls	56	121	127
	Total	122	267	290
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (33)	84 (88)	91 (94)
	National	51 (48)	88 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	33
	National	34.6

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	27	44
	National		N/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	54	46	100
	Average point score per candidate	11.4	11.7	11.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	50	43	93	6	4	10
	Average point score per candidate	11.6	11.9	11.7	6	6	6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Note. Not all the results for A level and AS level were available at the time of publication. The data above is for 2001.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1430	172	5
White – Irish	8	0	0
White – any other White background	39	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	66	22	3
Asian or Asian British - Indian	43	6	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	13	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	24	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	65	15	1
Black or Black British – African	98	7	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	54	13	0
Chinese	18	0	0
Any other ethnic group	90	7	1
No ethnic group recorded	5	8	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	115
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	43
Total aggregate hours worked per week	955

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.7
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	24.9
Key Stage 4	22.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001/2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	6,633,533
Total expenditure	6,691,289
Expenditure per pupil	3,390
Balance brought forward from previous year	329,600
Balance carried forward to next year	271,844

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	76
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	61

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5.6
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	1958
Number of questionnaires returned	495

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	49	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	29	50	7	2	12
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	46	12	4	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	51	13	6	7
The teaching is good.	21	53	7	2	18
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	41	22	6	14
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	41	6	3	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	42	5	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	18	43	21	6	12
The school is well led and managed.	28	45	8	3	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	52	8	2	13
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	47	8	4	15

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The commitment to improvement which has resulted in a significant rise in test and examination standards in 2002.
- The quality of the teaching which is predominantly good and often very good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils are not achieving at the highest GCSE grades in the Language and Literature examinations.
- The writing of many of the younger pupils lacks fluency and accuracy.

111. The proportion of boys attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2001 English Language examinations was close to the national average. The girls, although performing better than the boys, did not do as well as girls nationally and their attainment was below that of their counterparts at the time of the last inspection. Overall, the proportion of pupils obtaining these higher grades was below average. Pupils performed better in English than they did in most other subjects in the school. Progress is good when account is taken of the pupils' very low levels of attainment in the public tests in 1999 but there was significant underachievement then. The boys have improved their standards since the time of the last inspection. Apart from the gender issue, there was no disparity in the results obtained by pupils from different ethnic minority groups. The 2002 results were higher than those of 2001 and the performance in the subject was better than in almost all other subjects. In English Literature results in 2001 at the higher grades were below average for boys and girls and there has therefore been no change since the last inspection. Performance in English Literature was also better than in most other subjects in the school. There was significant improvement in the subject's 2002 results. Attainment in both subjects in 2001 in the broader A* to G range was close to the national average.

112. Results in the 2001 tests at the end of Year 9 were well below average compared to the national picture and to the standards attained in similar schools. Levels of achievement were below expected levels when account is taken of the below average standards these pupils had attained on entry to the school. The results were representative of the attainment levels of recent years and were below the standards achieved at the last inspection. Results then were close to national averages and above those for similar schools. The underachievement in 2001 was widespread and not linked to any particular group of pupils. There has, however, been a significant improvement in the 2002 results and the rise in standards mirrors the improving trend at GCSE.

113. The standards of work seen in Year 9 and Year 11 are close to average and reflect the school's recent improvements in the public tests and examinations. Pupils' levels of achievement are therefore now good. The work in English Literature currently undertaken with Year 11, for example, is of a good standard and is above average with pupils attaining in the A* to B grade range. This is because of the careful lesson planning and the positive attitudes pupils display to their work. The work done in class with pupils with special educational needs meets expected standards and they make good progress. Pupils from varied ethnic backgrounds make significant contributions in lessons and progress well. Some of the most original creative work was produced by these pupils. There are, however, a significant number of pupils who have difficulties with grammar, spelling and punctuation and as result their writing lacks fluency and accuracy. Some also have difficulty organizing their extended writing and need help with paragraphing. The department is aware of this and already has strategies in place to improve basic written skills for these pupils. There has been an improvement in the range of writing undertaken since the time of the last inspection and the department is now giving more time for the writing of formal accounts and factual reports. Opportunities for the use of computers to improve the quality of writing and present it in varied ways is built into the schemes of work and pupils have access to computer suites to develop their information and communication skills.

114. Pupils are confident and articulate when expressing their ideas and opinions and are sensitive to context and audience when speaking. They communicate well with each other in small-group work. Most pupils are able to use standard English when appropriate. Standards of speaking overall are good but listening is an area for improvement for some pupils. There were lessons seen where a minority of young people did not reflect on what others were saying and their listening skills were unsatisfactory. Pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills and standards overall are good. By Year 9 pupils read aloud confidently and with expression and by Year 11 they have become discriminating and critical.

115. Standards are rising in the subject because of the quality of the teaching which is predominantly good and often very good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject and an enthusiasm for the work which motivates the pupils. The planning of lessons is a particular strength with teachers modifying their approach to take account of the needs of all groups in a class. Expectations are high and the work is challenging. The result is that pupils are now learning more effectively in lessons and attaining higher standards by the end of Year 11 than in recent years. This was seen in Year 11 pupils' analysis of the themes of loneliness and the effects of racism in John Steinbeck's novel, 'Of Mice and Men'. Their work was of a very standard because of their understanding of these issues and their ability to evaluate how they are portrayed and developed in the novel. Teachers have established a positive learning environment in the classroom by building very good relationships with the pupils. The result is that pupils are keen to learn. Teachers are aware that the listening skills of some of the younger pupils need improving and they take every opportunity in lessons to get them to reflect on what others are saying. The ongoing monitoring and assessment of pupils' work across all five years is good and marking was detailed with clear pointers for improvement in most of the files seen.

116. Not all the teaching seen matched the rigour and challenge of the best. In a small number of lessons with lower attaining pupils the teaching lacked the flexibility needed to sustain interest. There was no attempt to vary teaching strategies and the work lacked pace. In one Year 7 class the teacher did most of the work herself and because of the lack of pupil involvement attention waned and the understanding of the text was limited. There was ineffective use of time in a small number of lessons. In one lesson, again with younger pupils, an introductory activity went on for too long and subsequent activities were squeezed and did not receive sufficient attention. Staffing difficulties beyond the department's control accounted for the one unsatisfactory lesson seen.

117. The newly appointed acting head of department provides good leadership with the emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. Improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been good. There has been a significant improvement in the 2002 test results for Year 9 pupils and these are likely to show standards close to the national average. Although test results at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average at the time of the last inspection, standards declined afterwards and that trend has now been reversed. GCSE results in 2002 have also shown a significant improvement and are also likely to be close to national averages when benchmark figures are published. Performance targets are now used to improve test and examination results and this more rigorous approach to management has raised morale and given a sense of direction to the work of the department.

118. The department has the capacity to raise standards further. Over the last year the significant changes in staffing, the improvements in the schemes of work and lesson planning, the increased emphasis on professional development and the rise in staff morale testifies to the determination of all members of the team to improve the quality of provision further.

Literacy

119. The school has developed a framework to enable all members of staff to make the teaching of literacy skills a part of their routine classroom practice and this whole-school approach is raising standards of literacy. The policy for cross-curricular provision is in place and members of staff have received initial training in developing pupils' use of extended writing, key words and specialist vocabulary. Reference is made to literacy targets in planning and attention is given to literacy standards in many lessons. There is a full time literacy support assistant who works with pupils in class, develops

resources and contributes to the literacy support unit. The gains in literacy provision are now being taken forward by all departments.

120. There are instances of good practice being used at departmental level where teachers take account of pupils' literacy needs in their approach to their teaching. The use of key words was a feature of every lesson in art and they were displayed prominently on classroom walls. They were also used appropriately by pupils in their sketch books. In business studies Year 10 pupils engaged effectively in class discussion, sharing their views in a coherent manner. Work of a particularly high standard was seen in drama where pupils were provided with opportunities to speak to different audiences. The standard of group presentations in history was good, as was their ability to read aloud in the subject. Pupils wrote design briefs and specifications as part of project work in design and technology and the standard of their written evaluations was generally satisfactory and often good. There is a range of subject specific texts used throughout the school and as a result pupils have many opportunities to extend their reading ability.

121. Standards of literacy throughout the school are generally satisfactory. Pupils are confident and fluent when speaking and have the reading ability to understand the range of texts they meet in all subject areas. There are a number of younger pupils at Level 3 in reading but they receive effective help through the literacy progress units. There are some pupils in all Years whose listening skills are not developed, although the majority can concentrate throughout a lesson. Most pupils are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum but there are those who struggle with technical accuracy.

122. Provision for pupils' literacy needs has improved and is not as inconsistent as it was in recent years. This has resulted in the generally satisfactory standards which must now be raised, particularly in the area of written accuracy.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The management and leadership of the subject.
- The collation and use of assessment data in raising standards.
- Pupils' good progress between Years 7 and 9.
- The provision for the most capable.

Areas for improvement

- Aspects of lesson planning.
- The full integration of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 to strengthen basic skills further.
- The use of computers to support learning.
- Developing a more relevant scheme of work for the lower sets in Years 10 and 11.

124. At the time of the last inspection, in 1999, attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was well below the national average. In 2001 this was still the case: standards have improved in 2002 and although they are still below the average, attainment has moved closer to the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment increased markedly. Compared with their low numeracy skills at the start of Year 7, this indicates a significant improvement since the last inspection. A comparison of performance between 2001 and 2002 with that of similar schools shows a dramatic movement from being well below the average to being at or close to the average. There is no significant difference between the attainment levels of boys and girls, nor between any other groups of pupils.

125. The proportion of pupils achieving grade C and above in the GCSE examination in 2002 is at about the same level as at the time of the last inspection. The results were well below the national average in 2001 but returned to being below the average in 2002. However between these years the

proportion gaining grade G and above has fallen from below the national average to being well below. This is, in part, due to the high percentage of absentees during Year 11. The percentage achieving grades A* - B has moved much closer to the national average. There remains no significant difference between the results of boys and girls but the girls have made a very noticeable improvement in the examination from 2001 to 2002. Thirteen very high-attaining pupils in Years 9 and a set in Year 10, who took GCSE early, all gained a grade C and above, with the majority at A and B grades. Unfortunately these entries are not included in the overall GCSE performance tables.

126. The achievement, or progress, of pupils from the end of one key stage and the beginning of the next can be measured by comparing the attainment levels achieved in the national tests or examinations. The overall achievement of those pupils at the end of Year 9 between 1998 and 2001 was unsatisfactory but the achievement of those completing Year 9 in 2002 was good and reflects considerable progress. The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 11 in both 2001 and 2002 was satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress Years 10 and 11.

127. Inspection evidence shows that In Years 7 to 9 the majority of pupils reach levels of attainment below the expected national levels for their ages. Higher ability pupils produce work that is above these levels and, at times, well above them. A Year 7 class demonstrated that it could apply trigonometry to calculating sides and angles in triangles and in Year 9 a class was able to plot and interpret graphs. Low attainers in Year 7 succeeded in working out the angles of sectors for a pie chart whereas a high-attaining set in Year 9 developed a formula for calculating the mean value. By the end of Year 9 a wide range in knowledge and understanding is evident. Pupils in upper sets can calculate irregular areas, find the volume of a prism, plot graphs from algebraic expressions, and solve a range of complex equations. In lower sets many continue to review basic operations, such as multiplication and division.

128. In Years 10 and 11, attainment in work seen is also below the expected national levels overall but again there is a wide range of ability found. An express class in Year 10 was able to use a computer program to carry out some advanced calculations about equations. In Year 11 a similarly high set readily found the distance travelled from a graph, using the areas of a complex shape. Lower attaining pupils can use formulae to calculate areas and perimeters of regular and irregular shapes. The consolidation and review work seen in Year 11 shows that the majority of pupils are able to apply what they have learnt, at appropriate levels. However, information and communication technology is not used as much as it should be, particularly in the application of skills learnt.

129. Most pupils show an adequate grasp of the basic operational skills needed for the level of work they meet but overall numeracy levels are below average. This slows procedures and progress at times. There is a lack of confidence evident, even in simple multiplication and division sums, and too ready a recourse to the use of calculators. More rigorous integration and application of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 would improve this, particularly through the use of a structured programme of mental exercises at the start of each lesson.

130. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall but better in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are largely co-operative, show a commitment to their work, usually respond well to the teachers and concentrate on the tasks set. Concentration wanes in lower-attaining classes when pupils are left for too long on a particular task or the work is inappropriate. With lessons one hour in length it is important to vary activities as much as possible for these groups and include applications that show mathematics to be a subject relevant to the world at large. In most classes a level of chatter develops to one degree or another. It becomes distracting at times and reduces concentration levels. Relationships in lessons are largely good. There is no disharmony evident between different racial groups or between boys and girls.

131. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but good in Years 10 and 11. This is the same overall finding as at the last inspection. The teaching observed ranges from very good to poor. The two less than satisfactory lessons were seen Years 7 to 9. The teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the subject and explanations and instructions are usually clear. The strengths in the teaching lie in the management of classes, the generally high expectations, the sharing of objectives and an emphasis on keywords and using appropriate methods to consolidate learning. This is supported by

high quality assessment through regular tests and analysis of pupils' levels of understanding and progress. In some lessons there are a number of weaknesses. Departmental planning and schemes of work are good but lesson plans do not always indicate the specific skills to be taught. Longer-term assessment usefully identifies pupils in need of support but plans do not always state how this is to be done in the lesson. Extension work is usually available but the intended strategies for the needs of different groups of pupils are not regularly indicated. In some lessons insufficient time is left for an effective review of the key points at the end: the timing of the different activities would help to structure some lessons better.

132. The department is led and managed well. A particularly strong feature of the management is the way assessment data is being used well to help raise standards. Here, the department is using data to track pupils and set clear targets for improvement: this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good because of the way standards are improving.

Numeracy

133. Skills in numeracy across the curriculum are below average. However, in a number of subjects, including mathematics, science and design and technology, the teaching of numeracy is broadly satisfactory. Together with the low attainment levels on entry to the school pupils' achievements in numeracy skills are satisfactory at present. The school has plans to improve this aspect of pupils' learning but these are not yet having an impact in the classroom. For example, a numeracy co-ordinator has been appointed and a school policy and an action plan have been drawn up. This includes training in objectives and strategies for all teachers. A whole curriculum map is to be devised so that topics, where numeracy plays a part, can be identified. Currently there is little evidence of a consistent approach across the school in all subjects. However, calculations, scales and the gathering of data are naturally found in use regularly in science, design and technology and geography. In other subjects opportunities come up from time to time; for example, in a physical education class the pupils were involved in working out the dimensions of a playing pitch and in English the rhythm of a sonnet was analysed.

SCIENCE

134. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Positive and determined leadership and management by the new head of department.
- A core of very good teachers.
- Good administrative procedures and development plan mean that science is well placed for future progress.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough permanent teachers at present and despite extra support there is still a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.
- The provision of textbooks for pupils to take home.
- Scientific equipment, particularly to support work using information and communication technology.
- The fabric of many of the laboratories.
- New, detailed work schemes to be completed.

132 Results at the end of Year 9 in 2000 and 2001 were well below national averages and well below average when compared to similar schools. Provisional results for 2002 are still well below national averages but just below average when compared to similar schools. Results at GCSE were well below national averages in 2000 and 2001 but in 2001 were average when compared to similar schools. Provisional results for 2002 show continued improvement; they are below national averages but above average when compared to similar schools. There was no difference in the attainment of boys and girls at the end of Year 9 but boys out-performed girls at GCSE in 2001 while nationally girls do a little better

than boys. The reason for this is not easy to identify but evidence from lessons suggests that boys tend to be better motivated by science.

133 Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below national averages but this is a satisfactory level of achievement given these pupils' standards when they joined the school. Standards at the end of Year 11 are at the national average and this represents good progress for these pupils. Higher attaining pupils have a good scientific vocabulary, are able to present their ideas clearly and to ask searching questions. Pupils in the middle attaining groups have a sound knowledge of the principles of science and lower attaining pupils are able to appreciate the importance and significance of science in relation to themselves and their environment. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, progress satisfactorily in their science lessons. For example, in one Year 11 lesson the topic of food webs was covered in such a way, with sympathetic teaching and suitable support material, that all pupils were successfully included in the lesson.

134 Teaching is both a strength and weakness of the department. A high proportion of lessons were good or better but there were too many lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory. Where teaching was good the lessons were stimulating, proceeded at a brisk pace and captured the imagination of the pupils. In one Year 10 lesson, for example, the topic of space and the life history of a star was presented in such an effective and stimulating way that the class was fascinated by the concepts. In another Year 11 lesson the topic of radioactivity was taught in such a way that a low attaining Year 11 group were completely absorbed, asking questions, concentrating well and therefore learning a lot. However, where lessons were unsatisfactory pace was slow, the work was insufficiently challenging and pupils were not given clear guidance. Consequently interest and concentration were lost and little learning took place. Exercise books are marked regularly and often contained thoughtful comments to help pupils improve the standard of their work.

135 The pupils' response to teaching varies with the quality of the teaching they receive. Where teaching is good pupils are interested, work well and achieve good learning. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor the pupils lose interest, behaviour deteriorates and little learning occurs. In one Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils were given their work clearly, in well-judged pockets of time with precise and thought provoking targets. Consequently they worked briskly and learned a lot. In another Year 8 group the task set was not clear and not sufficiently challenging for the pupils and in this case pace was slow, interest lost and behaviour deteriorated. There were some lessons in which behaviour was poor. Attendance is a problem and the high absence rate means that, for those pupils with poor attendance, work is often incomplete and continuity is lost.

136 The department has an adequate number of laboratories but, with the exception of the three laboratories which have recently been refurbished, the condition leaves much to be desired. Ceilings are stained or have tiles missing, windows are broken and there is graffiti in many places. To help the learning environment the teachers have, in many laboratories and the science corridors, arranged attractive displays of pupils' work and appropriate posters. There are insufficient textbooks in the department and the only books issued to pupils are revision guides for examination classes. There is no information and communication technology equipment in the department to carry out experiments such as data logging, for example, and this reduces the curriculum which can be offered to the pupils. However, the three interactive whiteboards are used to good effect.

137 The department is now led and managed well. The new head of department is supported by a core of experienced and enthusiastic teachers and a development plan has been produced to move the department forward. Work schemes are in the process of development and a system is in place for monitoring the work of the department. There are also good procedures for assessing the progress of pupils and providing them with appropriate targets. The school simply does not have enough permanent teachers of science and at the time of the inspection there were five supply teachers in the department. However, the school has already identified weaknesses in science but staff resignations have made it difficult to address these. A "science support recovery team" has been set up and this is helping to make improvements. This is clear evidence of the school's determination to improve standards.

138 Since the last inspection the department has improved the attainment of the pupils in science and progress here is good. But lack of textbooks and facilities for practical work are still matters to be addressed.

ART AND DESIGN

139 Overall the quality of provision in art is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Schemes of work are in place with very detailed lesson plans.
- Homework is used to support learning in the classroom.
- Provision for multi-cultural education is good.
- The use of literacy is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11, especially the attainment of boys.
- The use of assessment, particularly target setting and pupil self-evaluation, to raise attainment.

140 Standards at GCSE in 2001 were below national averages for both boys and girls. Forty-eight per cent of pupils achieved grades A* - C compared with the national average for that year of 63.9 per cent. Figures for 2002 also show 48 per cent of pupils achieving grades A* - C suggesting that results continue to be below average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below national expectations and progress is limited.

141 The work seen during the inspection confirms that achievement is below average. There was evidence of satisfactory use of line and colour, for example in a Year 9 lesson on the work of Lichtenstein, and some use of shape and pattern, but insecure understanding of form. When questioned pupils showed little knowledge of the work of other artists. Work displayed indicates a wide range of cultural references such as Aboriginal art and Indian textile design in Year 8 and the development of the kimono in Oriental art in Year 9. Pupils use of a variety of media in two and three dimensions. Investigative skills are weak and although information and communication technology is available in the library there is much reliance on the printed image. Pupils' ability to comment on, and improve, their own work and that of others, is limited.

142 Overall teaching is good. This good teaching is now having a strong impact on standards but improvements are recent and pupils' achievements have yet to catch up fully. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned with clear aims, and appropriate activities including links to prior learning and future developments. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they communicate effectively. Planning in relation to pupils who required additional support was very good. A significant feature is the use of homework to support learning in the classroom. Literacy, particularly the use of key words, is a strength throughout the department, predominantly in teaching but also in work displayed. No evidence was seen during the inspection of pupil self-evaluation nor did they comment on their own work, and that of others, with a view to adapting and refining their efforts.

143 The attitude and behaviour of the majority of pupils is good. They listen carefully and with respect to their teachers. They are eager to respond to questions and they use materials with care. They show appreciation of the work of others and work co-operatively but there is no evidence of comment or analysis of their own work or that of others. A small minority of boys do not behave appropriately and continue to talk throughout a presentation: this has an adverse affect on the learning environment of other pupils. Attendance is a cause for concern, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11.

144 The management of the department is satisfactory. Unusually it is shared between two members of staff. Schemes of work are in place and lesson planning is good. Homework is an integral aspect of learning as is the use of literacy. Planned references to different cultures is extensive and the

department makes an excellent contribution to the school environment with its many and varied displays of work. There is an enrichment programme for pupils from all year groups including visits to local galleries which is helping to improve pupils' awareness of artists. Links with parents are very good. Year 7 pupils, for example, have produced flags for the recent PTA Car Show as part of a planned scheme and were interested and motivated: as a result they produced good quality work.

145 There has been some response to the recent focus on the whole-school assessment policy but there is a need for further work in the department. At present assessment does not focus enough on skills and their development and there is limited pupil self-evaluation or target setting.

146 There has been limited improvement in pupils' achievement since the last inspection. In 1999 GCSE A* - C grades were reported to be well above average and although they have risen a little they remained below average in 2001 and 2002. The last inspection reported that by the end of Year 9 pupils made satisfactory progress: however, the school's analysis of achievement in art shows that pupils made only limited progress in 2001. Broadly, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The newly developed personal, social and health education course provides good opportunities for teaching citizenship.
- Some very good teaching means that there is good basis for improving the overall quality of provision.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils do not achieve enough, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching does not always motivate pupils or keep them involved in the work.

148 Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 9 and pupils achieve well compared with their prior attainment. Achievement is below expectations by the end of Year 11. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are enthusiastic and interested, and most enjoy the work. Pupils are developing a good knowledge of the way parliamentary government works and are beginning to understand how to use this understanding to explore current issues. In a Year 8 lesson on the structure of government and the law-making process, for example, pupils showed a good knowledge of the different structures in government and were able to explain the role of politicians. Similarly, in a Year 9 lesson on HIV and AIDS pupils consolidated their knowledge and understanding of the issues well. They made clear gains in their understanding of how HIV can be transmitted and avoided.

149 Overall, by the end of Year 11 pupils' currently do not achieve as well as those in Year 9. This is partly because the teaching is not as good and partly because the school is having to make up for lost time: pupils do not have a strong history of studying citizenship and lack motivation and interest. In Year 11, for example, pupils studying the issues involved in refugees and asylum seekers made only limited progress despite some determined teaching. Pupils often find it difficult to concentrate and are not good at dealing with sensitive issues. Although many are capable of producing good work, few take the opportunities provided and thus do not achieve well.

150 Teaching is satisfactory overall: in Years 7, 8 and 9 there is some very teaching but in Years 10 and 11 teaching lacks the same focus and attention to detail, and too many have weaknesses that limit pupils' progress and learning. A particular strength of teaching in all lessons in Years 7 to 9 is teachers' knowledge of the subject and the way they are able to present some difficult topics in sensitive and interesting ways. One strong characteristic is that teachers are able to give clear and expert answers to pupils' questions, addressing sensitive issues head-on. In a very good Year 9 lesson on HIV and AIDS, for example, this straight-forward way of dealing with questions meant that pupils really understood the issues and forgot their embarrassment. As a result they made quick progress and learnt a great deal

about the subject and about their own misconceptions. In some other lessons, mainly in Years 10 and 11, pupils do not make as much progress because the teaching does too little to motivate. In one example, in Year 11, too little attention was given to managing learning: the task was not well-thought out and pupils' questions, often good, were not answered well. The result of this was that pupils quickly lost interest and spent too much of their time talking. Learning was slow and achievement was not nearly as high as it should have been.

151 The new subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and much of the PSHE course is new. Through this course the school is developing some well planned teaching units on citizenship: the work on British Government and refugees and asylum seekers are good examples. The good teaching in Years 7 to 9 and the well-planned curriculum provide a good platform for further development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, including those with special educational needs because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks.
- Teaching is good; lessons are planned well and proceed at a good pace.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

Areas for improvement

- Improve standards in both key stages.
- The use of information and communication technology.

153 Standards in design and technology are below national average. They have remained at this level over the past few years. All evidence indicates that, although standards could be higher and examination results for 16-year-olds could be better, the quality of teaching and learning has been effective in promoting at least satisfactory achievement.

154 By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is below nationally expected standards. At present pupils have an insecure knowledge of the subject by the end of Year 9. They know how to use tools and equipment to a satisfactory standard and can work with various templates and jigs that help them to achieve a satisfactory level of consistency. Satisfactory work was seen in their food technology products and in the resistant materials projects. However, their application of the design process is less secure and they lack the necessary graphic skills to present their work.

155 GCSE results in 2001 were well below national averages as were the results in the two preceding years. The results were particularly low in food technology. Results in design and technology compare favourably with other GCSE results in the school.

