

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **KING JAMES'S SCHOOL**

Knaresborough, North Yorkshire

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121687

Headteacher: Dr. D. Hudson

Reporting inspector: Mr D. Pittman  
16976

Dates of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2002

Inspection number: 249644

Short enhanced Sixth Form inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections  
Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	King James Road Knaresborough North Yorkshire
Postcode:	HG5 8EB
Telephone number:	01423 866061
Fax number:	01423 861189
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. J. T. Bramham
Date of previous inspection:	7 <sup>th</sup> October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
16976	Denis Pittman	Registered Inspector		Teaching and learning Resources Finance Staffing Accommodation
19339	Susan Evasdaughter	Lay Inspector		Attitudes and behaviour Welfare and guidance Careers Partnership with parents
27984	Alan Whitehall	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team Inspector	English	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
19913	Roger Garrett	Team Inspector	Drama	
1779	David Leonard	Team Inspector	Chemistry	Assessment
27050	Valerie Blackburn	Team Inspector	Biology	
17923	Michael Shaw	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology	
10053	Janet Simms	Team Inspector	Art and design	
23891	Peter Slape	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
22590	Robert Castle	Team Inspector	Geography Physical education	
28101	Andrew Lagden	Team Inspector	History	
17404	Judith Tolley	Co-ordinator	French Special educational needs	Curriculum Equal opportunities
1819	Roger Crowther	Team Inspector	Psychology Business education	
18076	Howard Dodd	Team Inspector	Physics	

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)  
3 Harrowby Road  
West Park  
Leeds  
LS16 5HN

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school was founded in 1616 with a charter from King James 1<sup>st</sup>. Since 1971 it has been a comprehensive school. The school is larger than average, serving 1726 pupils and students aged 11 to 18. The school gained Technology College status in 1998, and became a Training school from September 2001. It is the only secondary school in Knaresborough, with almost all pupils transferring from the local primary schools. The socio-economic circumstances of pupils are varied, but are generally above average; the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Very few pupils come from a minority ethnic background, and none have English as an additional language. Around 22 per cent of pupils are on the schools register for special educational needs, and approximately three per cent of pupils have statements of need; both figures are broadly in line with the national average. The overall standard of attainment of pupils when they enter the school is above average.

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

King James's continues to be a successful school, producing standards which are well above average. Pupils achieve well as a result of good quality teaching. Pupils' personal development is significantly enhanced by an ethos which is caring and supportive. Teachers have established a very positive rapport with pupils, which is conducive to effective learning. The school is well led and has a clear sense of shared values and objectives; it provides good value for money.

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

- Standards of attainment in examinations and tests are well above national averages.
- The leadership of the school is innovative, and there is a clear sense of direction for pursuing its objectives.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and their relationships with staff promote effective learning.
- The range of opportunities provided in the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, broaden and enrich the personal development of pupils.

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

- The use of assessment data to monitor progress, and the quality of reports.
- The accommodation provision for science, technology and art.
- Ensuring the pace and challenge in lessons is appropriate for the most able pupils.

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

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

The school was last inspected in October 1996. The school has made good progress since then. Standards of attainment continue to be well above average; the trend in improvement in GCSE examinations is better than the national picture. The key issues identified in the last inspection have been effectively addressed. Because of its increasing popularity, the school has grown considerably, but this is beginning to put a strain on the current levels of accommodation provision. The curriculum provides a broader range of courses, which has extended the range of pupils' learning opportunities. The range of quality assurance procedures introduced has led to more consistency in standards of teaching. The tracking of pupils is better, but individual target setting is an area for improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	C
A-levels/AS-levels	*	*	B	

**Key**

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

\*In 2001, the method of reporting post-16 qualifications changed significantly. These changes mean that previous sixth form results are not comparable with those of 2001.

In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 pupils achieved results that were well above average overall. Results in English have been more variable in recent years than those of mathematics or science, although there has been a significant improvement in the last two years. In comparison with similar schools, attainment in English was well above average. In general there has been no significant difference overall in the attainment of girls and boys over the past five years. However, in the 2001 tests girls generally performed better in all three subjects. National Curriculum results have risen at a rate broadly in line with the national average. The rising trend in GCSE results is above the national average. Examination performance in most subjects was above national figures, with particularly high standards being achieved in art, design and technology and science. Standards achieved in German and business studies were not as high as they should have been. In GCSE examinations there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Overall, the attainment of pupils is in line with the performance of similar schools. The targets set for 2001 were particularly challenging, and the school failed to meet these. In 2002, overall performance for five or more A\* to C grades improved to 71 per cent. Examination results in the sixth form are above average; provisional data shows a significant improvement in 2002.

Standards in lessons at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average; students achieve very well. Standards of literacy and numeracy are high. Students with special educational needs make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are generally enthusiastic about their lessons. They come to school with very positive attitudes and a willingness to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Despite the difficulties presented by large numbers of pupils moving around a large and complex site, pupils are very well behaved, polite and respectful to their teachers and others.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered by their School Council, although in some areas their approach to independent research and use of initiative is under-developed.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average. Pupils are keen to come to school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. There are examples of high quality teaching in many subjects; excellent teaching was seen in art. Teaching meets the needs of pupils well. However, in some lessons, there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is generally good. The National Literacy, Numeracy and Key Stage 3 Strategies are being effectively dealt with in English and mathematics. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and expect pupils to produce good quality work. In response to this effective teaching, pupils learn well; they work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding in subject activities. The positive relationships in most lessons help to sustain pupils' interests and motivation.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils of all ability levels with good opportunities to learn. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and positively promotes pupils' personal development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are supported well, and most achieve well in tests and examinations. The targets for pupils are reviewed systematically; this helps to monitor their progress effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities for personal development. The moral and social development of pupils is particularly strong. An extensive provision of visits abroad and in this country helps develop their cultural awareness. The school has improved the provision for assemblies.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils' daily needs are met through hygienic school facilities, a full-time nurse, a peer-counselling group (the Listeners Club) and a comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme. The prevention of anti-social behaviour is very good.

The school collects substantial amounts of data about the performance of individual pupils across all departments. However, this is not used effectively enough to communicate target levels and grades to pupils or make clear to them what they need to do to raise their attainment. Teachers make insufficient use of assessment information to focus sharply on the learning needs of higher attaining pupils. The vast majority of parents work well with the school – they value the contribution it is making to their children's personal development. Training in child protection is not sufficiently widespread throughout the staff nor are children given enough education of how to protect themselves and others from abuse. The school has not conducted a risk assessment of the congestion caused by buses at the front of school, which potentially poses a serious risk to safety.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and senior staff provide effective and efficient leadership of the school. The head has successfully initiated change within the school such as promoting Technology College status. Many heads of department and pastoral leaders show good quality leadership and management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very supportive and bring a range of skills to their work in school. They have a clear understanding of the school's priorities for development and have worked hard on such issues as improving the overall quality of accommodation. The governors have taken an active role in the school's strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school is making effective use of information and data to improve its performance. It has established good review and monitoring procedures that help to identify both its strengths and weaknesses and provide information about future developments.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning and control are efficient. Subjects are given appropriate budgets to support pupils' learning opportunities. The capacity of the school's accommodation is inadequate to cope with the increasing numbers of pupils. Very good use is made of teaching and non-teaching staff.

The school's development plan clearly identifies the priorities for improvement. The plan is particularly innovative in as much as it uses the principles of best value to check the progress towards these targets. There are some statutory breaches that the governors need to address; these are in the provision for religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship. The increasing popularity of the school is putting an increasing strain upon the adequacy of the accommodation provision, particularly in science and art.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school.</li> <li>• They would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• The expectations that pupils and students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consistency of homework.</li> <li>• The way in which they are kept informed about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

<p>work hard and achieve their best.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leadership and management of the school.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school.</li> <li>• They think the teaching is good.</li> </ul>	
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The inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by most parents. Parents particularly expressed concern regarding the timing of meetings with teachers for pupils in older year groups. For example, parents felt that the full written report issued at the beginning of the summer term for Year 10 is too late for parents to take action on any difficulties. However, there are three formal points of contact (through reports or meetings) with parents in Years 7 to 10, this reduces to two in Year 11. The school issues short reports and performance reviews in advance of these written reports, but these do not always alert parents so that parents can take action to address any issues raised. The school accepts that there have been issues with inconsistency with regard to homework and is taking effective steps to address this.

## ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM KING JAMES'S SCHOOL

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school serves 342 students which is nearly double the size of an average sixth form. All the courses, apart from GCSE re-sits in English and mathematics, additional GCSE courses in Latin and Spanish and Intermediate level courses in information and communication technology (ICT), business studies and science, are of an advanced standard, either as academic AS and A-level courses or vocational A-levels. Students enter the sixth form with above average GCSE results.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Provision in the sixth form is good. The sixth form is cost effective and provides good value for money. Standards are above average and improving; students achieve well. The average points score of the students who took A-level examinations in 2001 compared with their average total points scores in GCSE examinations reveals that they made above average progress in the sixth form. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The broad range of courses offered meets the needs of the students effectively. The sixth form is very well managed and organised.

#### Strengths

- Standards attained are above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students' attitudes towards their learning are very positive and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- The curriculum provides students with a wide range of courses and extra-curricular activities relevant to their needs.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.

#### What could be improved

- Standards and achievement in physics and geography.
- Statutory requirements for religious education.
- The development of independent learning strategies, particularly to meet the needs of gifted and talented and higher attaining students more effectively.
- The use of assessment to enable students to take responsibility for their own progress.

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

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards at A-level are above the national average and achievement is very good. The quality of teaching is very good, promoting effective learning particularly at A-level. Pure mathematics at AS-level is in line with the national average.

Chemistry	Very good. Examination results have been consistently well above average. Teaching and learning are very good in Year 13 and good in Year 12. The department is very well led.
Physics	Satisfactory. Standards at AS and A-level are below the national average but improving. Arrangements for accommodation adversely affect learning. Teaching is good. There is good leadership. Students have very good attitudes and relationships with staff.
Biology	Good. The quality of teaching is good and often very good and results in good learning by the majority of students, many of whom attain grades higher than expected.
Design and technology	Good. Standards are above average, and have improved in both AS and A-level in the last year. Teaching and learning are good. The department is well led and managed, and students achieve well.
Business education	Good. The quality of teaching is good, lessons are well planned. The department is well organised. Attainment is above average and improving.
Information technology	Very good. Standards of work seen are at the national average. Students achieve well in the subject. Teaching is consistently good and the subject is very well led and managed.
Physical education	Very good. Learning is very good due to very good teaching. Attainment is well above average. Achievement is very good. There are good levels of participation in extra-curricular activities.
Art	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good in both years; students achieve very highly and most attain high grades. Very extensive extra-curricular provision adds significantly to students' experience.
Theatre studies	Good. Standards are consistently above average. Teaching is good overall and students learn well. They have very good attitudes to their work and show much commitment. There is good leadership and management.
Geography	Satisfactory. Standards are well below average with some under-achievement, which is now being addressed. Teaching is good but learning is satisfactory because it is hampered by the organisation of the course. Leadership is satisfactory.
History	Good. Standards are above the national average. A-level results have improved significantly over the last year. Achievement is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good.
Psychology	Good. Standards are above average and attainment is improving. New staff provide lively and expert teaching. Students are enthusiastic and articulate; they relate well to staff.
English	Good. Standards are above average in English literature and average in English language. Achievement is good. Very strong relationships with the students contribute to effective teaching

	and learning.
French	Good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Standards are above average. Students achieve well. They have very positive attitudes and very good relationships with teachers. The department is very well led and managed.