156 Current groups in Year 11 are achieving a higher standard than this in their practical work though their folder work is not at a satisfactory stage of completion for this time in the year. Year 11 pupils' attainment in lessons overall is below average. They have satisfactorily mastered a range of skills in making products but their folder work is below average and their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials is generally weak. Though overall standards are below average, higher attaining pupils are attempting a good range of products and are using drawing skills well to develop their ideas. Their research is thorough and helps to shape designs such as a furniture project in Year 11 based on traditional designs which the student has sketched and developed to suit the materials and skills available. There is some use of information and communication technology in the presentation of design folders but no coverage of control systems and computer aided design.

157 Pupils generally work purposefully and demonstrate a positive attitude to the subject. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more confident in practical work and help each other in their tasks, offering

comment and criticism in a positive manner. There is a good level of display of pupils' work in classrooms and the open areas around the department and this contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas. Most lessons are characterised by the quality of teachers' focus on the progress and needs of individual pupils. The effectively challenging, but supportive, relationships between the teacher and the pupils, coupled with ongoing individual feedback and support, ensure that all pupils make good progress

158 Teaching in all aspects of the subject is good overall. Two lessons were judged unsatisfactory but a consistent feature of this and other less successful teaching was the tendency for the teachers to find maintaining good discipline difficult. In these instances too much time is spent on disciplining groups and individual pupils at the expense of time spent on practical work.

159 The best teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with prepared lesson notes and work sheets which can then be retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. There are good introductions to lessons which link with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their vocabulary. Each day's progress is reviewed effectively at end of lesson. Teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engages pupils. Their skilful handling of materials and equipment enables pupils to be successful. Pupils are rightly proud of what they achieve. In a Year 10 food technology lesson they were keen to share their success when preparing a fruit jalouise. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that pupils can immediately use it to develop their understanding as seen in the Year 7 lesson where pupil were preparing designs using abstract shapes for a jewellery project. In the best lessons there is a joint approach to the learning that encourages pupils to become curious and ask questions. The differing needs of pupils are met well: pupils with special educational needs make good progress and the teachers provide extra support for learning. Teaching and learning is well supported by good classroom assistants. Teachers support literacy well: for example they are careful to introduce new words and give help with writing. Overall, teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. Homework contributes markedly to pupils' learning.

160 The leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in both key stages in the form of monitoring and assessment of attainment and progress. However, not enough emphasis is given to the use of information and communication technology, particularly control technology and computer aided design. There is very thorough and supportive observation of lessons by the head of department which includes both oral and written feedback highlighting the strengths and areas for improvement. This is having a significant impact on improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and is starting to raise standards. There is a good development plan with the necessary focus on raising standards. The good teaching and learning show that the plan is beginning to be effective. The department has suffered from some problems in staffing in recent years. The difficulties in acquiring a stable teaching team have undoubtedly adversely affected attainment and improvements: as a result progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Attainment in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is above average.
- Students' positive attitudes to learning, leading them to make good progress in most lessons.
- Very good contributions to inclusion, through very good differentiation in lesson planning and positive contributions to students' social, moral and cultural attitudes.
- Good contribution to literacy and numeracy skills.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistency in teachers' expectations.
- The numbers of students opting for geography GCSE.
- Insufficient use of primary sources, including opportunities to collect primary data in fieldwork.
- Insufficient opportunities to use computers.

162 Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below national averages. However, given their prior attainment they achieve broadly in line with expectations. Currently, Year 7 pupils achieve expected levels in lessons overall with a significant number in the top band achieving above expectations. All pupils have literacy skills that are at least as good as expectations and in many cases better, which helps them to learn efficiently. During lessons in Years 8 and 9 pupils achieve well in the middle and bottom bands and satisfactorily in the top bands; there are no significant differences in the standards achieved by girls and boys.

163 Pupils have good core knowledge of geographical ideas and can express them well, for example by explaining the reasons for contour patterns on maps. Most have a satisfactory awareness of the location of major countries and a good understanding of the factors that contribute to inequality, such as trade patterns. Their map work and graphical skills are satisfactory.

164 The 2002 GCSE results for Year 11 were well-below national averages and showed a sharp downward trend from the previous year. However, pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 lessons are currently achieving satisfactory standards of knowledge and skills, except in the higher tier in Year 11 where achievement is lower than expected. There are currently only two groups taking geography in Year 10 and two in Year 11. This is very low in comparison to other humanities subject such as history. In lessons pupils are encouraged to formulate their own ideas, which they express readily and clearly, but some in the higher tier fail to give the level of detail in their work that will give them access to higher GCSE grades, for example in their work on weather. Most pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 can provide detailed explanations for processes in the natural and human environment that they have studied and can discuss how these are related. In Year 10 all pupils have a good understanding of the location of places and can use geographical skills appropriately. For example, most were able to accurately locate cities around the world from the weather patterns shown in their climate graphs and by relating this to existing knowledge. Skills in data handling are satisfactory although there are insufficient opportunities to improve these through the use of computers. Some pupils use computers at home, such as for Internet research, but they tend to reproduce such information without analysing it.

165 Overall, most pupils make good progress in geography with significant gains in knowledge and skills, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Some make very good progress in the top band in Year 7, although it is the middle and bottom band pupils who make the best progress in Years 8 and 9. They learn particularly well in the lower-ability groups in Years 8, 9 and 11. Pupils enjoy geography lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning.

166 Behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is partly because of strong teaching and partly because of the positive contributions to their social and cultural development made by the geography curriculum. Some units directly address racial inequality, for example the unit in Year 8 on international migration, or the Year 9 work on the inequality in international trade and its effect on workers in poor countries. Pupils of all abilities are fully included in lessons and are given a broad variety of

chances to develop skills through discussion. Playing 'The Trading Game', a geographical simulation used in Year 9, groups bartered and competed under unequal conditions to produce 'goods' for 'profit', which resulted in very good understanding of the complexities of world trade and the reasons for price fluctuations and cartels.

167 Good quality teaching is a significant strength of the department and is starting to have an impact on standards. Overall in Years 7-11 most lessons are good or very good. A strong feature of lessons is the careful use of a range of teaching strategies for pupils of different abilities, with separate aims for learning. This results in a high level of understanding and achievement. For example, the most able pupils in the top band studying world trade were expected to extend their understanding of basic concepts to include an appreciation of the aims and operation of Fair Trade, bringing a political dimension to their knowledge. Other strategies include the skilful use of question and answer techniques and the use of stimulating learning activities, such as the teaching of specific memory techniques to the most able pupils in Year 7. Resources are usually well managed, ensuring best use of lesson time. Lessons are usually brisk and interesting, with a clear structure. The best lessons begin with a brief recap from previous work, ensuring that all pupils are attentive from the start; they end with effective plenary discussions in which teachers establish and reinforce pupils' learning. Appropriate homework is regularly set and marked, consolidating class work.

168 Where lessons are least effective teachers' expectations are low: this is most apparent in the top bands in Years 7 to 9 and the higher tier in Year 11. Low expectations are sometimes shown by too much praise for inaccurate work and sometimes show in lesson plans. In a higher tier Year 11 lesson, for example, the aim to be able to identify different climates on a world map using the key was a skill that many younger pupils could achieve. Insufficient reference to primary sources of data, for example using aerial photos or Ordnance Survey maps in the Year 7 unit on maps, means that some pupils do not fully develop their appreciation of how geographical skills are related to the real world.

169 Assessment of pupils' work is regular and informative. Pupils appreciate the new system of awarding grades for both effort and achievement and this allows them to target their efforts more effectively. Comments in their books usually inform them of the strengths in their work and clearly identify what they can do to improve. Targets are set for achievement in Years 10 and 11 based on prior attainment and teaching aims address these, leading to the good rate of progress that is seen in lessons.

170 Management of the geography department is sound: it is part of the humanities faculty, which is strongly led. There is lack of fieldwork planned in all years, which reduces pupils' appreciation of the relevance of geographical study. This was evident in pupils' limited ability to write about real world case studies. There are also insufficient opportunities to use computers to access and analyse data or to carry out research. This limits the range of skills that pupils are able to use. Progress since the last inspection is sound but effective teamwork, with staff that are relatively new, has laid down firm foundations for future development. The department contributes well to the school's enrichment programme by providing geography activities both for GCSE pupils and for those in the lower school.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management by the head of faculty.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils.
- Good value added results at the end of Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Further develop consistency across the department in planning, marking and setting homework.
- Improve access to opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in history lessons.

172 Overall attainment in history is average. At the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils achieving at Level 5 and above is broadly in line with expectations according to teacher assessment. This is confirmed by lessons where attainment is also in line with national expectations.

173 In Years 10 and 11, whilst standards of attainment are still below the national average, results improved from 46.7 per cent in 2001 achieving an A* - C to 50 per cent in 2002. History achieved the highest Key Stage 4 value added figure for any subject in the school. This shows that pupils achieve well when their prior attainment is taken into account.

174 Pupils achieve well because of good teaching which is challenging, varied and supportive. In Years 7 - 9 pupils make good progress in developing an understanding of chronology, the nature of evidence and the language of history. Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress as a result of careful planning and support from their teachers. Pupils in Year 7 for example, were able to analyse the causes and effects of the Roman Empire as well as to write sensitively about the life of a slave. In Year 8, pupils were able to use different sources to make an assessment about Henry VIII. In Year 9 lessons about First World War weapons pupils revealed an ability to defend their views with confidence using available evidence. However, evidence of understanding that some events, people and changes have been interpreted in different ways and possible reasons for this is limited.

175 In Year 10 and 11 pupils further develop their skills and become very good at analysing source material and placing it within historical contexts. Pupils studying GCSE make good progress and build upon existing skills. They become very good at analysing source material and judging the reliability of sources in the testing of hypotheses as was observed in a lesson about the nature of Native American beliefs.

176 The quality of teaching is a strength of the history department. Teaching was never less than satisfactory and was good or very good in 75 per cent of the lessons observed. Most of the teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding about the topics taught. They are also very good at ensuring that what is taught is relevant to pupils' everyday lives. In the best lessons activities are clearly linked to lesson aims. Challenging questions by the teacher help to develop pupils' factual understanding. The good use of praise and humour helps to motivate all pupils. Good classroom management is combined with very good relationships with pupils. A variety of teaching methods including group and pair work help pupils to work together and to learn from each other as well as to develop their communication skills. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Subject specific language is consistently developed.

177 In Years 10 and 11 particular strengths of teaching are the pace of lessons and the quality of support provided for pupils in preparing for examinations. In the best lessons, clear high expectations combined with the modelling of answers are helping to raise achievement. The variety of writing activities is contributing to the further development of skills. The department complements its teaching with an annual trip to the First World War battlefields in France and Belgium.

178 The contribution of history to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils were asked to compare native American beliefs with Christian beliefs. Here, a very sensitive analysis of these beliefs helped pupils develop a good understanding of different cultures and the way empathy with the native Americans was encouraged supported pupils' spiritual awareness well.

179 The faculty is very well led and managed. A strong vision by the head of faculty combined with clear aims, development plan and review are strengthened by a detailed faculty handbook and an excellent system for monitoring and evaluating teaching. The teaching and learning policy provides helpful guidance for teachers. Schemes of work, whilst detailed, would benefit from an indication of the amount of time to be spent on each unit and the cross-referencing of pupil activities with assessment levels. The quality of assessment is good. However, marking and homework are not always consistent across the subject. There is good support for beginner teachers. Staffing and accommodation are good. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has correctly identified the key priorities for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers have a good knowledge of the subject: this is beginning to lead to improvements in pupils' learning.
- Up to date equipment and software and specialist information and communication technology rooms.
- Improvement in provision since last inspection.
- The school's commitment to develop and improve information and communication technology.
- Hardworking, committed teaching and support staff.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9.
- Develop and co-ordinate the use of information and communication technology in other subjects areas including improving access to computers across the school.
- Improve assessment procedures in Years 7-9 in order that targets can be set for improvement.

181 Standards in Year 9 were below average in 2001 and the inspection evidence indicates that standards are still below national expectations. Pupils are developing knowledge and skills using word processing, desk-top publishing spreadsheets and databases but have insufficient opportunity to use appropriate software for measurement and control work. Pupils' experiences of information and communication technology when they arrive in the school are varied, however, standards of attainment are mostly below the national average. From September 2002 a well-planned course for Years 7 and 9 taught by subject specialists has been introduced. Work in Year 9 confirms appropriate development of skills and knowledge but insufficient opportunity to apply experience independently.

182 By the end of Year 11 GCSE results 2001 were below the national average and evidence suggests that there is much ground to be covered if standards are to come in line for the majority of pupils. The school has a small group of pupils who have taken a GCSE course during enrichment time and for these fast track pupils' progress is good. Pupils are confident users of word processing, spreadsheet applications and use Power Point to generate and communicate their ideas in different forms incorporating text, graphs and pictures as appropriate. Little opportunities were observed for use of information and communication technology in other subjects and therefore pupils were not able to practise and develop their information and communication technology skills in other subjects. Few departments were seen to be delivering information and communication technology consistently and effectively. In Year 10 pupils are beginning to understand the use of information and communication technology in a wider context using it to support research work. With a high level of teacher support most Year 11 pupils are able to carry out set exercises and use basic skills to produce items such as

newsletters. Overall pupils have a grasp of the way that information and communication technology can help them in their work and the effects it has on society, they can search the Internet for particular topics and present that information for their own purposes.