Work was sampled in other subjects. Teaching was very good overall in these subjects; for example, in politics and media studies students achieve well, and the standard of work is well above average. In a music lesson the quality of teaching and learning was excellent. The teachers' musical expertise and knowledge were used very effectively to promote students' understanding of compositional techniques. Teaching and learning in sociology are satisfactory.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The monitoring of students' academic performance is good overall and very good in some subjects, for example, design and technology. The reporting of students' progress to parents could be sharpened by identifying more clearly in reports what specific features of the students' work they would need to concentrate on in order for their grade to improve. Educational support is very good. Students are well guided regarding choice of subjects, though they have a minor concern that this is not always well linked to their choice of university course. They trust and value their tutors and feel very well supported on personal issues. Staff are generally diligent in ensuring appropriate provision for students' health and safety.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed. Students are given good information about courses and effective programmes are organised to give them a broad educational experience and prepare them for the demands of sixth form work. Standards and provision are regularly reviewed with curriculum leaders and appropriate action taken to raise standards. Students' progress is closely monitored and they regularly review their progress with staff and set targets. The school is committed to providing a wide range of courses which effectively meet the needs of its students.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The choice of courses offered.</li> <li>Teachers are accessible to give help when they have difficulty with their work.</li> <li>They enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise others to join the sixth form in this school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The advice they are given about what they can do in the sixth form.</li> <li>Information they receive about their progress in relation to the qualifications they expect to get.</li> <li>Advice they are given by the school and/or careers advisers about what they should do when they leave</li> </ul>

	<p>school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students feel that they are not always treated as responsible young adults.</li> </ul>
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The areas that students feel could be improved, as outlined above, represent significant numbers of students' responses to the questionnaire. However, when these issues were followed up at a meeting with representatives from Years 12 and 13 the students indicated that they were very happy with most aspects of provision and were able to suggest only minor improvements. For example, they felt that the school could be more proactive in ensuring that appointments are arranged with the external careers adviser.

## **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**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Standards of attainment in examinations and tests are well above national averages.**

1. Standards of work are high throughout the school. In Years 7 to 9, the standards in English, mathematics and science are well above expectations; results in the national tests are well above national averages. Overall performance was better than in similar schools. Standards in English were very good when compared with the performance of similar schools. In the 2002 tests the good standards of English were sustained but there was a marginal fallback in the performance of pupils in mathematics and science. The reasons for this were a higher than average absence rate for these tests. Nevertheless, overall standards continue to be well above average.
2. The 2001 GCSE results for pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades were well above national figures, apart from the performance in business studies and German where they were below national averages. In a range of subjects pupils gained success at the highest grades of A\* and A: this significant level of performance was achieved in art, design and technology and English. An initial analysis of the examinations for 2002 shows that the overall results for five or more A\* to C grades improved by two per cent; they now stand at 71 per cent. The overall trend of improvement in GCSE examinations is above average. In some areas pupils did well relative to other subjects; standards were particularly good in art, resistant materials and science. The poor performance in German continues to be a concern. Part of the reason for this is the lack of challenge and expectation for higher attaining pupils in some lessons.
3. The overall achievement of pupils is good, being particularly significant in Years 7 to 9. Generally, pupils read widely with a good understanding of texts. They have good analytical skills and can interpret material effectively in a wide range of subjects. Pupils have good writing skills; their factual recording is particularly strong. In range of lessons, pupils write fluently, with very good expression. The quality of presentation of work is generally good. Speaking and listening skills are well developed. The group activities, which take place in lessons, help to develop this ability. The overall standard of literacy in the school is good. Standards of numeracy are good. Pupils are confident and competent in applying number skills to problems which occur in other subjects.
4. Pupils have good ICT skills. Most pupils can competently use a range of software programs. In a number of subjects there is evidence of pupils using word processing skills, data handling and spreadsheets to analyse data. Most pupils have access to ICT facilities at home, and this supports their learning in these skills.
5. Parents and pupils alike recognise the good standards achieved by the school. At the parents meeting held with the Registered Inspector, parents indicated that this was one of the strengths they appreciated.

#### **The leadership of the school is innovative, and there is a clear sense of direction for pursuing its objectives.**

6. The headteacher provides very good leadership. He has been instrumental in bringing change to the school through the acquisition of Technology College status and the school's validation as a training institution. An important platform to the technology bid was the involvement and funding for local primary schools. The outcome of this initiative has been a greater cohesiveness in terms of the school's aims and objectives, both within the school and with the feeder institutions. The headteacher has

promoted the principles of self-evaluation. The school now has an ethos where staff are keen to improve upon their current practices. The school has placed considerable emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school is managed with thoroughness and clear purpose to bring about improvement.

7. An effective senior management team very ably support the headteacher. The team works well together and show a strong commitment to the objectives of the school. They exercise their delegated responsibilities well, conducting monitoring and review activities systematically and efficiently. Every year there is a detailed review and audit of performance of each subject, and this leads to objectives being drawn up both for the whole school and for individual subjects. The school development plan effectively reflects this review process and establishes clear priorities for improvement. It is particularly innovative in as much as it uses the principles of 'best value' to monitor the progress being made in the specified areas for development.
8. The monitoring of teaching is very good in both its breadth and its detail. Senior managers and the heads of department have been trained to observe lessons so they can both carry out monitoring, and also understand the features of high quality lessons. The work of teachers is monitored regularly. Staff receive detailed feedback of their lessons, and points for improvement where necessary. Through these systems the quality of teaching has improved since the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of lessons found to be very good is improving, particularly in the sixth form.
9. Governors show strong commitment and are particularly knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's work. They have been particularly active in promoting the necessary refurbishment and extensions to the school buildings. The governors have a major concern about the increasing numbers within the school and the strains that this is placing upon the accommodation provision. In general, they support the school well, through taking up the role of 'critical friend' very effectively. The governing body is a strong team, and working relationships with the staff are good. Annual meetings with parents are carefully minuted; these show the care governors take to explain the school's work to parents. Helpful information on the required areas is given in the annual report. The prospectus is an attractive and informative document, which reflects the school's values and work very well.

### **The quality of teaching and learning is good.**

10. Pupils are taught well throughout the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good with many examples of very good teaching. Teaching is particularly effective in design and technology, drama, and science. The standard of teaching in art is excellent. A minimal amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and this was mostly related to the issues of insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. This was evident, for example, in a Year 8 German lesson.
11. A particular strength is the consistency of the quality teaching across subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic and are committed to the pupils and the school. They form a self-critical group, supporting one another well. The school has an extensive programme for professional development and training. Members of the leadership team support other teams of teachers. The school has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning.
12. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge, expertise and show enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their pupils. In a Year 11 drama lesson which dealt with the theme of witches, the teacher's expertise was effectively shown in the range of activities which were provided for the pupils. The pupils were focused and enthusiastic and responded well to the observations being made by the

teacher. Teachers have high expectations and work is usually well matched to the ability of the pupils. In the best lessons teachers set suitably challenging tasks. However, in some lessons the stimulus and challenge for the highest attaining pupils are lacking.

13. The very good teaching evident in some lessons enables and consolidates pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, dealing with the equivalence of fractions, the teacher's questioning was very effective in moving pupils' learning forward. Pupils were eager to respond and showed a good understanding of basic numerical concepts. Occasionally in some subjects the lessons are too teacher-led, which impedes the independent learning of pupils.
14. The quality of teaching seen in a Year 11 art lesson on mixed media was excellent. The teacher has exceptional subject knowledge and expertise. A significant strength is his ability to enthuse and motivate pupils. There was very effective use of pupils' work to illustrate the principles of good writing. The pace and challenge in this lesson were appropriate to the full range of ability within the class. Pupils responded very well to his high expectations. They are making tremendous progress in their skills and competencies within the subject.
15. Building on what pupils understand and know is a positive feature of most lessons. This aspect is achieved by detailed planning. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on imaginative writing, the teacher used an interesting technique of using a piece of writing which was mysterious but needed refinement. This approach effectively encouraged pupils to use their prior knowledge to edit it. In discussion, pupils explored aspects of grammar naturally and spontaneously in their efforts to make the piece better. Pupils made significant progress in their understanding of grammar and the use of imagery.
16. The quality of homework set is variable. There is a lack of opportunities to develop independent learning skills, and there are inconsistencies in the amount of homework set by different departments. The school is aware of this issue and has developed strategies to deal with the problems of inconsistencies in the amount of homework set by different departments. Heads of department are now making this a focus within their individual development plans. A range of visits and visitors to the school motivates pupils and promotes their learning. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good.
17. In general, pupils are keen to achieve well. Most make clear advances in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Their intellectual, physical and creative efforts are developing well.

**Pupils' positive attitudes and their relationships with staff promote effective learning.**

18. Pupils show an enthusiasm for school life. Their response in lessons is significantly positive. Overall, it was good or better in 70 per cent of lessons seen, and very good in almost a third of them. Pupils listen carefully and are prepared to contribute thoughtfully. Older pupils' responses in most lessons were mature and responsible. Pupils show an interest in their lessons, concentrate well and work co-operatively with others. The quality and quantity of pupils' work is generally of a high standard.
19. Behaviour is very good. During the inspection there were hardly any occasions when lesson time was wasted because teachers had to remind pupils about how to behave. Pupils settled to work quickly and sensibly, and were good-humoured. They usually sustained this level of purposeful activity both when they were working on their own and on group activities. For example, in a Year 9 food technology lesson dealing with bread-

making, pupils acted very responsibly when using equipment and kneading the dough. This level of involvement and co-operation between pupils was also evident in drama lessons.

20. Relationships are very good; they are a strong, excellent feature in many lessons. In a Year 9 science lesson, pupils were engaged in a role-play about the effects of alcohol on the body. This novel approach engaged the interest of pupils and encouraged them to evaluate their own and each other's interpretation as to what it would be like to be drunk. Pupils responded sensibly and maturely to the exercise. Pupils clearly understood the effects of the abuse of alcohol on the health of the individual.
21. Occasions like assemblies and lunchtime activities are enhanced by the quality of pupils' response. Pupils want to be involved in decisions about their welfare and interests. For example, the Year 8 council had very clear ideas as to how and in what way they could contribute to the school.