183 Teaching is good in both key stages with planning being a significant strength. For example, in a Year 10 lesson planned extra support enabled all pupils to be fully involved so that the full ability range was challenged. Teachers are well prepared, they give clear introductions to lessons, and they communicate with confidence, set high expectations for their pupils and demonstrate secure subject knowledge. Following an audit there is now a framework for the delivery of information and communication technology across the curriculum. If information and communication technology is to be used to enhance teaching and learning in other subjects the school needs to ensure that the co-ordination, planning and assessment mechanisms for information and communication technology are developed. Technical support has secured the reliability of resources, teacher confidence has increased and skilled technicians are well prepared and an essential part of the team. Teachers within the department use the resources of the information and communication technology rooms effectively so that work demonstrated can be seen by all pupils. Pupils are generally well managed and most have positive attitudes to information and communication technology. Equipment is treated well and routines to log on, save and retrieve work are being established. During lessons pupils with particular needs get all the help they need either from the teachers, classroom assistants or the information and communication technology technician.

184 There is little evidence of assessed practical work but where it is available, marking is patchy and does not provide pupils with enough regular feedback on standards reached or how to improve. Assessment systems and structures are agreed but not yet implemented. Linking assessment outcomes to the National Curriculum is insecure; the system of assessing IT capability is at an early stage of development and co-ordination of assessment between curriculum areas not yet systematic or consistent. The systematic development of information and communication technology capability and the use of computers in other subjects are weaknesses and analysis of reliable data is at a very early stage of development.

185 The newly appointed head of department has a good understanding of the needs of the subject and has worked hard to update the subject documentation, provide support for colleagues and improve provision for all pupils. The school has made a considerable investment in information and communication technology and leadership is good. Progress since the last inspection in the development of resources has been very good with significant improvement in facilities and provision for the subject. However, these recent improvements have not yet impacted on standards and progress overall since the last inspection is satisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning in modern languages is often good.
- Marking is of a high standard and assessment processes are developing well.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- The organisation of languages on the curriculum and the teaching time allocated to them.

187 In 2002, at the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show that fewer pupils reached the expected level in French than in other schools and only 3 per cent reached higher levels. One of the root causes of this poor performance is the lack of consistency in teaching over several years. Samples of work seen from this year group confirm that they have made erratic progress over long periods throughout the key stage.

188 In some present Year 9 classes, pupils show that they have a good understanding of simple verb formations and can respond to questions with reasonable accuracy. In some wide ability classes, however, pupils often make careless mistakes in copying from the board and weaker pupils have difficulty with correct pronunciation, for example, they sound silent word endings. It is only in the "express" classes that standards are approaching the expected level. This is also true of classes elsewhere in Key Stage 3. In the Year 8 Spanish group, progress has been excellent and some pupils are already approaching Level 2 after only one month of learning the language. In Year 7, pupils have made a good beginning and are using numbers, greetings and the French alphabet with some confidence. Literacy standards are low when pupils enter the school and this impedes their progress in learning other languages. However, the establishment of good spelling and reading habits in modern languages can support their progress in English. This is apparent in some of the word-processed work seen on display.

189 Results at higher grades of GCSE were well below national averages in 2001 and show no improvement in 2002. Performance in German was particularly poor and was largely due to groups being taught by a series of temporary teachers, many of who were not specialists. Girls performed better than boys at this level and more girls than boys go on to study languages further.

190 Pupils currently in Year 11 have slightly better skills in listening and speaking than in reading and writing due to the emphasis given to these skills throughout the school. Standards in German and Italian are well below that required for a higher grade pass at GCSE. This is mainly due to poor learning experiences in previous years. Many pupils can manage only brief responses to questions and have inaccurate writing. Some also have weak pronunciation and use of tenses is insecure. There is a very wide range of attainment between classes and languages with French and Spanish being rather better overall. The rate at which pupils make progress depends on the teaching and is generally better in Year 10 than in Year 11. Some pupils in Year 10 show confidence in handling sentence structure, for example, word order in German and in writing descriptions.

191 The quality of teaching is good: it was satisfactory in half the lessons seen and good or very good in the other half. One Spanish lesson was excellent. The languages faculty is virtually a new team of teachers, many of whom are inexperienced or newly-qualified. They work very hard to provide good learning experiences for pupils and support each other through the sharing of teaching techniques and resources. Lessons that are most effective include high expectations and challenge for all pupils, an active teaching style that requires an active response from pupils, for example, gesture accompanying the spoken word, clear examples of the standards expected for higher GCSE grades and targeted questioning to pupils of different abilities.

192 Most teachers are native speakers of the languages they teach and make very good use of this to provide strong reinforcement of correct pronunciation. The technique of getting pupils to repeat words and phrases after the teacher, the audio tape or other pupils - often in a fun way through singing or chanting in different voices - is clearly effective and enjoyable. Pupils respond well in these lessons because they feel involved and their confidence is boosted. Improvements to some lessons could be achieved by a brisker pace, a wider variety of activities, particularly to break up prolonged periods of oral work, and a greater focus on accuracy in writing, especially spelling when copying.

193 The languages faculty is ably led and well managed. The development of new schemes of work using the Key Stage 3 national framework is beginning to influence the planning of lessons, for example starting with learning objectives, setting homework, an oral "warm-up", timed activities and a plenary at the end. This encourages clearer thinking about how teachers might provide support for pupils with special educational needs and extension tasks for more able learners. Marking and assessment are strengths of the faculty. Books are marked to a high standard and include constructive and challenging comments by teachers. A new computerised assessment system relating the results from regular tests to national curriculum levels is a promising development. Progress since the last inspection is sound overall.

194 The school offers a good range of languages to its pupils. There is some unevenness, however, in the amount of teaching time allocated to languages in different year groups which affects languages

other than French in particular. GCSE results are also affected by the late start to learning German and Italian, and to a lesser extent, Spanish.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are strong.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- New schemes of work.
- Planning and assessment.
- Range of instrumental lessons and extra curricular opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for information and communication technology, including software and composing programmes and midi.
- Continue to raise standards in vocal composition and listening skills.

196 Attainment at the end of Year 11 in the 2002 Music GCSE is below national levels. There has been a gradual decline in standards for pupils attaining grades A* - C. Whilst some pupils achieved their potential many pupils underachieved in relation to their ability. Temporary teaching and some instability in the department has adversely affected standards over the last year.

197 In Year 7, pupils enter school with varying levels of ability. In this year, pupils learn to understand what musical elements are by recognising timbre, texture and dynamics in pieces of music by Britten, Tchaikovsky and Murray. They can compose simple graphic scores and perform some features of their chosen musical elements on the keyboard. The use of headphones aids pupils' concentration in their practical work. Overall, singing from the small sample heard is average and there is potential to extend the repertoire in this area.

198 In Years 8 and 9 standards are currently below average for classes who have had some temporary teaching in the past year. Whilst capable of performing, many pupils have not had sufficient support in helping them with the discipline of listening or practical skills in lessons. Early indications are that pupils are making good progress in lessons and are increasing their confidence in practical skills through supportive and enthusiastic teaching. For example, progress was good in a Year 8 class where pupils were combining rhythm and pulse successfully. Each group of pupils used a family of instruments to play their rhythms. Wood, skin, metal instruments and shakers were selected. These combinations added greater texture and timbre into their work. This class do not have a long concentration span, but they clearly became motivated in this task and they could hear that they were achieving accuracy and improvement in their work. Consequently, they went on to perform well as a class, behaviour and achievement were good.

199 In a Year 9 lesson pupils reached average standards but made very positive progress as in a performance of the 'Jackass Blues' on glockenspiels. Pupils performed their melodies, learned the bass line and performed them together. They then went on to improvise their own melodies between each statement of the tune. At first this was hesitant, with inaccuracies in rhythm, but after some teacher support and further rehearsal, the second performance was much improved and contained some interesting inventions by the pupils.

200 In the present Year 11 group many pupils are working at a level which is below average because of some disruption to their course work and changes in staff. Consequently, teaching is currently trying to address gaps in musical literacy, performance and compositions and in the study of set musical works. Teachers offer extra-curricular sessions for pupils, but not all attend. Pupils have some ability in their aural work, but only the more able pupils can notate a melody with some confidence. Pupils who have good instrumental skills, for example Grade 5/6 standard, are able to draw on their knowledge to

help them understand keys, chords and harmony which they begin to use in their compositions. Others are in the early stages of learning and composing skills are less secure. There is insufficient information and communication technology to assist pupils to raise standards effectively with this area of their work in Year 10 and 11.

201 In the two Year 10 option groups, pupils have made a positive start, although they are only in the first few weeks of their course. Standards are average for most pupils but learning is good as is the progress made in lessons. For example, in one lesson rehearsing dictation skills, each rhythm was played three times. Some pupils were able to correct their work on the second or third hearing. Although some of the group found it harder to follow the work they persevered with the task and all made progress with their answers. Pupils who receive instrumental lessons perform with some confidence on for example clarinet, oboe, percussion, flute and trumpet and they are able to apply some idea of key, melodic shape and structure to early stages of their compositions. Others require more support and are at an earlier stage of development. Many attend ensembles or the school band and this positively helps performance skills. Homework is set regularly and is thoroughly marked and it supports learning, especially in analysis and written work which needs more rehearsal.

202 Pupils with special needs are well supported in their lessons through sensitive teaching and good in-class support. In a Year 8 class the quality of specialist support given to a pupil with visual impairment helped the pupil take a meaningful and confident role in lessons. In practical work the xylophone had the notes written out in extra large letters which enabled the pupil to take part in the class performance of 'Love Me Tender' and make good progress. This confidence was also evident when the pupil took an active part in answering some of the teacher's questions.

203 The attitude of pupils is clearly changing towards the subject as the new head of department leads a revitalised department in a curriculum and range of performing opportunities designed to motivate the pupils. Girls usually attain higher standards than the boys although boys' achievement in the GCSE courses is good.

204 The good quality of teaching is one of the very important factors that is helping to drive up the standards and the quality of pupil learning and is also having a positive effect on attitudes towards the subject. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and all have high expectations of the pupils. Lesson planning successfully balances the activities of performing, composing and listening. This is underpinned with a clear strategy to improve knowledge and understanding of music through a comprehensive grounding in basic skills. Lessons aims are always shared with pupils. The quality of teacher explanation, use of warm up activities, presentation of materials and well-framed questions allow teachers to check for pupils' understanding. Lessons have a brisk pace, with no time wasting and follow a clear sequence so that each activity offers a different musical perspective on what is being taught. This strategy works well to support classes with pupils who do not have a long concentration span and for some pupils who have not had the discipline and routine of regular music lessons.

205 There are effective assessment strategies which are beginning to provide a clear picture of attainment and progress in the subject. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to provide a framework for pupils to listen, compose and perform work over a wide range of styles and cultures. These include the music of China, Africa and Latin America. Instruments are adequate but information and communication technology is not used nearly enough to help raise standards in music.

206 The provision of instrumental lessons and an increasing range of enrichment classes and ensembles are providing pupils across the school with good opportunities to extend their performance skills. The school band which has only recently re-convened regularly plays in assembly. Instrumental tutors and class teachers participate regularly in all these activities. Presently 160 pupils receive instrumental lessons in the school which is a steep rise in numbers. The quality of relationships and learning is good in instrumental lessons and pupils are attaining standards ranging from beginners to those achieving Grade 6/7 as defined by the instrumental examination boards.

207 The new head of department has made an outstanding start in bringing clear vision and leadership to the department and in motivating teachers. There is little more that could have been

achieved in such a short time-scale and overall progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. His work has been well supported by the head of faculty. The department now has the capacity to succeed in all these identified areas. Teamwork is evident in class planning and in curricular enrichment activities which are attended regularly by all the staff. One unqualified teacher is very well supported by the head of department and staff.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers' planning of their lessons, which includes all pupils and identifies progress in learning.
- Assessment and target setting, which are well used to support pupils in improving the standards they achieve.
- The very good leadership and management of the department and the commitment to improvement.

Areas for development

- Raise standards in dance by improving the teaching and learning of choreography.
- Share good practice in sharply focussing objectives for learning and teachers' questioning skills.
- Develop the use of information and communication technology in physical education.
- Work towards a better gender balance in recruitment to accredited physical education courses.
- Continue to push for improvements in accommodation, in particular, access to a dedicated classroom space.

210 Pupils arrive at the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment lower than those expected and with different strengths and weaknesses. For example, the quality of Year 7 girls' performances in gymnastics and dance is higher, while boys understand better how to apply their skills in order to succeed in games. By the end of Year 9, attainment is broadly in line with expectations nationally and pupils have made significant gains in their skills and understanding of the activity areas they follow.

211 Overall, standards by the end of Year 11 are in line with expectations. The current cohort continues to demonstrate different strengths between boys and girls: boys have more fluent games skills and greater tactical awareness, whereas girls perform very well in dance. The proportion of A* - C grades gained in full course GCSE was below average in 2001, but in 2002 standards were higher. A small group of pupils was examined in short course GCSE in 2002, attaining good results in comparison with their prior attainment. Significantly more boys follow GCSE physical education courses than girls. In 2001, GCSE dance results were below average and in 2002 standards were lower. Although open to all, GCSE dance is taken only by girls.

212 From the low starting point in Year 7, pupils make good progress between Years 7 and 9 as they learn and apply skills in a variety of contexts and across the four strands of the national curriculum. Year 9 pupils are confident in a range of skills and many are able to apply these effectively to solve problems set by their teachers, for example, when they work as a team devising strategies to create scoring opportunities in basketball. Across the school, knowledge and understanding of health related fitness is impressive. Pupils are progressively able to take responsibility when preparing for and recovering from physical activity. They are encouraged towards greater independence in this area and many in Years 7, 8 and 9 are developing an understanding of anatomy more often found in Years 10 and 11, and even GCSE work. Satisfactory achievement is seen in Years 10 and 11 across the range of activities. There is evidence of higher order thinking skills being developed, and, in the best lessons, teachers understand how to help pupils make connections between different areas of their learning.

213 In GCSE physical education lessons, expertise is developed through the study of theory and its application to practical work, as in a Year 10 badminton lesson, where pupils practised interval training techniques and identified how the various components would enable them to play the game more effectively. This is less evident in GCSE dance lessons, where many pupils do not link theory with

practical work. Although their performance skills are well developed, GCSE dance groups are making slower gains in relation to the syllabus requirements.

214 Talented pupils are helped to higher achievement when they are given leadership or coaching roles, challenging them to evaluate how skills and techniques can be improved. Pupils with special educational needs achieve consistently with their peers and are supported appropriately in taking a full part in lessons.

215 Teaching is satisfactory overall but good in Years 7 - 9. During the inspection over half the lessons were judged to be good and some very good and excellent teaching was also seen. Lessons are well planned to accommodate the range of learners and to meet the needs of every group. A strength of the teaching is that the aims of all lessons are written and shared with pupils, together with key words which are systematically introduced. Some teachers focus lessons very sharply and specifically, referring back to the objective and reinforcing the vocabulary throughout. Some skilled questioning allows teachers to focus their input and ensure that needs are met. This is not yet consistent, but in these lessons pupils are clear about the expected outcome and are able to assess how much they have learned and to identify improvement targets for themselves. Teachers mostly have high expectations of work and behaviour, and pupils respond well to this, especially when physical and intellectual challenges are set. Year 7 pupils in an orienteering lesson, for example, planned the most efficient route and, having carried it out, evaluated its success against criteria set by their teacher. Most managed very well, giving thoughtful responses and identifying how they could improve their performances in future. In most lessons, time is used well and activities are varied to ensure that learners remain on task.

216 Where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupils are not given opportunities to develop their ideas and teaching does not make clear connections between different aspects of the activity area. Sometimes pupils' incorrect practice goes unchecked and this limits their progress. Where lesson aims are too lengthy or complex pupils are not clear about the expected outcomes. Again, this means that progress is not as good as it could be.

217 Pupils respond well to physical education teaching. Their behaviour is almost always good, and respect for their teachers and each other is evident. Most enjoy taking part and are keen to improve. The small amount of challenging behaviour is firmly but sensitively dealt with: teachers are skilled in preserving good relationships, encouraging and refocusing these pupils.

218 Opportunities for pupils to develop through the enrichment programme are extensive, there are a full range of activities, teams and fixtures, as well as recreational and GCSE preparation opportunities. Very talented pupils are encouraged to join local clubs in their chosen sport; a number progress to local, regional and national level.

219 Leadership of the department is very good and is informed by a clear understanding of how the department can raise standards through improving teaching and learning. The team is cohesive and hardworking, with a positive ethos. They are poised for improvement and ready to meet the challenge together. The quality of the indoor accommodation is at times detrimental to teaching and learning. The lack of a dedicated classroom limits resourceful examination level teaching, and there is no space large enough for Years 10 and 11 games teaching. Noise from adjacent gymnasia often disrupts the flow of more reflective teaching activities.

220 Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The physical education curriculum for Years 7 – 9 has been developed to include more movement development opportunities, particularly for boys: it now meets statutory requirements. Significant developments have been made in assessment, and attainment is now in line with expectations by the end of Year 9. Use of computers in physical education is underdeveloped.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management of the subject, including very good monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Good teaching, including very good lesson planning.
- Positive attitudes from pupils to the subject.
- Very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results at the end of Year 11.
- The use of information and communication technology.

224. Results in the short course GCSE in 2001 showed attainment levels for religious education that were at least in line with national averages for the subject. In 2002, the grades achieved were uniformly lower than in 2001, but this time all rather than some pupils were entered for the examination. Pupils are not assessed formally at the end of Year 9.

225. The standards seen during the inspection indicate average attainment, overall. Some lower attaining pupils are held back by their levels of literacy and by confusion over the meaning of words used in this subject area. They achieve higher standards, however, when given support in lessons, including those pupils with learning difficulties. Higher attainers reach at least average standards because of good teaching and positive attitudes to the subject. They have a sound basic knowledge and understanding of the key facts about the particular world religions they are studying, for instance, Year 8 pupils can recall the names of Hindu gods and their roles; Year 9 pupils can recount the principal events in the life of Moses and can identify each of the Ten Commandments. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to recognise how Christians have distinctive views on issues such as evil and suffering or sex and marriage, and are aware of Islamic teaching on male and female roles. Standards are therefore in line with what is found throughout the country, both amongst Year 9 pupils and Year 11 pupils.

226. This represents good achievement, given the standards being reached by pupils joining the school in Year 7. Part of the reason for this is that the majority of pupils have a positive attitude to religious education. They usually co-operate well with each other and with their teachers, and show interest and even enthusiasm about what they are learning. A small minority misbehave in lessons, but this does not have a serious effect on the learning of others, because teachers are able to deal effectively with any disruptions. A few pupils arrive late to lessons, but most settle down quickly to work and use the lesson time productively.

227. The progress made is also the result of good teaching. Lessons are very well planned and are structured around worthwhile learning activities. Teachers use resources well, whether video clips or worksheets, and their lessons have pace and challenge. Homework is set regularly. The best lessons are characterised by very good classroom discipline. Good management of pupils is normal, although one or two inexperienced teachers can allow low level disruptions to slow the pace of learning. The very good lessons seen during the inspection were characterised by pace. A Year 7 class, of lower attainers, worked in pairs on a selection of Islamic beliefs and practices in order to produce an introductory booklet on Islam. They extracted information from the evidence given them, discussed it and wrote up their findings to present to the class, illustrated with pictures and pasted up extracts, in just over 30 minutes. Year 10 pupils were enabled, through the use of flow charts, to employ words such as *omniscient*, *omnipotent* and *benevolent* in relation to God in an analysis of Christian responses to human suffering, based on extracts from newspapers. Excellent video films were used with Year 7 and Year 9 classes to illustrate the practices of Jewish and Muslim communities respectively in Britain.

228. Most teachers are suitably qualified. Standards are maintained through very good monitoring and evaluation of the teaching. The faculty is well led and managed, with an able subject co-ordinator who has a good grasp of the needs of the subject area. A thorough system of assessment is applied, so that pupils are aware of their progress and their targets. Religious education makes very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its thorough treatment of each of the major

world faiths and the cultural practices of their adherents. There are good resources in each of the specialist religious education rooms, although computers in each room would represent a useful addition: it is possible to book an information and communication technology room, but this facility is under-used at the present.

229. There has been good improvement since the last inspection: teaching is now always at least satisfactory and is usually good or better, leading to good progress by pupils. All pupils are now able to take the GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11, and the subject is being well led and managed within a relatively new faculty structure.

MEDIA STUDIES

230. Overall, the quality of provision for Media Studies is **very good**.

Strengths

- High standard of achievement.
- Very good teaching.
- Very good departmental leadership.
- Significant contribution made to the development of literacy.
- High standard of resources and accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- The inspection identified no significant areas for improvement.

231. Standards, particularly at the end of Year 11, are well above average in relation to national standards. Throughout Years 10 and 11, written work and student response in classroom discussion is also above average. Pupils use appropriate media language, which becomes increasingly more sophisticated as they progress through the course. Work produced for GCSE course work assignments and practical production is of a particularly high standard. Projects such as magazine production show very good technical skill, and effective use of the codes and conventions of the teenage magazine genre. Accompanying written documentation, production diaries, visual drafts and evaluation of finished product are also well above national standards, with appropriate media language and technical terms in evidence.

232. Since the last inspection, standards of achievement at GCSE have been above or well above average in relation to national standards, with typically around 70 per cent of pupils achieving an A*-C grade. In 2002, performance recovered from a dip in 2001, and 68 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-C grade accompanied by a 100 per cent pass rate. Pupils of all abilities do better at media studies than in other subjects, with boys doing equally as well as girls.

233. The quality of teaching in all lessons seen was either good or very good. Schemes of work are clearly described and lessons well planned, varied and cater for all levels of ability. Pupils respond well and become engaged in lessons because of clearly explained and understandable lesson objectives, first class resources, and the selection for study of media products that maximise pupil interest. Teachers demonstrate both good subject knowledge and the facilitation skills to manage the wide variety of activity that characterise lessons. Accommodation is very good with good use made of information and communication technology for research, word processing, as well as media production using digital technology. The department has its own display/gallery area. Work is regularly assessed with individual targets set.

234. Leadership of the department is very good. There is clear vision and commitment to continually improving how the subject is taught and resourced. The department has identified and made good progress on a number of areas for improvement since the last inspection, particularly in response to changing syllabus demands, such as the development of adequate resourcing for radio production. The four media studies teachers, all media graduates, constitute a strong team and use regular meetings to share workload and resources. They all have individual and comprehensive programmes of continuous professional development. The team authors much of the classroom material used in lessons. They

attend a range of exam board courses, ensuring that subject and GCSE syllabus knowledge and practical expertise is constantly being updated. The department also has strong links with the British Film Institute and pupils recently attended a series of workshops on popular music run by industry professions. The department has also developed links with the City Learning Centre and local media companies, who provide work experience for media pupils.

DRAMA

235. Overall, the provision in drama is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of leadership and departmental organisation.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Team work of teachers.
- The quality and range of in-class performances, enrichment classes and performances to various audiences.
- The contribution to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral and cultural development.

Areas for development

- Improve provision of information and communication technology in the department.
- Continue to raise pupils written work and listening skills -especially in Years 7-9.

236. Of the 50 pupils entered for GCSE examinations in 2002, 52 per cent gained grades A-C. This is slightly lower than national levels. However, this represents good achievement for pupils with three-quarters gaining one grade above their expectations.

237. Overall the good standards in drama have been maintained since the last inspection and progress is good. However, more pupils are opting for the subject at GCSE. Observations during the inspection confirm that standards attained in drama are at the expected levels and above that for a number of pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is good and often very good for all pupils as they move through the school.

238. In Year 7, most pupils enter the school with little or no drama experience. In the first term, pupils focus on learning skills of group work, listening and co-operation. In a Year 7 class devising group improvisations to produce a 'sound scape' of a school playground, a prison, or a hospital, most were able to work with one another effectively. They made progress in their role-play, in co-operating with one another and gained confidence in performing their work to the rest of the class. In Years 8 and 9 pupils build on their prior knowledge and attain average standards in 'mime,' 'gesture', and in devising and sustaining character in a role. They gain confidence in improvisation, in the use of text and with drama conventions. For example in a Year 8 class pupils used texts they had studied for homework like 'The Hobbit,' 'Cinderella and 'Top of the Mops' to devise a scene which illustrates the work they have read. The pupils completed their tasks and respected one another's work. By the time they reach Year 9, pupils gain more confident understanding of the key elements of Drama and reach at least average standards in their work. They use space well and are more confident in their speaking roles and inventiveness. They explore technical vocabulary which include, for example, status, blocking, accepting and then go on to explore various texts where these features are used and learn the appropriate layout for scripts.

239. In Year 11, standards are above average for many of the pupils whilst all make good progress in their work. Pupils study a range of texts, such as Animal Farm, explore adapted scripts and use poetry such as the 'The Haunting' as a stimulus for devising their work. In one lesson very good progress is made when pupils work on the theme of a 'Runaway', using a newspaper article to explore the issues and dangers of living on the streets. The lesson builds on prior learning successfully. Techniques such as 'mime,' 'hot seating' and 'marking the moment' had been used to assist build a picture of the boy who had run away including his home life and to explore possible reasons why this had happened. As the

practical group work develops, pupils make good use of space and levels. Pupils' facial gestures and mime are convincing and most can sustain a role in character when developing their scenes. Very good questioning by the teacher helps pupils explore the range of thoughts affecting the family, firstly within a day, then a month, after the boy has left home. This work, when completed, will be performed to classes in Year 8.