**The range of opportunities provided in the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, broaden and enrich the personal development of pupils.**

22. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils of all ability levels with good opportunities to learn. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and positively promotes pupils' personal development.
23. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils follow a common programme which fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. All pupils study English, mathematics, science, geography, history, religious education, drama, music, physical education and ICT. In addition pupils in Years 7 and 8 follow a course to promote wider learning, Activ-8, which gives them the opportunity to begin to take responsibility for their own learning and to evaluate their own progress. In this course, delivered through six modules, pupils learn a range of skills including group working skills, creativity and thinking skills through tasks such as puppet making and photo stories. Pupils also follow a programme of PSHCE which addresses issues relevant to pupils' moral and social development. Sex and relationship education is delivered in an integrated course through several areas of the curriculum such as science and religious education.
24. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils study courses to GCSE level in English, including English literature, mathematics and statistics, science, a foreign language and short courses in ICT, religious education and physical education. In addition pupils choose three additional GCSE subjects from other subjects previously studied in Years 7 to 9 or from a range of subjects new to them such as art, textiles, business studies, design and technology and German. The school makes appropriate provision for pupils for whom a GCSE course is not appropriate through its ASDAN course.
25. The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school is wide and positively promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils are able to experience art, drama, music and dance through participation in concerts, productions, competitions, exhibitions and workshops. The school has hosted performances by the Leeds Symphony Orchestra and the London Studio Ballet Company. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in the activities of different musical groups in the school and to participate in regular school drama and musical productions. There is a house drama competition and pupils are given the opportunity to attend theatre performances in the local area. The school offers a wide range of sporting opportunities from recreational clubs to competitive fixtures and has close links with local sports clubs. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

26. The school curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of educational visits. Visits and exchanges to France and Germany enhance the study of languages from Year 7 onwards. Departments offer the opportunity for their pupils to take part in fieldwork activities which enhance the taught curriculum.
27. Careers guidance is good. It is taught as part of the PSHCE programme and pupils have access to the services of the local careers guidance services who provide pupils with interviews. Pupils attend talks by visiting speakers and events put on by the local business community to help them make an informed choice about their future. In addition to this Year 10 pupils take part in two weeks work experience and are helped to prepare for this by an industry conference which covers such issues as health and safety and personal budgets. Mock interviews are also arranged and pupils visit a careers event to prepare for the world of work. For pupils who wish to continue their studies in the sixth form the school arranges a series of events which inform students of the choices available both at this school and at local colleges. The provision in this area is further enhanced by informal social events such as a barbecue organised by the school where prospective sixth formers are given the opportunity of talking informally to sixth form staff and subject teachers about their choices.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **The use of assessment data to monitor progress, and the quality of reports**

28. The school has established a comprehensive assessment profile for each pupil. On entry to the school data is recorded about their National Test results and verbal reasoning scores. Subsequently this data is added to with information about the Year 9 tests and GCSE results. From the basis of this data, numerical targets in terms of average points scores are effectively compiled for each pupil. However, the drawback is that the data gives too broad an overview. It lacks a sharper focus to establish targets for effective pupil tracking. Pupils have a variable understanding of the significance of the targets which have been established for them. Although National Curriculum levels are recorded in these central records, they are not reflected adequately in day-to-day marking. The school recognises that it needs to improve this whole area of target setting by focusing upon the timing of assessment, its content, and whether the information is going to the right people. In order to assist its analysis of assessment information, the school is embarking upon using comparative data about other schools.
29. The need to improve pupil target setting is also reflected in the requirements for departments to be more precise in their own targets. This information should enable the general targets for the school to have a more realistic basis whilst still being challenging. The reporting cycle is clearly identified for parents and is appropriately related to the consultation evenings. However, there is a concern that the timing of the Year 10 reports and consultation are too late for parents to be able to deal with any significant issues.
30. The reports are effectively divided into a short report and a more detailed written one. The snapshot report gives a good overview of attitudes and identifies areas for commendation or correction. The written reports have plenty of detail, reflecting attainment and effort grades. However, the comments made by staff tend to be attitudinal. There is insufficient focus on what has been achieved or what needs to be done to improve skills or competencies. English reports, however, effectively comment upon these areas, reflecting upon issues such as standards of writing and how an individual might be able to improve their style.

### **The accommodation provision for science, technology and art**

31. The popularity of the school is reflected in the substantive increase in the size of the school roll. In consequence, the average class sizes have become some of the highest in the local education authority. The school took the deliberate decision to reduce class sizes. The impact of this decision was to put even more pressure on the accommodation facilities. The school is operating at 93 per cent capacity. In administrative terms, this leaves little room for manoeuvre in order to run the school as efficiently as possible.
32. The area that has the most dramatic need is in science, particularly in physics. The lack of availability of science laboratories for sixth form physics groups means that 50 per cent of the allocated teaching time is taught in non-specialist accommodation. This situation has an adverse effect upon the quality of teaching provided and is impacting upon standards achieved in this subject. In art, although standards are not affected to the same degree, the limitations in room size means that sixth form students are constrained when producing large-scale project work. This restriction on their creativity is also compounded by more limited opportunities for independent work. In drama, some of the rooms are shabby and are not conducive to the effective delivery of the subject. Whilst the overall provision in design and technology is satisfactory, there are restrictions upon the availability of space for specialist sixth form teaching. In general, the accommodation in this area does not entirely reflect the normal pattern of provision of a school with Technology College status.
33. The importance of the needs to improve the quality of the buildings is reflected in the development plan which is in the process of being completed. The school has recently restyled the reception area and created an area for Year 7. The library is currently being refurbished and will provide more opportunities for independent work through the use of the extended ICT facilities.

### **Ensuring the pace and challenge in lessons is appropriate for the most able pupils**

34. The school makes a good provision for its most able pupils by offering 'add-on courses'. For example, there is an effective additional studies programme for an identified group of pupils in Years 7 to 9. The organisation of the school week by having two shortened working days enables extension programmes to be run. These include subjects as Latin, law and archaeology. These courses along with an extensive extra-curricular programme provide good opportunities for personal development. However, the school recognises that it needs to revise and enhance its programme for gifted and talented pupils. In general, because of their natural ability, these more able pupils achieve well. However, in some lessons, there are insufficient pace and stimulus for them. They are able to cope well with the demands of the curriculum. The challenge for the school is that the attainment profile of pupils on entry is now becoming well above average. Lesson planning, teaching styles and expectations will need to accommodate this new development.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

### **In order to raise standards the headteacher, governors and staff should:**

- Develop the use of assessment data to monitor progress, and improve the quality of reports by:
  - improving target setting;
  - collecting the right information for the right people;
  - involving pastoral teams in pupil tracking;
  - focusing on what needs to be improved in the written comments for reports.
- Improve the accommodation provision for science, technology and art by:
  - identifying what funding is needed to be able to meet these needs.
- Ensure the pace and challenge in lessons is appropriate for the most able pupils by:
  - revising the programme for gifted and talented pupils;
  - using the data about preferred learning styles to support this provision;
  - promoting the use of extension materials in lessons.

### **Sixth form issues:**

- Improve standards and achievement in physics and geography by:
  - making laboratory space available;
  - reviewing course structures and the demands of coursework.
- Ensure statutory requirements for religious education are met.
- Develop independent learning strategies, particularly to meet the needs of gifted and talented and higher attaining students more effectively by:
  - greater use of ICT;
  - adapting teaching styles to allow for more student participation;
  - improving resource provision, such as accommodation in art.
- Develop the use of assessment to enable students to take responsibility for their own progress.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	42
	Sixth form	84
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		38

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	2	3	23	12	2	0	0
Percentage	5	7	55	28	5	0	0

Each lesson is more than 2 percentage points of the whole.

#### Sixth form

Number	2	33	38	11	0	0	0
Percentage	2	39	46	13	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1384	342
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	41	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	167	6

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	130	126	256

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	97	102	103
	Girls	122	115	117
	Total	219	217	220
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (77)	85 (79)	86 (82)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (39)	61 (62)	50 (53)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	107	101
	Girls	121	123	109
	Total	209	230	210
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (81)	90 (85)	82 (94)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (41)	59 (64)	51 (59)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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
	2001	117	125	242

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	73	110	111
	Girls	95	122	123
	Total	168	232	234
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	69 (73)	96 (98)	97 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47.1
	National	39.0

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	66	80	146

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	23.2	25.2	24.3	4.0	3.75	3.0
National	16.9	17.9	17.4	-	-	-

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13	100
	National	9.8	-

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1707
Any other minority ethnic group	10

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	51	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	102.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	716

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.0
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	21.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001 - 2002
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	£
Total income	5218937
Total expenditure	5401656
Expenditure per pupil	3221
Balance brought forward from previous year	359481
Balance carried forward to next year	220626

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	31.72
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	35.31

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	8.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1640
Number of questionnaires returned	274

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	42	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	3	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	60	8	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	54	21	5	5
The teaching is good.	32	63	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	47	16	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	36	6	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	36	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	52	13	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	55	38	3	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	46	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	38	3	1	4

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

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

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

35. Over the past four years A-level results have been above average in comparison with results nationally. In 2001 standards achieved were very good. Examination results were well above average in chemistry, biology, physical education and art and design. They were above average in English literature, mathematics, music and general studies, and average in English language, computer studies and sociology. They were below average in economics, French, design and technology, geography and history, and well below average in German and physics. In all other subjects too few students were entered for the results to be statistically significant.
36. Results in the AS-level examinations in 2001 were above average. A third of students gained A or B grade passes and standards were particularly high in art and design, chemistry, theatre studies and physical education. The proportion of A to E pass grades was 86 per cent overall.
37. In the 15 subjects chosen for inspection, standards seen were: well above average in chemistry, physical education and art and design; above average in English literature, mathematics, biology, psychology, French, history, design and technology, business studies and theatre studies; and average in English language and ICT. Standards seen in physics were below average and well below average in geography.
38. Thirteen students took advanced vocational examinations in 2001. All passed the examinations, and this result was above the national average.
39. An analysis of the average points score of the students who took A-level examinations in 2001 compared with their average total points scores in GCSE examinations reveals that they made above average progress in the sixth form. While the collective performance of the school is above average, the performance of individual subjects is more variable. For example, results in geography and physics were relatively lower than the same students' results in other subjects.
40. A preliminary analysis of A-level results for 2002 shows a good improvement in the overall pass rate with a comparable increase in the average points score. Although the national comparators are not yet available there were good standards of performance achieved in art and design, chemistry, sports studies, and resistant materials. Relatively poor standards of performance continued to be shown in physics.
41. The achievement of the students in the 15 subjects chosen for inspection is good overall. It is very good in physical education and chemistry, good in French, mathematics, design and technology, biology, business studies, ICT, art, theatre studies, history, psychology and English. Achievement is unsatisfactory in physics and geography. Students with special educational needs achieve well. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
42. Students achieve particularly well in physical education because they are given challenging work and they are guided well in meeting its demands. In chemistry and mathematics students achieve well because of the teachers' very good subject knowledge and the opportunity to investigate ideas for themselves. In art teachers use their subject knowledge well to challenge students and enable them to refine their own work. In ICT students achieve well because they are given the opportunity to work

independently, setting their own targets and taking responsibility for their own learning and progress in the subject.

43. Students do not achieve as well in physics and geography as they do in other subjects. In physics progress is hampered considerably by the lack of specialist accommodation and in geography by the overall organisation of the course, coupled with the difficulties presented by large teaching groups containing students from a wide ability range. Generally, the achievement of students with special educational needs is good.