240. Standards are at least average in the current Year 10 at an early stage of the course. Having read a scene 'Home Sweet Home' from the script 'Wise Guys', which explores family relationships and 'Domestic violence', Year 10 pupils work on their group presentations to explore the theme. They make good use of facial expressions, movement, space and silence to add tension and to portray their characters realistically. There is a positive level of co-operation and girls and boys work together effectively. When the teacher adds another character into the plot, pupils successfully perform a 'spontaneous improvisation' to incorporate the character into their scenes.

241. Pupils' response to drama is mostly positive. Most pupils are very amiable and co-operative in lessons, but there are instances in Years 7 - 9 where the dynamics of a few classes, especially those with a higher concentration of boys, do present challenging behaviour. However, teachers work very hard to manage and motivate all pupils, through a range of well chosen skills and disciplines which leads to good learning and greater confidence and helps promote more positive attitudes towards the subject. Increasingly, boys and girls work more effectively together and are willing to take more 'risks' in their work as they move through the school. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 lesson on gender where boys assumed the roles of girls and were able to sustain their characters convincingly.

242. The quality of teaching is never less than good. Most teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers work effectively as a team and share planning and evaluations of pupils' work. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and the techniques required to teach it. The use of warm-ups and well chosen techniques such as brain storming spontaneous improvisation, 'mime', movement, space and gesture is effective in helping pupils develop their concentration and responses to drama. Good probing questioning is successfully used to assist pupils gain a deeper understanding of character and plot. Teachers are particularly skilled at framing questions which encourage pupils of all levels of ability to participate. Lessons are planned well, have good pace and sequence and the materials are always stimulating.

243. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work are clear and concise. The department uses good assessment procedures and levels are clearly displayed and shared with the pupils. Video is often used to record performances to help pupils evaluate their work. Teachers give constructive feedback to pupils after practical work and during lessons and target pupils appropriately to assist them with their learning. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of theatre visits and there are good opportunities for pupils to perform to different audiences, for instance, to other year groups in the school, or to local primary schools. Public performances such as 'Bugsy Malone', are whole school productions involving pupils in a range of work connected with production, lighting and scenery as well as performance. Moral and social issues are often the subjects of intense focus in lessons. Issues such as 'theft', bullying, prejudice and their effects, offer pupils the opportunity to reflect, explore and understand them from a range of different perspectives. These provide a good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

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

235. 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 2001².

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	1	100	93	0	23	3.00	2.27
Leisure & Tourism	10	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	6.33	10.06

GCE A Level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	24	92	96	42	46	6.58	6.57
Biology	9	78	88	44	34	4.44	5.25
Chemistry	1	100	90	100	43	8.00	5.90
Classical studies	2	100	95	100	49	8.00	6.51
Communication Studies	23	100	93	22	31	5.74	5.53
Computer Studies	14	57	95	7	23	2.43	4.62
Drama	7	100	99	57	38	7.71	6.59
Economics	9	78	89	11	36	4.44	5.52
English Literature	40	88	95	23	37	4.15	5.91
French	6	83	89	33	38	4.67	5.59
Design and Technology	9	78	91	22	30	3.78	5.38
Geography	5	100	92	60	38	7.2	5.74
History	10	70	88	0	35	2.80	5.45
Mathematics	17	59	87	12	43	2.80	5.45
Music	2	50	93	0	35	1.00	5.74
Other Social Studies	18	8.	87	17	34	4.44	5.3
Physics	4	100	88	75	40	7.5	5.67
Sociology	13	69	86	15	35	3.69	5.32
Spanish	8	75	89	13	37	2.75	5.70
Sports/PE studies	7	100	92	14	25	4.86	5.09

² 2002 data was not available at the time of publication

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

244. The inspection focused on biology and physics but mathematics was also sampled. Teaching was good and students worked very diligently and made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the topic. In one lesson there was an effective mixture of instruction, individual practice and review. The attainment was above expected levels.

Biology

245. Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and linked to effective questioning enabling students to review their learning.
- There is sound planning based on an appropriate scheme of work.
- Teachers give students regular feedback, both written and oral, about their work.
- Resources and accommodation are satisfactory and are used well by teachers to promote and develop students' study skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students' achievements in AS Level examinations in 2002 were weak and did not provide an adequate base for A2 study.
- Teachers' planning does not clearly indicate the needs of individual students and how these will be met.

246. The school's results at A Level from 1998 to 2001 have generally been slightly below average, with few students attaining the higher grades. In 1999 they were well below average and in 2001 average. In 2002, the results at AS Level were very disappointing with few students achieving sufficient credit to claim certification. This has resulted in these students embarking on an A2 programme of study without the necessary base of knowledge skills and understanding. The science department is presently considering the most appropriate course of action for these students to maximise their opportunities. The inspection showed that students make satisfactory progress in their studies given the below average base from which they started. Although most students had attained the necessary entry requirements for the AS course of five GCSE grades at C or above to include double science, their basic knowledge of fundamental concepts such as photosynthesis is weak. Many students, but particularly those in Year 13 do not appreciate the demands of A Level study, nor have they developed the self-motivation or study skills to address the weaknesses in their basic knowledge. For example in a Year 13 lesson on photosynthesis students had not completed the preparatory revision tasks and consequently were not able to benefit fully from the work which had been prepared. These issues are a legacy of past staffing difficulties in the science department. The present staff who are teaching the AS and A2 biology groups have only been doing so since September 2002.

247. The quality of teaching for the post-16 biology groups is satisfactory and students' achievements are satisfactory given their low starting base. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well to plan interesting and stimulating activities. However, these are not always as successful as they might be because the students do not complete the necessary preparatory work. Teachers' planning is sound and they use questioning techniques well to enable students to review their learning. Both homework and work in class is regularly marked, often making good use of past examination papers and mark schemes. The regular oral and written feedback is summarised appropriately through the recently introduced review sessions which students have with their group tutors. A more formalised system of review by biology staff, specifically of the progress which individuals are making in biology, would enable students to be clearer about the next steps in their learning. This will enable teachers' planning for lessons to focus more effectively on the needs of individuals and how these will be addressed.

248. The head of the science provides clear direction for the work of the department and her

management is sound. It is only since the appointment of the present head of science, in September 2002, has there been any system for the review and evaluation of teaching and learning in the department. Consequently, the weaknesses in students' learning at GCSE Level are only now becoming apparent and strategies to address these are at an early stage of development and their effectiveness has yet to be realised. The teaching of biology has been radically overhauled since September 2002. There is now a sound scheme of work which provides clear guidance to teachers of what should be taught and when. Much work has been done to improve the resources and accommodation for the teaching of post-16 biology and these are now adequate. In order to provide a better match of provision to students' needs and aspirations, the department is presently considering the implications of a more vocational curriculum.

Physics

249. Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject and encourage students to develop good study skills enabling them to make good progress.
- Teachers make good use of questioning skills to match work well to the needs of individual students.
- There is sound planning based on an appropriate scheme of work.
- Teachers make good use of resources, especially the interactive whiteboard.

Areas for improvement

- Students' levels of knowledge and understanding of previous work done in Years 10 and 11 are not secure.
- Teachers' planning does not clearly indicate the needs of individual students and how these will be met.

250. Since 1998 the A Level results in physics have generally been close to those which would be expected nationally. However, the small entry means that this judgement should be treated with caution as each student often represents over ten per cent of the cohort. Although the provision in physics has been less affected by the difficulties experienced by the science department since the last inspection, nevertheless there are still underlying weaknesses in the knowledge and skills which pupils develop at GCSE that affect their performance as students at AS and A2. Although all the present post-16 students in the physics groups have attained the necessary entry requirements for the AS course of five GCSE grades at C or above to include double science, their basic knowledge of fundamental concepts in areas such as electricity is weak. In a Year 12 lesson, where students presented their findings about research work done at home on various aspects of optics, the general level of students' communication skills was below that which would be expected. Given these weaknesses in their basic skills overall, most students by the end of Year 13 achieve well, and sometimes very well, in their work.

251. The quality of teaching is never less than good with many very good features; it is a strength of the provision. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are very enthusiastic. They have high expectations and continually challenge students' thinking. They make good use of questioning skills to skilfully match the demands of the work to the needs of the students. A particularly good example of this was a Year 13 lesson introducing the concept of universal gravitation, where the students' interest was stimulated and sustained through well-paced delivery and good questioning to consolidate learning, and interesting side issues were explored with vigour. With the small numbers in the groups this approach works well. However, although teachers' lesson planning is sound and firmly based on a good scheme of work there is no specific identification of the needs of individual students and how these will be met. Teachers make very good use of resources, particularly the interactive whiteboard to make learning exciting and interesting.

252. Since the appointment of the new head of science in September 2002, much-needed systems and structures have been implemented and already the impact of these is beginning to be felt although their full potential is still to be realised. Laboratory resources have been brought up to a level where they

are now adequate, although some of the equipment is dated and not well-suited to the demands of post-16 science. The laboratory accommodation has been improved and is now satisfactory, with the interactive whiteboard being used effectively. Staff skills in its use are also developing well to further realise its potential. Systems to review and evaluate teaching and learning in the department were only established in September 2002. Consequently, the weaknesses in students' learning at GCSE Level are only now becoming apparent and strategies to address these are at an early stage of development and their effectiveness has yet to be realised.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

253. The quality of teaching is good. Students learn very well, they respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. The faculty is well led and managed.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Leadership and management.
- Progress of students.

Areas for improvement

- No significant areas for improvement.

255. The GCE AS and A Level results are satisfactory meets the demands of the course. All students who took the examination gained a grade.

256. The standard of work of current students was average. Students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on GCSE results. In the lesson seen they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students recall knowledge and understanding well and apply it effectively to design and meeting the requirements of a specification. Their project work is good and shows the same confidence as their class work.

257. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the good teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in questioning and the tasks set. Lessons provide opportunities for students to practise what had been discussed and, as a result, their skills and techniques improve as the lesson progresses. In the lessons students have helpful opportunities to carry out detailed research, working as individuals to formulate ideas, to record their findings and to prepare specifications. Teachers draw together students' ideas well and provide helpful explanations that take learning forward. Students responded confidently to the activities as a result.

258. Students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. They rose to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. In the lesson time was used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion.

259. The good teaching and learning result from work in the faculty being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflected the course requirement and determined the level for good teaching. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of student performance through review, evaluation and assessment is becoming established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused.

BUSINESS

260. The focus of the inspection was business studies.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- The range of courses available enhances inclusiveness and equality of opportunity.
- The quality of accommodation and resources are good and these enhance learning.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and this promotes their learning effectively.

Areas for improvement

- The good use of a range of teaching and learning styles needs to be developed across the whole team.
- To improve standards in examination results.

262. A number of courses are offered in the sixth form including A/AS Level business studies, Vocational Certificate of Education in business (VCE), GNVQ Intermediate business and A/AS Level accounts. All of these courses with the exception of GNVQ Intermediate business have been introduced since the last inspection, so no comments on improvement can be made. The results for GNVQ Intermediate business were at expected levels in 2001 and are broadly in line with the results of 1998. This trend has continued with the 2002 results.

263. A /AS Level business studies was introduced to the curriculum in 2000 and therefore no results are available for 2001. The results for 2002 indicate that attainment is below national averages with only one student achieving a higher grade. The AS Level results for 2002 also are below expectations.

264. For present students, standards of work on the VCE course are, overall, in line with national standards. All students are making progress in their understanding of business, in some cases good progress is being made. For example, analytical skills and summarising skills were being developed when Year 12 students were writing individual explanations of gap analysis in a lesson on marketing. All students confidently use information and communication technology in a range of contexts that includes researching businesses on the internet and using spreadsheets for constructing a budget sheet in the finance unit of the intermediate GNVQ course. The key skills of literacy and information and communication technology are covered well and as a result these skills are sound.

265. In all lessons the attitudes of students were at least good and in most cases were very good. They are attentive and participate in question and answer sessions as well as in group discussions. Most are keen to do well. This has a positive impact on their learning. Students find the teachers to be very supportive and willing to give of their time to help when they are having difficulties in understanding particular business concepts.

266. Another reason that students make good progress is that teaching is good overall. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory. The good teaching is providing students with a sound understanding and knowledge of business. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and have positive relationships with the students. Satisfactory teaching could be improved by more effective planning that includes a range of teaching and learning styles.

267. The management of the department is good, with the potential to improve further. Two members of staff who share the responsibility currently lead the department. They have divided the areas of responsibility between them and are working effectively in partnership leading the team of five teachers. The quality of lesson planning is monitored on a regular basis. Clearly presented course

outlines and assessment methods for the vocational courses are shared with students so that they are clear as to what is required and how they are to be assessed. Students found this to be very helpful.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

268. The inspection focused on A and AS Level courses but the school also teaches vocational information and communication technology at GNVQ Level and a CISCO course: these were sampled during the inspection and contribute to the overall judgements about information and communication technology. Progress for students studying the vocational information and communication technology courses is good. The overall provision for information and communication technology is good and courses are attracting a larger number of students in Year 12 demonstrating an increase in popularity. Retention rates on vocational courses are good: in 2001, 85 per cent finished the information and communication technology intermediate GNVQ course in Year 12.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Knowledge and expertise of teaching staff.
- Good quality teaching.
- Improved planning and management.
- Courses appropriate to student needs.
- Very good provision and maintenance of computer resources.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are not high enough, particularly in Year 13.
- Information about student progress is not always used effectively to set targets.