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

44. Students' attitudes to the school are very good. They are eager to come to school and to benefit from their lessons. They make sensible, considered responses to questions and almost invariably work well in pairs and small groups, giving their full attention to the lesson. Occasionally, as in a Year 13 sociology lesson, they do not prepare well enough and are not able to gain the maximum benefit from the lesson despite appropriate homework being set.
45. Students' appreciation of the involvement that they have had in the design of their sixth form is demonstrated by the way they take ownership of its day-to-day running. For example, through the sixth form council they identify problems like there being too much untidiness after breaks and that queues are sometimes too long for their café, and find solutions. When they discovered that the school could not provide additional staff to deal with these issues the students established a rota for tidying up and for volunteers to help in the café. They are very pleased with the result, both because the problem is solved and because they appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate their maturity through doing the work involved.
46. The behaviour of the majority of students is very good and students relate to their peers and staff in a mature and personable manner. Some of the students have chosen to take responsibility for assisting with the organisation and training of new volunteers for the Listeners Club which exists to provide a space for pupils in the main school to speak to trained fellow pupil-councillors about any concerns they may have. There have been no exclusions from the sixth form in recent years.
47. Students' personal development is very good. It is outstanding in some areas, as with the organisation of the council, support for younger members of the school and volunteering in order to find solutions to the problems they have. However, they do not always show the same degree of self-reliance in relation to the more formal and academic aspects of school life. This is shown in the example above of the students not preparing sufficiently well for a lesson. Another example is that, although they were told about the availability of the careers officer, they felt that they had not taken full advantage of this service because it would have meant arranging an interview for themselves.
48. Attendance in the sixth form is very good overall, though there has, in the past, been some lower attendance associated with Key Skills courses because the level of tuition provided on elements of these courses has not been well enough matched to the level of attainment or needs of the students. The school is very well aware of this issue and is currently taking steps to improve the situation.

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

49. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned well. Teachers set appropriate tasks and activities to effectively build the students' knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Overall, students are positive about the quality of

teaching they receive and appreciate teachers' accessibility and support when they have difficulty with their work.

50. In the 15 subjects chosen for inspection, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in mathematics, chemistry, design and technology, physical education, art and psychology and is good in physics, ICT, theatre studies, geography, history, biology, business studies, English and languages. In some of the other lessons observed, teaching was excellent in music and very good in politics and media studies.
51. Many of the good features evident in the main school are also present in sixth form teaching and learning. The greater maturity and increasing independence of students help the effectiveness of teaching. A significant strength of teaching is the very good specialist subject knowledge of staff. Teachers know the various examination specifications well and ensure students are fully conversant with examination technique. Other very good features of teaching that promote students' progress are high teacher expectations and the pace of the lesson. In many lessons good questioning skills allowed teachers to draw the best from students and to challenge their thinking; this was particularly apparent in music, politics and chemistry.
52. Teachers expect students to work hard and take an active part in lessons. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson on aspects of poetic writing, students were challenged to offer their own views for discussion and refinement. Consequently, a lively discussion emerged where pupils developed theories because they reflected on each other's opinions. The pace of this activity meant that students were focused on the tasks, and the outcomes of the lesson were very productive.
53. Most teachers plan lessons very well. In a Year 12 biology lesson on cell structure, for example, the teacher had prepared research material for students to work in groups. The material was well structured, developed the investigative skills of students and promoted their literacy through the presentation they were expected to give. The quality of the activity kept students focused on the task throughout the lesson and effectively promoted their learning. On occasions, however, biology lessons are too teacher-directed and in consequence the opportunities for student participation are minimised.
54. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally very good. In a Year 13 chemistry lesson investigating chemical reactions, for example, the teacher's effective elaboration and questioning of students ensured that all were able to participate. Students were confident that the issues they raised would be clearly explained. Students had a clear understanding of what they were expected to do and what learning they should have achieved by the end of the lesson. Teaching and learning are less good in Year 12 chemistry lessons because teachers do not adequately address the much wider range of students' prior attainment found in the large AS-level groups; in particular, teachers do not use assessment information effectively enough to identify and appropriately challenge higher attaining students.
55. Some teachers make very good use of ICT to promote students' learning. In a Year 12 physics lesson, for example, the teacher used resources from a CD-ROM to demonstrate images of ultrasound pictures and X-ray photographs. This activity enabled students to extend their understanding and understanding of these physical applications. However, there is insufficient use of ICT applications in mathematics. The constraints on access to ICT facilities in chemistry are limiting opportunities for independent learning.
56. Teachers are aware of the needs of the relatively few students on the special educational needs register and take these into account when planning their lessons.

Generally, good planning ensures that materials are suitably adapted to meet these students' needs and enable full participation in all lessons.

57. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught in specified lessons. The commitment and motivation of students in these lessons are lacking. Insufficient use is made of the data about students' prior attainment to structure the lessons more appropriately to their individual needs. In other lessons students are given a range of opportunities to develop the skills of working with others and problem solving through the style of learning that they are offered in subjects.

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

58. The sixth form offers a very good range of courses towards Advanced Supplementary (AS), Advanced (A2) level and Intermediate and Advanced Vocational Certificate of education (AVCE) certification. Students are consulted about their aspirations and preferences before they enter the sixth form and the school is successful in providing courses relevant to their needs. However, as a result this and of timetabling restrictions, teaching groups often contain a wide ability range.
59. Students are able to study up to five AS subjects in Year 12 and usually continue to study three subjects to A-level. Intermediate vocational GCSE courses are offered in business education, ICT and science and AVCE courses in business education and ICT. Students also have the opportunity to resit GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. Courses offered are well matched to the aspirations and potential of the students.
60. Students are mostly able to follow courses in the sixth form for which they have been well prepared in Years 7 to 11. In addition, they have the opportunity to study general studies, psychology, drama and theatre studies, economics, media studies, politics and government, sociology and philosophy to A-level and Spanish and Latin to GCSE. Students also follow a programme of PSHCE; however, statutory requirements are not fully met because the school provides no opportunity to study religious education in the sixth form.
61. In addition to the study skills fostered in individual subjects when they join the sixth form, students are given valuable guidance in research skills. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught through timetabled lessons. At present these lessons do not take sufficient account of students' prior attainment and knowledge; the school is aware of this and is reviewing its provision.
62. Students intending to go on to higher education are well supported with talks on, and assistance with, university application during PSHCE time. In addition the school encourages students to attend university open days and organises visits to Oxford and Cambridge universities for interested students. Opportunities for students to engage in work experience are well supported by the school and students intending to start work after Year 12 or Year 13 are well supported by the careers service. Sixth formers felt that they were not always given sufficient guidance for the next stage in education. The newly opened sixth form area is designed and organised very effectively to prepare students for the next stage in education and they are encouraged to take full responsibility for managing their time. Facilities available are conducive to the development of their research and independent learning skills but as yet these skills are not fostered sufficiently through subject areas and students sometimes rely too heavily on their teachers for guidance.
63. The wider skills of problem solving and working with others are well taught through subjects in the curriculum and through opportunities to help younger students and to

take part in and organise community service, such as the Senior Citizens' Lunch Club, Young Enterprise and fund-raising activities. Sixth form students are encouraged to take responsibility in a variety of areas; for example, they edit the school magazine and organise projects and events for the local community. Elections are held for the sixth form committee which organises social events and also helps in the appointment of new staff and meets with governors to discuss projects within the sixth form. Students taking on responsibility as prefects and house leaders also take part in a series of activities designed to develop leadership and team-building skills.

64. In addition to academic courses there is a very good range of extra curricular activities to enable students to develop other talents and interests. There is a wide range of musical activities which include vocal and instrumental groups and extensive music technology provision. Artists display their work both within the school and in local art galleries and firms. There are regular school drama productions and regular visits to the theatre and art galleries. There are opportunities for students to take part in a wide range of sporting activities and they are encouraged to make full use of the sports facilities in their free time. There are also opportunities for dance and yoga. A good variety of residential visits is provided both in this country and abroad, including a trip to London for Year 12 where students are given the opportunity to pursue their own academic interests and enhance their learning by, for example, visiting museums, art galleries and theatres. Students are also given the opportunity to do fieldwork through individual subjects. Students also have the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and outward bound courses.
65. Equality of access and opportunity is very good. Students have equal access to all courses, dependent upon their prior attainment, and teachers provide appropriate support for students with special needs. The school's aim to allow the maximum number of students the opportunity of pursuing their studies in the sixth form is laudable but this occasionally results in large teaching groups with a wide ability range. Where this is the case the needs of all students are not always adequately taken into account in lessons to ensure all achieve their full potential.
66. The opportunities for the spiritual development of students are contained in reflective and thought-provoking assemblies, form periods and most lessons. Personal creativity was seen to great effect in art, English and drama. The organisation and ethos of King James's encourages awareness, hope and alertness for mystery and wonder. The level of contribution to charity work is high.
67. The strong moral ethos at the school is based on mutual respect, and the relationships between students and between students and teachers are very good. Issues of class and gender and racial stereotyping were considered in art, drama, English and design and technology. The morality of business ethics is a regular discussion topic in business education. Students show their collaborative skills through the opportunities offered in lessons for working with others. This is not consistent, as the opportunity for students to contribute to their own learning was less in some subjects. Extra-curricular activities are broad and well supported. Students run their own committee and support younger pupils in the school.
68. Students' awareness of their own culture is developed in all subjects through lesson planning and, for example, trips to art galleries and the theatre, visiting speakers and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The school is aware of the need to give students some experience of a multi-cultural society and the art department, for example, ensures that elements of Indian and African art are part of the learning environment. This awareness is not embedded in the curriculum and has yet to have a significant impact.

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

### Advice, support and guidance

69. Overall, the school's care of its students is satisfactory. The school takes care to consult with students, through a questionnaire and the sixth form council, and has amended the support and guidance it offers to them accordingly. Although the improvements made are substantial and the raft of measures to provide advice and support to students now represents good practice, students still feel that more could be done. Students feel that tutors guide them on the basis of results at GCSE rather than working back, as they say the Careers Service does, from the career that they wish to follow. The school's offers much of its provision direct to students but it also expects students to make their own appointments and visits. It is this latter area that some students are dissatisfied with. Students have to, for example, make their own arrangements for meeting with the Careers Officer and visiting universities. The school would like to offer more focused advice through the Careers Service about choices in higher education but have not been able to find an appropriately qualified Careers Officer within their region.
70. A significant proportion of students do not feel well informed about how they are progressing. The school has listened to this concern and is in the process of improving its assessment procedures. There is too much variation between the guidance given in different subjects on what students need to do to improve their work, though students feel that English and media studies are more successful at this than other subjects. Currently the targets agreed between students and tutors are not sharply enough focused on what students need to do in order to progress from their current grade onto the next grade. Similarly, reports to parents are more concerned with the general attitude of students to work than the specific improvements that are required in their work. There are exceptions, such as art for example, but even here the guidance is not comprehensive.
71. Students' personal care is mostly well provided for. They have a superb new block, which they had a hand in designing, with café, study, toilets and socialising facilities. They have access to a full-time school nurse and a good programme of PSHCE lessons to support them through adolescence. Great care is taken to assist students in settling into the sixth form. This includes the head of sixth form being available for parents and prospective students during the three weeks before school begins, two full days induction where students can speak with any of their prospective tutors and a barbecue for students in both years to meet together at the beginning of term. These measures have been very effective in assisting the two year groups to bond well together and at a meeting with students they stated that the tutors are their 'friends' whom they could approach about any personal issues. The student questionnaire responses did not, however, support this view. Staff are meticulous in maintaining appropriate professional boundaries between tutor and student.
72. General provision in respect of health and safety is good. However, due to the number of pupils and students that travel to and from the school by bus and on foot each day, the congestion at the front of the school at these times poses potential dangers for students. Although the school has been careful to make appropriate risk assessments for activities within subject departments and for school trips, it has not conducted a risk assessment for the daily arrival and departure of buses.
73. The school has appropriate measures in place to protect children in its care. It follows recognised procedures well in order to identify and act on any concerns. However, many staff have not received training in the identification of the signs and symptoms of abuse and there is too little in the PSHCE programme which deals with how students

can protect themselves and others from abuse. A small number of other issues in relation to health and safety were reported to staff during the inspection and these were dealt with immediately.

## **Assessment**

74. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good, with strengths in art, chemistry and mathematics. Regular reviews are the main tool for tracking students' progress through the sixth form; students review their own performance, while teachers review their progress towards target grades. The resulting dialogue between tutors, teachers and students often encourages students to improve their work-rate, and they appreciate the support received from teachers when they fall behind. Even so, many students are insufficiently aware of their target grades and how they will reach them; short-term targets for students, and guidance towards achieving them, are not sharply enough focused. The school has very recently begun to use assessment information to identify gifted students and encourage them to take the first units in Open University courses as a means of pushing them towards even higher attainment. More generally, however, assessment data is not used early enough to encourage higher attaining students to further their studies, particularly in Year 12 where groups are large and attainment is wide ranging.

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

75. The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the provision made for students in the sixth form. In the student questionnaire, students were generally very happy with overall sixth form provision. They are happy with the choice of courses, feel that teachers are accessible if they had problems with their work and would advise other students to join the sixth form.
76. The school takes good care to consult with and involve parents and students in the provision it makes for them. An annual questionnaire is provided for both groups and senior staff diligently act on the findings. Consequently they have made significant changes in the way they assist pupils in Year 11 to select courses and in the meetings they have with students regarding target setting. However, following these innovations, students still expressed themselves in the questionnaire as dissatisfied with these areas. Around one third of students expressed concerns regarding the advice they are given on what to do in the sixth form, how well they are advised on how they are progressing in school and on what to do when they leave school. Although the range and frequency of meetings with staff have improved both for target setting and for course selection, students are concerned that the focus of target setting meetings is not sharply focused on what they need to do to improve their grades at AS and A-level. In meetings with students, some of them felt that they were well informed about their attainment and how to improve it but one felt that there was so much information it was confusing. Others pointed to the inconsistency between departments in relation to giving unambiguous guidance on the areas they needed to address in their work in order to achieve a higher grade. They singled out English and media studies as being most successful in this. This inconsistency is also evident in the reports sent to parents on students' progress and what students could do to improve their grades in examinations. Careers guidance from staff takes the form of where to look for the information they require rather than staff having the ready answers that students would prefer. The school is keen to improve the careers provision that they offer but are having difficulty in finding an appropriately trained person who is fully conversant with all the academic options offered post-18.

77. When interviewed, students stated that they felt very well supported by their tutors on a personal level; however, a high degree of dissatisfaction was expressed on the student questionnaire with the support they could expect for personal problems. The school is very keen to offer a high level of support to students on personal matters, for example it provides a full-time nurse who is accessible to all students and who will be involved in the students' PSHCE programme. Inspectors could not find any deficits in the personal support offered to students, but it is clear that many students feel strongly that they could be better supported in this important area.

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

### **Leadership and management**

78. The sixth form has grown significantly since the last inspection. It is a popular choice for both students already at the school and for those at other schools in the region, many of whom choose to travel considerable distances to attend. This has been the result of parents and students noting the sustained success of the school in examinations.
79. The size of the sixth form enables a wide range of academic AS and A-levels to be offered together with vocational A-levels and intermediate courses relevant to the needs and aspirations of its students.
80. The sixth form is very well led and managed by a member of the senior management team. Her core roles are pastoral and organisational, and she is very well regarded by students. Students feel they could be given more information and guidance about sixth form courses; however, during the inspection it was found that the information they are given throughout Year 11, not only at open evenings but also at informal social events organised specifically for the purpose of allowing students to meet with subject staff and discuss the courses on offer, was excellent. In addition to this the school makes special arrangements for prospective students, new to the school, to familiarise themselves with the sixth form and to make an informed choice.
81. The head of sixth form has a clear vision of the way forward. Already, in the short time she has had responsibility in this area, she has been successful in putting her ideas into action and has played a major part in monitoring and evaluating the development of teaching and learning and in raising standards. The head of sixth form is well informed about the standards achieved by students. She reviews standards regularly with subject co-ordinators and appropriate action is taken to improve provision and the standards achieved. All students have individual interviews with the head of sixth form and her pastoral team to review their progress, set targets and discuss any problems they may be encountering. Any movement between courses is restricted to the beginning of the year and after that dropouts are rare. Very few students fail to complete courses that they start at the beginning of Year 12.

### **Resources, staffing and accommodation**

82. Finance is well managed and systems for monitoring and administration are good. The most recent audit report confirms the good practice. The school has been accepted into a government pilot programme related to consistent financial reporting. Decisions taken by governors on sixth form issues are based on a good understanding of the school's priorities through an awareness of the school development plan. The sixth form is cost effective in that expenditure matches funding allowing for an appropriate contingency fund. The financial implications of managing the changes in the curriculum

structure have been managed well. The principles of best value are mostly applied well. The sixth form gives good value for money.

83. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced to teach the sixth form curriculum. The school spending on technical, administrative and clerical support is above average. This results in appropriate support for the relevant subject areas.
84. Arrangements for performance management are effective and fulfil statutory requirements. They are an important part of the quality assurance framework for the sixth form. Staff development opportunities are well structured and effectively promote teaching competencies. There is very good support for newly qualified teachers through a designated programme and a good quality induction scheme for experienced newcomers.
85. The level and variety of up-to-date learning resources in subject areas are good. School expenditure on books and materials is above average; this is beneficial in supporting the achievement of high standards. The library has insufficient reference materials and the book stock is rather dated. The school recognises these deficiencies and is engaged in a major refurbishment and resourcing project for the library. There are good central resources for ICT, including a provision in the sixth form study centre.
86. Accommodation for the teaching of the curriculum is satisfactory overall but includes several concerns. There is an adverse impact on the sixth form curriculum caused by the lack of availability of scientific laboratories to conduct investigations. This situation is particularly critical in physics where this shortfall is having an impact in limiting students' progress. Similarly in art the size of the rooms are a constraint on creativity and independent learning. The new sixth form study centre provides a very good social and learning environment.

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

***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	2	100	83	50	23	4.00	2.27
Biology	2	50	52	0	2	0.50	0.79
Computer Studies	1	100	74	0	13	2.00	1.75
French	2	100	78	0	13	2.00	1.65
German	1	0	82	0	13	0	1.85
Mathematics	3	67	62	0	15	1.00	1.51
Business	11	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	12.55	10.45
Science	8	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	4.50	9.80

***GCE A-level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	19	95	87	53	43	6.42	5.80
Biology	43	98	88	40	34	6.14	5.25
Chemistry	31	94	90	61	43	6.90	5.90
Other Social Studies	34	82	87	26	34	5.06	5.30
Physics	22	77	88	5	40	2.91	5.67
Sports/Physical Education Studies	20	100	92	35	25	6.10	5.09
Art and Design	8	100	96	75	46	8.25	6.57
Music	7	100	93	29	35	6.00	5.74
Full Design and Studies	9	78	91	22	30	4.44	5.38
Geography	24	75	92	21	38	4.25	5.74
History	25	88	88	16	35	4.48	5.45
Communication Studies	5	100	93	20	31	6.00	5.53
French	9	78	89	22	38	4.22	5.59
German	5	80	91	0	40	3.20	5.81
English Literature	15	93	95	47	37	6.67	5.91
English Language	34	88	91	29	30	4.82	5.27
General Studies	66	92	85	36	30	5.61	4.91
Economics	8	63	89	38	36	4.00	5.52
Computer Studies	18	100	86	11	23	4.44	4.62
Vocational Studies	1	100	76	0	26	2.00	4.36



## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to high standards at A-level.
- Assessment data is used well to track the progress of students.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The mutual respect of teachers and students contributes to a joint commitment to succeed.

#### Areas for improvement

- Improve standards at AS-level in pure mathematics.

87. In 2001 results at A-level GCE were above the national average. Preliminary analysis of the results in 2002 shows a significant improvement on this position when all gained a pass grade with 91 per cent achieving grade D or above. The small number of students who elected to take further mathematics gained the highest grade. The results at AS-level in 2001 were close to the national average. Standards in 2002 have improved significantly but the results of pure mathematics are below those of other sections of the course. The results of students who resit GCSE are average with some students attempting the course from relatively low prior attainment. Retention rates are very good.
88. The standard of work seen at AS and A-level is above the national average and matches the standards achieved in 2002 at this level. For example, Year 13 students during a mechanics lesson, when challenged to derive an equation to describe the trajectory of a projectile sliding off an incline, show a good grasp of the mathematical concepts involved. Other students in Year 13 are able to apply formulae defining an arithmetic series in order to find the first term and common difference given the size of two terms. Students studying further mathematics in Year 12 use algorithms effectively to solve problems involving networks. Year 12 students identify the problems occurring in an investigation to test the statement "The results of girls are better than the results of boys at GCSE". They show they understand the difference between displaying discrete and continuous data. Students enter the sixth form with results above the national average and continue to make good progress; consequently achievement is very good.
89. The teaching is very good overall. Five of the eight lessons observed were very good with the remaining lessons good. The teachers demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their subject and communicate it to their students in a clear, concise manner. They use different teaching techniques such as effective questioning. Students are directed to use the Internet to obtain data, but generally there is insufficient use of ICT in the subject. Work is presented in a challenging manner and the students respond well, showing interest and a willingness to share ideas and question what is taught. The move to encourage independent learning is a feature of the teaching strategy. For example, students are given the opportunity to solve a problem to find minimum distances between six towns before being introduced to the mathematical techniques involved. Higher attainers do well and the teachers know their students' capabilities but a greater focus on the opportunities for further challenge is possible.

90. The head of department shows clear educational vision and the sixth form provision is very well managed.
91. There is an effective course structure, and accurate assessment of the work of the students is undertaken. Formal monitoring of teaching is in place and good practice shared within the department. Realistic targets are set based on the GCSE results and the progress of students tracked. The accommodation is satisfactory and the provision of resources is good. The software for the computers in the designated ICT room limits the possibilities for advanced sixth form work. Relationships between staff and students are very good and the teaching staff work well as a team. Standards of attainment are better than at the time of the previous report.

## Sciences

The focus was on biology, chemistry and physics, but AVCE and AS-level science were also sampled.

92. All students entered for the AVCE in 2002 passed; results exceeded the school's expectations. During the inspection, an AVCE lesson in Year 13 and an AS-level lesson in Year 12 were observed. Standards in both lessons were average for the course; teaching and learning were good. Although Year 12 students found difficulty in using mathematical concepts to work out ecosystem productivity, they grasped the main points by the end of the lesson. In Year 13, AVCE lessons are well related to vocational contexts; for example, students had previously visited a major hospital in Leeds to gather data for their work on medical physics. Courses are well structured, providing students with appropriate guidance while allowing them freedom to plan their own work and decide its direction.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Examination results have been consistently well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Year 13; teachers build well on students' prior learning and make frequent checks that new work has been fully understood.
- Students achieve very well because their progress is reviewed regularly and teachers are quick to support those who fall behind.
- The department is very well led and results show good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Students are very attentive because they enjoy their work.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment is not used effectively enough to identify and challenge higher attaining students early in Year 12.
- Students have limited independent learning opportunities in Year 12, partly because access to computers is inadequate.
- Laboratory accommodation is insufficient; too many lessons are timetabled elsewhere, and most existing laboratories need refurbishment.