270. In 2001 43 students were entered for AS Level many of whom had limited experience of information and communication technology before joining the course. A Level results in computer studies were below the national average. Of the four students who took A Level one student was absent for coursework and the exam, the rest of the group achieved a grade. The small numbers make statistical comparisons invalid but recent results have shown all achieve a grade. Evidence gathered shows that progress is now good. Students' attitudes are positive on all courses including the A and AS Level courses. Students show an interest in working independently without teacher intervention. For current Year 13 students, standards are low, closely related to students' previous experience and commitment to the course overall. The majority of Year 12 pupils are making good progress and achieving the appropriate level at this part of the course. In the GNVQ and CISCO course, students are achieving in line with expectations at this stage of both courses. Teachers are providing very good support to individuals in classes with attainment reflecting a wide spread of standards. Few examples of high attainment exist and there is a skew to the lower end of the scale.

271. Teaching is very good. Marking and assessment are effective in helping students judge their progress although this information is not always used effectively to set targets for future attainment. Similarly in the vocational information and communication technology and CISCO courses teaching is good and often excellent with students achieving course expectations. The CISCO course is extremely well managed and the e-learning course element is proving popular, offering plenty of intellectual challenge.

272. Lessons are well planned, managed and well presented. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and this is used effectively to plan and deliver high quality lessons. Expectations are high and students comment that they have been advised of course requirements and that courses are challenging. Students are acquiring computing skills, knowledge and understanding; they are confident users of information and communication technology. They appreciate the level of individual support available and

they are applying their knowledge in project work. Behaviour is very good and there are positive working relationships in evidence.

273. Recent changes in personnel and teaching methods are beginning to impact and attainment is rising. Although staff have only held responsibility for the organisation of the courses for a relatively short time, good progress has been made and leadership and management are good. The resources for learning are good and make an effective contribution to learning. The accommodation has recently been refurbished and this provides a positive ethos for student development. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject based on the recognition of the need to raise standards.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

274. The focus of the inspection was the leisure and tourism vocational courses but physical education was also sampled. Examination results were below average in 2001, standards are higher in 2002. Three lessons were observed. All were at least satisfactory and some good teaching was seen. Lessons included opportunities for pupils to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own and others performances and to analyse these using a range of theoretical principles. Pupils' work is of about average standard as they develop technical language and apply research skills. Both the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism and the AVCE courses in leisure and tourism were inspected.

Leisure and tourism

275. Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Very good standard of accommodation.
- Good use of local tourist facilities.

Areas for improvement

- Explore the opportunities of progression into further leisure and recreation areas.

276. The results of the July 2002 GNVQ advanced examination were below the national average. In July 2002 a small number of students completed the first year (of a two-year course) of the single award AVCE. Teacher assessments and inspection evidence at the halfway stage of the course indicate that the students are making good progress and are producing work of a standard that is in line with national expectations. The four students who have recently commenced the first year of the AVCE course have started well, and inspection evidence indicates that all these students will attain grades that are at least in line with national expectations.

277. Most of the students taking the AVCE course show they have good knowledge, understanding and practical skills. The best students are able to analyse and interpret information from a wide range of up-to-date, industry specific sources, and to use their findings to support sensible conclusions. They have a clear understanding of the vocational context of their work. Written work is of a good standard. The retention rate amongst students taking the AVCE courses is high.

278. The GNVQ intermediate course was introduced in September 2002. At the time of the inspection the course had been running for three weeks. Most of the students possess three or four grades D or E gained at the GCSE in July 2002. From this base achievement is good. Students are enthusiastic about the course, and join in class discussion enthusiastically, and most are able to make informed and perceptive comments regarding the tourist industry. Students are beginning to develop appropriate research skills and the better students are able to display good critical analysis of information. Students' written work is competent and thorough but often spoilt by weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

279. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The course co-ordinator, who was appointed to the school in September 2002, is enthusiastic about his subject and is creating a positive environment for both staff and students. Lessons are well planned and make good use of a variety of activities, including questions and answers, group work and role-play. All teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and bring first hand experience of the leisure and tourism industry to their lessons. Teachers circulate when working with small groups of students, encouraging worthwhile discussions to promote understanding. Visits to local leisure and tourism facilities, such as, Greenwich Tourist Office and local hotels, make an important contribution to students' learning. Teachers are constantly challenging the understanding of students, and in oral work, draw answers out through careful questioning. Teachers plan and sequence lessons well, with many having a practical focus that often helps students sustain interest and motivation in the topics being taught. Teachers treat their students with a high degree of sensitivity resulting in many students attaining levels of attainment that is commendable for them.

280. The accommodation is very well equipped and located in newly decorated and refurbished rooms. There is a very good supply of computer equipment which students use very competently.

281. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator has made a good start in reorganising the work of the subject. New schemes of work are being provided and are helping the delivery of the subject. The profile of the subject is being raised within the school. The staff who teach leisure and tourism are enthusiastic about their subject, support each other and are committed to the improvement of the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

282. The focus of the inspection was art, media studies and music. Drama was also inspected in some detail. The provision for drama is **very good**. Pupils achieve high standards and make good progress in their learning because teaching is very good and the subject is effectively led and managed. Standards have steadily risen since the last inspection and more students are choosing the subject at AS and A Level. Students' relationships are very good.

ART

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good: particularly in one to one tutorials.
- The way teachers and students evaluate the work together.
- Very good short-term targets given to students to help them develop their work.
- Improvements to the photography course.

Areas for improvement

- Standards need to be higher.
- Much of the teaching is filling in gaps in students' knowledge and understanding.
- The environment is untidy and is not visually inspiring.

284. Standards in art at A Level are broadly average but have been falling over the last four years. Four years ago 56 per cent of the students achieved an A grade whereas last year only 21 per cent did. A comparatively small number of students take the subject which could indicate that the subject has lost some appeal. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore not satisfactory although recent improvements are important ones. The change this year in examination and course work requirements demands skills in art such as the research and development of ideas which the students have not securely acquired. For example, few use their sketchbooks well to explain how their ideas have developed and to select further information. Teachers have realised there are these gaps and are working in a very focused and logical way developing these skills with both Year 13 and 12 students. Indications are that this will ensure students achieve well in their exams.

285. Students' work consists of a mixture of techniques; multimedia painting, construction and collage. As it is early in the term students' ideas inspiring their work are relatively new and underdeveloped but all individuals are pleased to talk about their work. Few have developed an art vocabulary that would help them discuss ideas of form, techniques or stimulus. Whilst technical language is now being well taught in the department the initiative is too new for the Year 12 and 13 students to benefit fully.

286. Relationships between members of the art department and the students are generally good. In some cases these relationships are very good and contribute to frank and constructive discussion. This develops the students' understanding of their own strengths and encourages them to ask questions and many make great effort with their work. Teachers are aware of the need to raise standards and prepare students well for courses. They use their rapport with students to discuss the requirements of the course and the work each student is doing. Students value this advice and support even though on occasions they have had to recognise their own weaknesses. The short-term targets set on these occasions help students plan the next steps in their work and help them focus their efforts well. Teachers demonstrate real sensitivity and understanding during these one to one discussions but also show that they can probe below the surface to discover the important issues affecting achievement. However, too much of this advice is remedial, filling gaps in students' knowledge and understanding.

287. Teachers ask good open-ended questions to help students think a little deeper and understand more. For example, when discussing work with students, teachers will ask questions such as, "Where are you going with this piece of work?" In almost all lessons teachers are asking students to make personal responses to the work of famous artists. Students find this a difficult request, as they have not had experience in Years 7 -11 to do this often enough to be proficient. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to help students improve their own work and to develop their understanding. This is particularly the case in photography where teachers' good subject knowledge is improving the technical competence of students and therefore their ability to use it creatively. Students are keen learners when they clearly understand what is expected and when they have the correct skills and techniques to be competent and creative. They still need support to produce enough work within the time available, as they are not yet independent and self-directing workers.

288. The leadership and the management of the department are shared and it is difficult to see where the main drive for improvement comes from which is one of the reasons for the slow progress since the last inspection.

Media Studies

289. Overall, the quality of provision for Media Studies is **excellent**.

Strengths

- High standard of achievement.
- Excellent teaching.
- Very good departmental leadership.
- Significant contribution made to literacy, social, moral and cultural development.
- High standard of resources and accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

290. Standards both at AS and A Level are well above average in relation to national standards. Practical work and accompanying documentation are of a particularly high standard. Finished media products, in both video and print, clearly show high levels of knowledge and understanding of a wide range of production skills and successfully utilise the codes and conventions of a number of film and print genre. Production logs, storyboarding and evaluation of finished product are also well above national standards. Essays and levels of class discussion and debates on media issues are mature, with students able to contribute confidently using sophisticated levels of media language and terminology.

291. Since the last report, results at A Level have been consistently well above national average. Since 1999, there has been a steady rise in the number of students achieving an A-C grade, from 67 per cent in 1999 to 75 per cent in 2002. All students have achieved a pass grade in the last four years. In some years, boys do better than girls, and vice-versa, but overall there is no difference in their standards of achievement. AS results are also above national average. In 2002, 61 percent of pupils achieved an A-C grade with an overall pass rate of 87 percent. Students perform significantly better in media studies than they do in other subjects. The number of students taking media is very healthy and increasing each year.

292. The quality of teaching during Years 12 and 13 is excellent. Teachers have a deep knowledge and command of the subject across all aspects of the syllabus. Lessons, often lasting up to three hours, are well planned, varied, well facilitated with constantly changing activity and group dynamic. These qualities, as well as the use of timely review sessions involving group discussion, ensure lessons are challenging, brisk, engaging and produce effective learning for students of all ability and background. Students respond very positively to the high expectations and levels of subject knowledge displayed by teachers. They are totally engaged and clearly enjoy the subject. Particularly remarkable was the maturity and ability shown by some students in effectively facilitating small-group discussion. "Home produced" classroom resources have teacher ownership, are relevant to syllabus developments, and reflect student interest and abilities. Accommodation is very good with use made of information and communication technology and other media technology such as digital image making, photography and editing.

293. Assessment of folder work essays is very thorough, involving target setting and student self-assessment. Students are well aware of the assessment and success criteria for their work and the standards to which they are performing and aspiring to.

294. Leadership of the department is very good. There is clear vision, including how the subject can make a significant contribution across the curriculum in support of any future school efforts to achieve specialist college status. The department has identified and made considerable progress on a number of areas it has identified for improvement, focused on how the subject is taught and resourced. There are regular meetings of the four media studies teachers, all media graduates, who constitute a strong team. There is an excellent programme of continuous professional development. Two teachers sit on the advisory panel of the British Film Institute for which one has become an associate tutor. Such professional development ensures that subject knowledge and practical expertise is constantly being updated. The department enjoys good links with a number of outside bodies and businesses.

Music

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

Strengths

- Good quality teaching and learning.
- Improving attainment.
- Standards of instrumental work.
- Overall leadership and management of the subject.
- Teachers planning and use of skill development.

Areas for improvement

- Use of information and communication technology to develop composition work.
- Continue to raise standards in performance, musical literacy and critical analysis.

296. In the 2002 A Level examination, of the two students entered, both achieved pass grades. The numbers over the last two years have been too low to make useful comparison to national levels.

297. The one student in the present Year 13 dropped out of the course during the Inspection period due to pressure of other A Level courses. Currently there are five students working on the AS Level course.

298. Of the work seen in lessons, scrutiny of some written work and discussion with the students, those in Year 12 have made a positive start to the course. Students are building on their prior learning well whilst revisiting skills and concepts to consolidate their understanding at this early stage of the course. Performance skills are average, whilst musical literacy and composition is slightly below average.

299. Students now have the opportunity to learn well because of the very good quality of teaching and revised schemes of work. Teachers share the course and use their experience and expertise in different areas to the advantage of student learning. The quality of teaching observed in the lesson samples were never less than very good.

300. The impact of instrumental lessons and the opportunities for students to perform to one another are significant in helping to raise performance standards. Students also extend their performing skills by taking part in school ensembles and in the school band. This also provides a good role model for other year groups in the school.

HUMANITIES

301. The focus was on history, geography and psychology. Classical studies, religious education and law were also sampled. In religious education two Year 12 lessons were seen in which teaching and learning were at least good and students' attitudes very good. The standard of the work being done was in line with that found nationally. Classical studies is studied by a small number of students who are working at a standard at least in line with the national average. In the one lesson observed, very good learning took place because of the very good teaching and the equally positive response of the students. Standards are in line with course expectations and good teaching helps students to make brisk progress.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The position of the department as part of the humanities faculty.

Areas for improvement

- The levels of attainment of all students.
- Teaching that does not sufficiently challenge all students.
- The lack of opportunities for students to carry out fieldwork.
- The numbers of students taking up geography at AS Level.