93. A-level results have been well above national averages for the last five years. Well over half the students entered each year gain the highest (A and B) grades, and almost all gain a pass. The results in 2002 were outstandingly good and, in relation to their GCSE results two years earlier, students did better than expected. They also do well in

chemistry compared with other A-level subjects. Although the performances of male and female students vary from year to year, there is no consistent pattern of difference.

94. At AS-level, results for Year 12 students in 2001 were high. Almost all passed, and the proportion gaining the highest (A and B) grades was very high. However, in 2002 results were significantly lower, largely due to a decline in the performance of female students; they were also lower than expected, bearing in mind students' earlier GCSE results.
95. Standards in lessons and written work in Year 13 are well above average, reflecting recent A-level results. Students achieve very well in their lessons. For example, in one lesson students quickly developed very good understanding of how rate equations are derived. In their investigations, students often demonstrate very high levels of attainment, as in an excellent piece of work on the decomposition of hydrogen peroxide in which the students speculated about sources of error resulting from yeast contamination. Students in Year 12 have only just started their course. There is a much wider range of prior attainment in Year 12, resulting in lower standards overall, although still above average for the course. A noteworthy feature is that students enter the sixth form with a sound knowledge of GCSE work, such as that on atomic structure; this allows them to build advanced work on a firm foundation.
96. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and occasionally excellent; they are better in Year 13 than in Year 12. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which is well used to give clear explanations and build up students' understanding step by step; teachers' own enthusiasm for the subject rubs off on students who learn well because their interest is engaged. Questioning is often used effectively to encourage careful thought and precision in answers, for example refusing to accept vague references to 'amount' of gas. In an excellent lesson, the teacher used a wide range of approaches, including discussion in pairs, to capture and hold students' interest; their learning about the use of colorimeters in redox reactions was excellent because the pace was rapid, yet they built on their existing knowledge, for example through frequent references back to rules for finding oxidation numbers. Students particularly appreciate the detailed written feedback they receive from their teachers, especially following investigations; students learn from mistakes and subsequent work often shows substantial improvement. Teaching and learning are less good in Year 12 because teachers do not adequately address the much wider range of students' prior attainment found in the large AS-level groups; in particular, teachers do not use assessment information effectively enough to identify and appropriately challenge higher attaining students.
97. Students learn very well because they want to do their best for their teacher. They appreciate teachers' efforts to help them achieve their full potential, for example preparing 'electronic notes' that allow lesson time to be used more productively, and the support given when they fall behind with their work. Students enjoy chemistry lessons because they frequently engage in open discussion in a secure yet adult atmosphere; as one said, "chemistry lessons are fun".
98. The independent work undertaken by students is too limited. Although this is partly due to pressure of time and inadequate access to ICT facilities, some opportunities are missed in lessons to encourage students to find information for themselves. The department's links with industry are not well developed, restricting students' opportunities to appreciate the importance of their work in a wider context. Laboratory accommodation is inadequate, a substantial number of lessons needing to be taught in classrooms.

99. The department is very well led. Students' very positive views of their experience in chemistry lessons stem from a clear vision that teaching should encourage them to participate fully in lessons.
100. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Results in 2002 were even better than they were then.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and teachers know their subject well.
- The curriculum is well planned. Overall management is good.
- There are very good relationships between students and teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for physics lessons is very poor.
- The attainment of students in AS and A-level examinations is well below average.

101. The standards attained by students by the end of Year 12 and the end of Year 13 are well below the national average. This represents poor achievement in relation to their attainment at GCSE. A slight improvement has taken place at AS-level between 2001 and 2002.
102. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students in Year 13 was generally at the level expected nationally. The higher attaining students were able to discuss difficult concepts with their teachers in a confident and perceptive way. For example, in a lesson focusing on electrostatics, students were able to apply their existing knowledge to explain in detail the action of the van de Graaff generator.
103. Similarly with Year 12, the standard of work seen was of the expected AS standard and students demonstrated confidence and enthusiasm in lessons. In an introductory lesson on 'materials', for example, they were able to offer convincing arguments in terms of the physical properties of substances to explain why certain materials are chosen for specific purposes such as the use of tungsten in darts and titanium for artificial human joints.
104. The students in both Year 12 and Year 13 displayed a good attitude towards their work and towards their teachers. Their behaviour in the lessons observed was exemplary with eagerness, curiosity and commitment being very evident. However, the learning process was affected very adversely by the inappropriate nature of the accommodation used for the majority of post-16 physics lessons. A large computer room with over 40 workstations was being used for two classes being taught simultaneously. Not only does the design of the room make it very difficult for students to take notes, due to insufficient table space, but the other lesson taking place in room, with no partitioning, creates a severe distraction and imposes a significant constraint on the nature of the teacher-student interaction. This is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs that must be corrected if standards in physics are to improve.
105. The quality of teaching observed was consistently good. For example, in a lesson dealing with circular motion the teacher immediately engaged the interest of the students using a self-propelled model aeroplane which followed a circular path when suspended by string from the ceiling. The work being covered was conceptually difficult but the teacher was able to effectively reinforce the most salient points by making

reference to the example of circular motion being demonstrated. In this way, students' understanding of these concepts was greatly enhanced.

106. Good use was made of ICT in half of the lessons observed, with teachers exploiting the use of *PowerPoint* presentations to enhance the learning process. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, the teacher was able to show the students a sequence of images including an ultra-sound scan of a foetus, an infrared photograph of London Docklands and a computer-generated image of a tornado. This enabled the teacher to hold a very effective discussion with the students about the relative merits of different imaging techniques during which the difficult concept of resolution was introduced and clearly understood by the majority of the class.
107. The quality of students' learning was generally good in the lessons observed. The higher attaining students had the confidence to challenge the teacher and reflect on the concepts being taught and for all students there was evidence of good consolidation of previous learning. Learning was best achieved where the students could see the topic in context and understand how it related to other areas of the specification. When studying imaging, for example, an awareness of the many applications and usefulness of the imaging techniques helped students to appreciate why the resolution of the image was a key factor. Learning was slow and difficult where the teacher made unrealistic assumptions about students' prior learning, particularly in their mathematical capability.
108. The physics department has good resources but the current accommodation is woefully inadequate with more than 50 per cent of post-16 physics lessons taking place in non-laboratory rooms. This problem also afflicted the physics department last year and it was no surprise to see that virtually all students scored their lowest mark in the practical physics module. The situation is likely to be worse this year with students now following a new examination specification which places greater emphasis on students' individual practical investigations. The students in Year13 were particularly angry about the current arrangement and suggested that this was the main reason for the high proportion of students who choose to stop at AS. There can be little doubt that the unsatisfactory nature of the accommodation for physics lessons is having a distinctly negative effect on the standard achieved at both AS and A-level.
109. Students' attainment and progress have not significantly changed since the last inspection and remain below the expected national standard. However, at present the department has a good team of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers. Under the new leadership of an able and conscientious head of physics, who has moved quickly to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning, there has been a slight improvement in standards attained in AS examination results and there is justification for being optimistic about the future, provided the accommodation difficulties can be quickly resolved.

## **Biology**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching from a committed team of subject specialists results in good learning by the majority of students.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good; students are very appreciative of the work staff do on their behalf.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The standards attained by some girls.
- Accommodation for the delivery of the subject.

110. In 2001, the A-level results were very high compared to all schools nationally, an improvement on the previous year when they were in line with national results. In both years, the proportion of girls in the school attaining the higher grades A and B was much higher than the boys. Each year most students attained a pass grade. The difference between boys and girls continued with the results in 2002 for both AS and A-levels with slightly less students attaining higher grades at A-level than the previous year. Far fewer boys than girls chose to take the subject.
111. The overall number of students choosing to take biology in the sixth form has remained fairly constant, but not all complete the two-year course. Approximately one third do not continue into the second year; many of these are taking biology as their only science subject at AS-level.
112. The standards of work seen in lessons and in coursework are above average. Students overall are making good progress as they follow the course, though this progress improves with time. Coursework investigations show that in the first year of the course many experience difficulty in evaluating the limitations of an experiment and the impact on their results. But by the time they reach their second year, many students progress well, apply reasoning to experimental limitations and draw together biology principles and concepts to support their reasoning. Within lessons, current Year 13 students are able to apply knowledge of the structure of chromosomes in the cell to work out how they behaved in cell division to produce reproductive cells. Year 12 are only in the first week of the course but many are developing confidence in researching and presenting information about unknown topics, such as the ultrastructure of cells.
113. Taken as a whole, teaching is good and often very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge allows them to present a topic in a variety of ways to stimulate and keep the interest of students. In the better lessons, teachers used group work effectively to construct models of glucose molecules or dividing chromosomes. In this way, students' minds are focused on the subject matter. However, occasionally a long teacher input means that all students are not fully involved and so many take little active part in this part of the lesson.
114. Lessons are planned well to make the most of the 65-minute sessions and include activities to reinforce understanding. However, the short time scale and the lack of double periods means that lengthy practical sessions are difficult. The use of a small classroom for many groups means that teachers are restricted in the methods they can use to involve students in the lesson. This can have a detrimental effect on the learning process.
115. Homework is set regularly, often to reinforce the lesson content or in preparation for the next. Detailed marking of individual pieces and the use of examination questions in homework booklets give students regular feedback about their attainment. Students are aware of their target grades and what to do to improve. Teachers also provide numerous revision sessions out of lesson time and as far as possible these sessions are tailored to the needs of individual students. Additional help is offered to weaker students to help them overcome problems with the basic subject concepts.
116. Almost all students demonstrate very good application to their work and the relationships between staff and students are very good. The students are very appreciative of the dedication and commitment of the teaching staff in helping them

achieve their full potential. All teachers responsible for delivering the subject are subject specialists and work well together under the good leadership of the subject leader.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

117. The focus was on product design but the textiles course was also sampled. This is the first year of a new course which was in its second week. Current work seen has progressed well, and students and teaching staff alike are fully committed and enthusiastic. Good strategic use is being made of computer design facilities to support teachers' expectations of high standards, and students' diversity of approach to their designs and outcomes. Teaching and learning in the two lessons observed are very good, and students are already showing that they are becoming independent learners and can model and adapt their ideas as they develop.

### **Product design**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards are above average and are improving.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good.
- The effective monitoring of students' progress and target setting.
- Students' attitudes are very positive.
- The leadership and management are very good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Accommodation and resources available for the subject.
- Strategies for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.

118. Examination results in both AS and A-level have shown significant improvement this year compared with the design and realisation examination taken last year. In 2001, students' overall performance was broadly in line with their prior attainment, although some low attainers under-achieved. In 2002 all students gained a pass, and the percentage achieving A and B grades more than doubled. Achievement was again broadly in line with prior attainment and some low attainers at AS-level greatly exceeded expectations. The department operates an open entry policy for post-16 courses, and student retention from AS to A-level is good. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

119. The standard of work of current students is above average. Even at this early stage in the course, Year 13 students' work is above average and at least in keeping with their prior attainment at GCSE. The introduction of computer-assisted design (CAD) facilities such as *Pro-Desktop* is clearly having a positive influence on the standard and the presentation of current work. Practical work carried out in Year 12 is of a high standard and folio work is better than average throughout most the design process. Evaluation of project work could be developed further to include more objective testing and third-party evaluation. Year 12 students make an equally good and enthusiastic start to their course. Folio work is well organised and benefits from regular self-monitoring procedures, planning for which is evident even at this early stage in the course. Students have high expectations which match those of teaching staff. At this stage, they are not afraid to modify or change the focus of their chosen product area in the light of their initial research. Standards of literacy and numeracy applied to folio

work are good and ICT is increasingly applied to good effect despite the current department shortfall in personal computer (PC) facilities. Students can apply what they have learnt in research and product analysis to their own designs.

120. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are enthusiastic about the course in both years, and are focused upon work in which they show interest. Students' behaviour is very good, and they work collaboratively and interact well with each other and their teachers. This creates an environment in which students can learn rapidly, and they have become proficient independent learners. They organise their own work within a supportive environment of review and challenge. Boys and girls and students of all abilities feel well supported by their peers and staff alike. The smaller number of girls in class groups feel fully included and comfortable with the course.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' knowledge and expertise in the subject are a strong feature and enable students to learn well. Plentiful and appropriate textbooks are provided, and learning is further reinforced by a well-organised extensive mixed-media department library which pupils are encouraged to use. Teachers make good use of their knowledge of students' prior attainment, for instance when they are introduced to new ICT CAD software. Students have opportunities to work at their own pace, and are also encouraged to apply previous related experience. Lesson planning, organisation and pace all play their part to enable learning and progress. Students learn rapidly when teachers provide real product examples for product analysis or to exemplify ideas, and when they discuss ideas together. They are given good guidance on how to carry out the complexities of product analysis and this helps them to understand the use of materials and construction techniques and design influences. Teachers do not sufficiently extend students' intellectual understanding when teachers do not grasp opportunities to encourage debate when opportunities arise. Students learn well when they are involved in practical and experimental activities which they can apply to their own product development, for example when they model drawer-pull designs on paper, in modelling material and on full CAD-CAM (computer-assisted manufacture) lathe facilities. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods including visits and industrial links, which they could develop further to even greater effect. Monitoring, assessment and target setting are very effective.
122. Good use is made of available resources, although the quantity of high tech facilities such as full CAD-CAM for current teaching group sizes is limited. There are well used but insufficient numbers of computers in classrooms, and at the time of the inspection the department computer suite is not on a PC compatible standard, is not networked, and is not always available to students. The post-16 course does not have a specified base and occasionally unsuitable rooms have to be used. The department is well aware that its accommodation and facilities are in need of refurbishment.
123. Subject leadership and management are very good. The subject leader and staff have a clear sense of direction for the department, and address priorities through a clear department development plan which also reflects school priorities and Technology College status. Following the department's own monitoring and quality assurance procedures, staff have focused successfully upon the development of student support mainly through regular monitoring, and verbal and written target setting. This has had the effect of improving standards, particularly the number of higher grades achieved and the performance of low achievers. The department has not developed clearly considered strategies for stretching gifted and talented students. Performance management procedures are actively supported. There is a commitment to relevant continued professional development. The department approaches health and safety, and inclusion positively and has purchased specific equipment for a pupil using a wheelchair. There has been a thorough audit of spiritual, moral, social, cultural,

environmental and citizenship learning opportunities which has yet to be applied more formally to post-16 studies. The range of post-16 curriculum opportunities is expanding, but does not include a vocational course. Staff are very committed and provide considerable opportunities for students to use resources and facilities outside lesson times. This is warmly appreciated by students who are very positive about the department, and attribute their success to this support.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

### **Business and social studies**

124. The focus was on business and psychology. Individual lessons were seen in economics, government and politics, and sociology. Attainment in economics, based on small numbers, has been a little below the school and national averages in attainment at AS and A-level. In the AS lesson observed, students were given a clear grounding in the definition of markets enlivened by a mock auction of chocolates to illustrate the effect of price on demand.

The quality of provision in business education is **good**

#### **Strengths**

- Well-structured lessons with regular attention to study skills, key concepts and vocabulary.
- Good relationship with students.
- Regular monitoring and feedback on progress.
- Good and improving results at AVCE and GNVQ (Part 1).

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Sharpening the focus of student short-term improvement targets and relating these to grade criteria
- Further developing teaching and learning strategies to enhance skills of independent learning

125. The school offers AVCE (previously Advanced GNVQ) as a single or double award plus GNVQ Part 1 in Year 12 for those whose GCSE performance in Year 11 does not allow immediate entry to a more advanced programme. Some students progress to these courses from GCSE in business. An increasing number of GNVQ students progress to AVCE. Judgements of attainment are affected by changes in both courses and fluctuations in the numbers seeking the awards. Attainment in AVCE and its predecessor GNVQ (Advanced) are above average and improving. Attainment in GNVQ (Intermediate) is also above average. In the main, recent attainment exceeds that predicted on the basis of GCSE performance and the points score is also above the school average. In recent years girls have performed better than boys; current groups are male dominated.

126. The standard of work seen is above average reflecting the overall good quality of teaching. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and practical business experience. Students in Year 12 at the beginning of their AS programmes are benefiting from clearly structured lessons with emphasis on technical vocabulary, study skills, use of resources outside the classroom and regular revision of learning. Students respond conscientiously and with interest; they learn well. Good sessions were seen during lessons where the teacher drew ideas together to enable students' understanding; this provided students with a good basis on which to finish tasks and to develop their learning. Some students take part in Young Enterprise. A busy and lively lesson introduced them to the roles they would have to assume in a company and its

possible name and product. Advisers from local firms support this activity. Work experience is integral only for the Intermediate course.

127. Intermediate GNVQ students make steady progress in understanding business structures. Their attention span and writing skills are limited. Teachers work at an appropriate pace and with attention given to individual needs. Additional tasks are provided to stretch the academically stronger students. Year 13 AVCE groups work enthusiastically on planning assignments for new units of their course. Students are challenged to work to tight timescales and to be realistic in their research proposals. At all levels students are pleasant, co-operative and adult in their behaviour.
128. Written work has been carefully and accurately marked although minor errors in presentation are not always noted. The best work clearly discusses methodology as well as presenting and analysing findings in full, making sophisticated use of ICT. Poorer work, at the bare pass level, lacks an explanation of the context for the work, exploration of findings and over-reliance on unoriginal illustrative material.
129. Students speak positively of their choice of subject, which was well explained at induction, how it is taught and resourced, the supportive work of staff and the opportunity to progress from GNVQ to AVCE.
130. Overall the subject is well managed by an enthusiastic and experienced team who have had to cope with frequent syllabus change. The general process of target setting and student monitoring is well embedded and is being refined. Staff are developing a useful resource base in specialist rooms in the sixth form centre, with increased use of Internet and Intranet materials.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

### **Information and communication technology**

131. The focus was on the AVCE course but the Key Skills provision was also sampled. One lesson of Key Skills was observed which was satisfactory. In this lesson, students appreciated the importance of ICT but were not aware of what they would do in the course. This lesson did not build sufficiently upon what the students already knew.

### **ICT AVCE**

Overall, the quality of provision for ICT is **very good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Consistently good teaching ensures that students learn well in all their lessons.
- Students have access to a good range of resources to help them learn.
- Students gain higher grades in ICT than in their other subjects.
- Very good leadership has ensured that a good choice of course has been made and that it is well taught.

#### **Area for improvement**

- Some students have difficulties explaining their work.

132. The AVCE is a new course for the school. The AS examination was taken for the first time in 2002. At the time of the inspection, no national data for this examination was available. In 2002 students gained better results in ICT than they did in their other subjects at AS-level. Thirty-seven out of 40 students gained results which were at least as good as those which could be expected based on their GCSE results. Very few

students did not complete the course and the vast majority have continued to study the subject into Year 13. No student has yet taken the A-level examination in the subject.

133. The standards of work seen of current students in Year 13 are at the national average. These standards are higher than would have been expected based on their GCSE results. They are developing the skill of using HTML language to design a web page. Higher attaining students can use more advanced functions in spreadsheets such as performing conditional calculations and accessing a database from within a spreadsheet. Students of average attainment can plan and test their solutions whilst those of lower levels of attainment produce limited design specifications and show some evidence of how their work has been developed. All students are developing the ability to work independently. In one lesson, students used computers to plan a schedule for a piece of coursework. They have good research skills and use the Internet well. They give limited explanations and descriptions of their work, both orally and in writing. Although students work well in groups, they do not offer critical comment. A small minority of students plan beyond the current level of their own skill. Students use resources, such as teachers' plans, from the school's computer system to help them learn. They build well on previous work. In one example, a student used his plan for a successful assignment as a basis for a new piece of work
134. Students in Year 12 were at the very outset of their course. They participate well in lessons and are willing to discuss their ideas and views with other students. Students are beginning to build on what they learnt up to the age of 16. They already appreciate the importance of research for their studies.
135. Teaching was good in every lesson seen. Teachers emphasise what is required for each assignment and regularly inform students what they will have to do to gain marks for each grade. Students are told exactly what they should do next to improve their grades. There is a good range of activity in each lesson. In one lesson, students in Year 12 discussed types of organisations in groups, in pairs they suggested examples for each category and individually they found information on a chosen company from the Internet. Because this lesson proceeded at a lively pace, students never had the chance to lose attention and were keen to share their ideas with others. Teachers take every opportunity to develop students' independence. In each lesson, students are given appropriate tasks to be completed before the next lesson.
136. Students' learning is good because they are well taught. They have access to ample, up-to-date computers in lessons and at other times. They use these computers well for research. They record their work systematically, although often not explaining in sufficient depth. Their work is well presented. They move rapidly and smoothly from one activity to another. One girl spoke of enjoying the challenge of the subject. Students would recommend the subject to others. Very few girls take the course. This reflects the national position. No student could give any reason why the subject was less popular amongst girls. Girls' achievement in the subject is equal to that of the boys.
137. The subject is very well led and managed. The recent change to the AVCE course was made because the school saw this as being more appropriate for the students choosing ICT in the sixth form. This is proving to be fully justified as results improve and more students opt for ICT. Students like being able to choose some of the modules they will study. The school had made good arrangements to cover the long-term absence of a teacher of the AVCE course during the inspection. Skilful technicians ensure that the extensive computer network functions well.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **Physical education**

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

### **Strengths**

- A-level results are above average; achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good; teachers have very good knowledge and very high expectations of students.
- Very good relationships and very positive students' attitudes contribute to a purposeful learning atmosphere.
- The department work well as a team; leadership of the dept is very effective.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The portable classroom used for theory teaching needs improved ventilation and good blackout.
- Improved access to computers is required in order to improve investigation and presentation.
- There are no timetabled opportunities for physical recreation for sixth form students.