303. A Level performance in 2001 was above national averages in terms of the percentage passing and the percentage achieving A and B grades but the 2002 results indicate that standards have fallen. AS Level results in 2002 were also below expectations. Very low numbers of students have taken up AS Level geography in recent years, which means the statistics do not show clear trends on their own.

304. Lessons confirm that attainment is below average, with students in both Year 12 and Year 13 producing oral and written work that frequently shows a lack of depth of knowledge, or that indicates poor geographical skills. For example, a Year 12 student had produced a hydrograph that lacked the detailed labelling that would be expected in Year 10 GCSE work. In the best lessons students show better-developed skills of critical analysis, such as in a lesson in which they were asked to investigate contrasting theories on global warming. However, the quality of their notes is not good enough to provide a basis for revision that will support achievement at the higher A Level grades.

305. Students are generally well motivated and they respond positively to challenging lessons in which they are required to make decisions individually. They readily answer questions and participate in discussion but few discuss their ideas in depth or detail. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on flooding, students listed superficial details about the 1995 flood in Britain, and their work showed a poor understanding of the causes. All students have a satisfactory grasp of basic skills and concepts but their ability to relate these to case studies in the real world is limited. They are able to use computers to research and analyse data, but are not always independent in selecting or collecting information.

306. Students' gains in knowledge and skills are limited in lessons, and their work shows insufficient progress. This, and their low attainment, is a result of some unsatisfactory teaching. While a minority of lessons are good or very good, too many lessons are characterised by low teacher expectations and undemanding activities. This is sometimes reflected in poor planning, in which appropriate learning outcomes have not been identified. At other times inaccurate or poor quality answers are allowed to stand. Too often students are required to read textual information during lessons, which is a more appropriate activity for their private study. This was a feature of a Year 13 lesson on hurricanes in which students were required to make notes from a photocopied text; their oral feedback was poor in quality, with detail in discussion and depth of analysis not above GCSE standard. In marking there is a lack of consistency in the feedback that students are given and teachers sometimes credit work that is of an unsatisfactory standard. This leads to the failure of students to improve the quality of their work.

307. A key weakness of the current A and AS Level courses is the lack of fieldwork. Plans are in place to conduct fieldwork in the near future for A Level students, but insufficient priority is currently given to fieldwork in general. Library resources to support A Level study are inadequate at present. In order to raise standards the good practice in planning, assessment and target-setting seen in the main school will need to be systematically introduced to the A and AS Level courses.

History

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

Strengths

- History is becoming more popular.
- Teaching is mostly good.
- Relationships with pupils are good.

Areas for improvement

- Improve A Level examination results through consistent teaching and careful monitoring of pupil progress.
- Improve the quality of texts for A Level students.

309. A Level examination results in both 2001 and 2002 were below national averages but the evidence from the inspection shows that students are now better and attainment is close to the average. This is because good teaching is helping to raise standards: the results of the AS Level examinations shows how this is starting to lead to good progress. Another important piece of evidence that shows improvements in the subject is that the number of students choosing to study history in the sixth form has almost doubled since 2001.

310. Students are articulate and are able to place historical ideas and concepts in context. In Year 12 they demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of Anglo Saxon England and are able to ask and to answer perceptive questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the political and economic system. In Year 13 they were able to prioritise the causes and effect of the decline of the Weimer Republic. Students displayed a good understanding of life in Germany in the 1920s and are confident in presenting their group findings to the whole class.

311. Students make good progress in the analysis and interpretation of source material. They are willing to debate historical issues and respond well to challenging questions from their teacher. A greater

emphasis upon backing up evidence with specific examples combined with reference to challenging texts will raise standards further.

312. Teaching is a strength of the work of the department. In the best lessons the brisk pace, a variety of methods, an emphasis on group or pair work and the modelling of good answers helped students to develop their skills as historians. Challenging questions enabled more able students to consider different interpretations of history. A greater focus upon independent learning combined with consistency in introducing students to challenging sources will raise achievement further.

313. Very good relations between teachers and pupils were observed in history lessons. Teachers treat their students with respect which results in their high motivation. A lesson during which the students had to move around the class and to elicit responses from their peers was particularly successful in enabling students to learn from their classmates. Students are grateful for the support and advice they receive from their teachers about improving their grades. Students would benefit from access to a greater number of rigorous texts in the library.

314. Teachers are beginning to monitor the progress of students carefully. Year 12 students have been provided with target minimum grades based on their average GCSE performance score. However, some students were still unclear about their achievement in relation to examination criteria. There was much evidence of good formative marking. Teachers now need to check regularly on the notes taken in class, carefully monitor progress and act swiftly if they perceive that difficulties have arisen.

315. The leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory. There are detailed schemes of work which are in the process of being reviewed on the basis of pupil attainment. The head of faculty has a clear view about the priorities for development. Systems for tracking good progress are being developed.

316. A high priority must now be given to ensuring the highest quality of teaching in every Year 13 lesson and to the close monitoring and evaluation of students' progress. However, the department is well placed for future development.

Psychology

317. Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The teacher's subject expertise, which enhances the quality of teaching.
- The attitudes of students towards a new subject.

Areas for improvement

- Broaden the range of teaching strategies, in particular to encourage more active learning by students, including greater use of group work, presentations based upon independent research, discussion and debate.

318. This is the first year that psychology has been offered as an option in the sixth form. Its introduction has been in response to student demand and it has proved a popular initiative with two large AS Level groups. An appropriately qualified member of the humanities department has undertaken planning for the course, although observation of practice in other schools was postponed due to the teacher's illness during the planning stage. Appropriate schemes of work are being developed in line with the requirements of the AS Level examination syllabus. Planning for individual lessons is detailed.

319. As this is a new course, there are no previous examination results. Observation of work and discussion with the teacher and students indicates that students' current standards of attainment are appropriate for this early stage of the course. Students display a sound knowledge and understanding of psychological theories related to 'attachment'. Some respond with confidence to the teacher's questioning and are able to relate the theories to personal experiences, sometimes challenging the

theories, but most are rather tentative. For example, one female student effectively challenged the proposition that at an early stage of infancy a child will relate indiscriminately to any carer. However, in general, students have yet to develop appropriate evaluative skills when addressing research.

320. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and the learning of students of all abilities is at least sound as a consequence. Teaching has clear aims and objectives, which are effectively shared with students. The teacher has very good subject knowledge. Relationships are very good and students are prepared to ask for help and clarification. Whilst lessons are well prepared and involve a range of activities and resources, the style adopted provides too few opportunities for students to become active learners. Lessons are well structured, with good teacher exposition and whole-class questioning. However, activities then tend to be completed by students individually, with a limited amount of informal collaboration and too much information given by the teacher. Whilst the teacher does encourage collaboration, the nature of the tasks rarely supports this. The opportunity for independent research using information and communication technology is provided through homework and there is some evidence of group work in revising the term's first module of work. In order to develop evaluative skills, students need more opportunities to become more active learners, through greater use of group tasks and research. Students of all abilities should be given the opportunity to make presentations and to debate. Students' attitudes are very good. Some engage well in lessons, although too many remain rather passive. They are attentive and want to succeed.

321. Psychology is part of the humanities faculty. It is taught in a pleasant room off the sixth form cafeteria. Appropriate support is provided by the head of faculty. Whilst the course is an early stage of development, the teacher would benefit from observation of active teaching strategies at sixth form level in other humanities subjects.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

322. The focus of the inspection was English and Spanish, but work in French and German was also sampled. Standards in French and German in Year 13 are in line with expectations overall, though one German student is working at a higher level towards a top grade. Standards in Year 12 French are a little below par due, in part, to a slow pace of learning in some lessons. The main weaknesses are in the limited range of structures and vocabulary which students know well enough to use with confidence. The quality of teaching is broadly good and ranges from satisfactory to very good.

English

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

Strengths

- The teaching is of a consistently good standard and is often very good.
- Students are learning well because of the positive nature of both the working relationships and their attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The systems in place for monitoring students' academic progress are not fully operational.
- Attainment at the highest A Level grades has not been consistent in recent years.

324. The standards attained in the 2001 A Level examinations were well below average, particularly in terms of the proportion of students obtaining grades A or B. They have been below the national average for the last two years and below the standards attained at the time of the last inspection. Results were then described as close to average but they were not typical of the standards being attained before then or since. The results of girls have fluctuated more than those of boys. When account is taken of students' levels of attainment at GCSE, there has been under-achievement in A Level results over recent years. Results in 2002 were a significant improvement on those of 2001. Well over half the students obtained a grade in the A to C range and all students who were entered for the subject passed. In the 2002 AS examinations students performed better than in 2001, with all passing and a large majority

obtaining grades in the A to C range. Results in 2001 had been below expectation. The improvements in the 2002 standards at AS and A Levels were shared by students from a variety of backgrounds.

325. The standard of work seen in Year 12 in the course of the inspection mirrors the improvements seen in the public examinations and the quality is what would be expected at this early stage in the course. Students were adapting well to the demands of the AS course and were beginning to take increased responsibility for their own learning. Presentations in class and written work show that they are developing appropriate skills and confidence in handling research material and in literary analysis. This was seen in the ability of students to draw parallels between 'The Handmaid's Tale' by Margaret Atwood and the work of George Orwell. This required wide reading and the analysis of background material and both were done well. Standards in Year 13 A Level work were close to the national average. They had developed a critical, independent approach in their analytical work and were able to illustrate their reasoning with apt textual references. This was seen in the work done on Shakespeare's 'Othello' where the work of many of the students was meeting the criteria for grades A and B. Most of the writing seen was fluent and well structured. When account is taken of the good GCSE results obtained by the students on entry to the course, progress in the subject is satisfactory. Some of the higher attaining students are working to above average standards and their levels of achievement are good. Retention rates on the AS course and from that to A Level in Year 13 are good.

326. All sixth form teaching was good, and at times very good, and this accounts for the progress being made by students. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and they plan well with close reference to the demands of the examination. Their enthusiasm for the subject was evident and lessons were delivered in a lively manner. This stimulated students' interest and they spoke highly of their commitment to the subject and their enjoyment of the work. This is a significant factor in explaining the improved standards seen. Expectations are high and relationships are positive and supportive of the learning process. These are strengths in the work of the department. Some outstanding examples of detailed and helpful written feedback in the marking of students' work were seen in files but this good practice is not universal and is an area for improvement.

327. The newly appointed acting head of department is providing good leadership by putting improvements in the quality of teaching and learning as a developmental priority. She is well supported in this by her line manager and the subject's teaching staff and this strong sense of team commitment pervades their work. Teachers are responsive to change and are able to evaluate strengths and areas for improvement. Their professional approach owes much to the supportive culture which is being established in the department and to the effective sharing of teaching tasks and opportunities. The head of department has identified the developments in teaching strategies which will further improve the quality of provision. She and her team have the capacity and the will to make these further improvements.

Spanish

328. Overall, the quality of provision in Spanish is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and results in good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Time allocation is lower than that for French in Year 13.

329. There are small numbers taking A Level Spanish: two in Year 12 and one in Year 13. This compares to four in Year 12 French with three in Year 13 and two in Year 13 German. Most students are girls.

330. Spanish results have been very low recently where numbers enable valid comparisons to be made. In 2001, for example, Crown Woods students achieved only one third of the national average for higher grades. There was some improvement in 2002 when two out of five students (40 per cent) gained

A or B grades with other students gaining C or D. The school uses value added measures to judge performance from GCSE to A Level and this analysis shows significant progress made by students of Spanish over two years. Results of the advanced subsidiary (AS) examination in 2002 were also encouraging with the single student achieving a B grade.

331. Students of Spanish can read aloud with good pronunciation, understanding and fluency. They can cope with hearing Spanish at native speed and answer questions with a satisfactory degree of detail and accuracy. Some high quality discussion took place between students and teacher about the environment and pollution. Students' command of tenses and breadth of vocabulary are sound, though they have to think carefully before using some of the more irregular and radically changing verbs. Writing at length and for a range of purposes is developing over time. Attainment in Year 12 is now broadly in line with expectations, whereas the attainment of the Year 13 student (a Portuguese speaker) is above average.

332. Teaching is consistently good and presents high levels of challenge to move learning forward at a good pace. Both teachers have expert knowledge of the language - one is a native speaker, the other an Advanced Skills Teacher. A good variety of resources is used to stimulate discussion and information and communication technology is used by both teachers and students. A very good lesson with Year 13 involved an electronic game of, "Who wants to be a millionaire?" using questions in Spanish supplied by the teacher. Teachers keep good records of progress in the four skills and use this information diagnostically to plan further work.

333. Students are mature and attentive and show interest in the subject. They have been encouraged to develop skills in independent learning and willingly use the Internet and other sources to research information. They are keen to participate in discussions, and can sustain and develop their views well. They make use of skills already acquired in the learning of other languages to improve their learning of Spanish. The cultural context of the language is learnt through students' contact with native speakers, including foreign language assistants and by use of authentic materials.