138. The first A-level course started in 1998 with 14 students gaining results in 2000 that were well above average. In 2001 a larger cohort achieved even better A-level results with over one third gaining A or B grades and all students gaining A to E grades. Students do as well in physical education as they do in other subjects; this represents very good achievement for this group of students. Although female students outperform male students, the very small numbers of females taking part does not make for true statistical comparison. Provisional A-level results for 2002 indicate that the high standards have improved.
139. In 2001 almost all of the 20 students, studying on the AS course, gained A\* to C grades at GCSE with over 60 per cent with A and B grades; this represents a good level of entry qualification to the AS course. The 2001 AS results are well above average with over half gaining A or B grades; these students achieved well in terms of their transition from GCSE work.
140. The 2002 results show a slight decline from the high standards in 2001. Recruitment of students in 2002 for the AS course in Year 12 has improved; all these students have passed GCSE with A\*-C grades which reflects an improving and positive situation. However, these Year 12 students are only one week into their course; they are starting to adapt and respond well to the challenge of higher levels of work.
141. The standards of sixth form students' performance in physical recreation and sport are good with school teams and individuals being successful at district and county level. Although there is no programme of physical education for the sixth form, students wishing to take part in physical recreation make arrangements with the department or the nearby sports centre. The extra-curricular sport and inter-school matches offer a good range of activities for both male and females.
142. Students' work seen in lessons and observation of their files and books show work to be well above average, reflecting a very good level of achievement. Students' course work is well presented, showing good understanding. The above average work is reflected in work seen during AS and A-level theory lessons. Years 12 and 13 students have a positive approach to their work and find the work challenging. For example, Year 13 students show a keen interest studying the history of games and see the different routes along which games developed from the Middle Ages, from mob games and non-violent games up to the present day. Year 12 students show a good understanding of

the different elements that constitute leisure; they successfully distinguish between physical education, physical recreation and sport and use the words correctly in discussion and presentation. Students are encouraged to complete a glossary of technical words. In a Year 13 lesson on mountain walking, students successfully use mathematical formulae for working out calories needed to complete a six-hour mountain walk. Students in Year 12 clearly understand the extra demands of the new courses. Students in Years 12 and 13 both achieve very well.

143. The quality of both teaching and learning in physical education is very good. The majority of lessons seen were classroom based; the nature of lessons seen had limited physical participation. The very good teaching seen is characterised by very good subject knowledge. This is evident in the very good explanations which teachers give to students, for example, in Year 13 work on mountain walking where the theory and practice are well related to one another. For instance, students work out compass bearings on a map and then apply them around the school site with varying degrees of success. Teachers are very confident and enthusiastic about physical education, which they transmit to their students as exemplified in a Year 13 lesson on the history of games development. The tasks provided for students indicate good planning of sixth form work; teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of the AS and A-level modules. In theory lessons the teaching methods involve students actively in their learning in group work, classroom debate and presentations to their peers. This was well demonstrated in the majority of lessons seen and especially in the lesson about aspects of leisure. Learning objectives are clear and shared with the students. This leads to increasing confidence as they progress through the course. Teachers have very high expectations of students, which were evident, for example, in the enthusiastic way in which Year 13 worked on preparation for a three-day mountain walk. The good feature of the majority of lessons is the pace and demands made by teachers, and as a consequence students take part with great zest and enthusiasm. Overall, very good knowledge, planning and high expectations lead to very good and confident learning by the students. Students are encouraged to engage in open debate with each other in order to improve the depth of their learning, which was well demonstrated in lessons on mountain walking and the history of sport in Year 13. Students are attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in the subject. Their attitudes towards physical education are very good, and also contribute to a good learning environment. Students all show a mature and positive approach to their studies, and they are clearly enjoying their courses. They develop a good and confident working relationship with their teachers. They listen well to the teacher and to one another.
144. The post-16 curriculum in physical education is well led and well managed. A strength of the department is the way staff operate as a team, helping and supporting one another. Students are successfully tracked through their AS and A-level courses and are very aware of their achievement. Access to computers in lessons constrains some investigative work in school although the majority of students have access at home. The department has a dedicated room for theory lessons; however, the portable classroom is in need of improvements being made to the ventilation and blackout; this inhibits learning.
145. Unfortunately, there are no timetabled opportunities for physical recreation for sixth form students although the department does give students access to facilities when possible.
146. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The A-level and AS courses are new and recruit well. Standards are well above the national average and students achieve very well. Teachers involved in the A-level and AS courses and sixth form physical recreation are working very hard to improve the quality of the

physical education in the sixth form; the department shows a good capacity for further improvement and continued development of high standards.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

### **ART**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Very good teaching in both years.
- Mature, appreciative students who enjoy and value highly constructive relationships with staff.
- Students' high skills base, particularly in painting and drawing, upon which they develop good levels of individual interpretation in both years.
- Students take very good advantage of extra-curricular opportunities such as life-drawing classes and visits to galleries abroad to strengthen their portfolios of work.

#### **Area for improvement**

- Accommodation for large groups in the current classroom is unsatisfactory and places constraints on the nature and scale of students' work

147. Year 13's A-level (A2) results have risen in recent years and are now well above average. They also show most students achieving very well in art compared with estimated grade predictions. Students from Year 12 also gained very high grades at AS-level, with many also out-performing estimated attainment. The percentage of A grades in both examinations was particularly high.

148. Current work in both years indicates that students are on track for similarly high attainment. Although few enter the courses from an A\* grade at GCSE, their technical skills in key elements such as drawing and painting are very high. Both year groups experience a brisk skills revision course at the start of the year, which refines and hones these competences well. Later on, teachers ensure that, individually, students develop their work creatively from these common initial start-points, whilst retaining their technical rigour. In the current project in Year 13, for example, students were starting to produce technically very competent charcoal drawings based on a large still-life set-up. These show very good composition and use of visual elements such as line and shape. Evidence from their AS-level portfolios shows that they will 'personalise' these creatively later on. Year 12 students were working similarly effectively on unusual viewpoints for self-portraits, showing the same level of technical competence in drawing. Very good, large-scale displays of past and current students' work in the public areas of the school testify to the very high quality of the final outcomes of two- and three-dimensional projects. These also enhance the quality of the school's visual environment, providing inspiration for younger pupils. Few students achieve below their predicted target grade in either year and many exceed these expectations by a good margin. Students' attitudes to their work in the department are highly positive. They appreciate the high level of support, help and advice provided by teachers, whom they regard as committed and extremely enthusiastic. They appreciate teachers' passion for their subject and their aspiration to ensure that all students as individuals achieve the best outcomes possible. Students know that if they work hard, they will succeed well in art, and will mature effectively both in their art work and in their own personal development. The good response to extra-curricular opportunities such as life-drawing classes demonstrates this. Most students attend these and their portfolios include very good evidence of the development of their understanding about drawing the human form. Opportunities to visit galleries at home and abroad similarly enhance all aspects

of their development, adding significantly to students' cultural awareness, particularly of European art.

149. Teaching seen on inspection was always good or very good and is very good overall. The teaching team share post-16 teaching highly effectively and students speak very positively of the benefits they accrue from experience with two teachers during the year. The team has a common approach, communicating effectively on a daily basis about the progress of classes and individuals. Their joint understanding of the development of students' work is thus very secure. Each teacher brings a slightly different slant to his or her work, so students benefit from two differing sets of expertise during the year. All teachers possess a very good basis of knowledge and understanding which they utilise very effectively in lessons. The relatively short single lessons occur at a good pace, with changes of activity which lead to very good progress in lessons and across the years. Lessons include appropriate input from teachers, for example relating to a wide range of artists' work which students can study to expand their theoretical knowledge base. Resources such as books for this work are good and are well used to extend students' historical and critical knowledge. They use these particularly well as the stimulus for the illustrated, written personal investigations and personal studies which form part of their courses. Good ICT resources are readily accessible and likewise used creatively in students' portfolios. Relationships between students and staff are very good. This creates a secure environment where students know they will receive useful oral and written feedback, encouraging them when necessary, criticising their work positively, suggesting developments, challenging and pushing them to do their best. They also know that teachers do not shirk from harsh criticism if they are not doing their best, and that only those who fail to respond to teachers' concern will under-perform. That so many students who did not achieve the highest grades earlier in the school achieve such high grades at AS-level and A-level is a tribute to very good teaching which generates very positive attitudes to learning amongst all but a very small minority of students.
150. The teaching team is new since the time of the last report when standards were similarly high. GNVQ has been discontinued but current curriculum provision is entirely appropriate for students' needs. The new head of department has created a very cohesive team and manages the department very well. Staff provide a rigorous yet supportive environment and are committed to students achieving maximum progress in both technical skills and personal development while they are in the sixth form. High attainment has been maintained and most students now achieve very well. Although sixth form students have a classroom for class use, this accommodation is unsatisfactory for current requirements. It forms a constraint on students developing their own style and flair earlier in their courses, particularly the highest attaining students. The size and refurbishment of this space do not provide the necessary physical environment to promote the high degree of independent learning expected and of which these very high attaining students are capable earlier in their courses. For example, students have no dedicated personal space to work in and lack ready access in free periods. This is unusual for post-16 experience in art, limiting the freer responses attainable by the ablest students.

## THEATRE STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre studies is **good**.

### Strengths

- Results in previous years have been consistently above average for A to E grades and students' achievement is good.
- The new head of department is providing good leadership by giving a new sense of purpose and clear direction to the work of an already well-managed department.
- Teaching is of good quality overall, particularly in relation to teachers' knowledge about drama and their dramatic expertise.
- Most students have a positive attitude to their drama work; they enjoy the course and recognise how it benefits them, especially in terms of gains in maturity, self-confidence and independence.

### Areas for improvement

- In their preparations for demonstrations of their performance skills, students do not take sufficient account of how an audience might respond. Some lower attaining students would benefit from more guidance in structuring their written work.
- The drama studio and the department's classroom base are in need of refurbishment. The accommodation does not at present do justice to the department's aspirations and its important contribution to the school's work.

151. The drama department has annually recorded a 100 per cent pass rate for its theatre studies students since the previous inspection up to and including 2001. Provisional results for A-level students in 2002 indicate previous standards have been maintained, representing good achievement by the majority of the current small group of Year 13 students given their prior attainment.
152. Standards are above average overall. Year 13 students write well about plays ranging from *Volpone* (Jonson) to *Metamorphosis* (Berkoff), showing good understanding of the challenges they present to performers and directors. Higher attaining students have a strong sense of a play's theatrical atmosphere: one student for example effectively described Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* as "absurd and disturbing". Most students also tackle with interest different approaches to the theatre in well-prepared and presented essays on, for example, Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* and Lorca's Surrealism. The writing of lower attaining students is less well controlled and their skills of analysis and organisation are not always sufficient for clear expression of their understanding. They would benefit from a more structured framework for writing and models of good writing to imitate.
153. During the inspection there was little opportunity to observe students' performing skills directly, but videotape evidence indicates that performances are well rehearsed, imaginative and thoughtful. Standards of speaking and movement, especially the choreography of groups, are well above average. Production skills, for example in stage setting and lighting, are less strong. The length and rather self-absorbed nature of some performances indicates that students are not taking sufficient account of audience reaction in their preparation and evaluation. Nevertheless, performance standards overall are above average.
154. Despite limited opportunity for lesson observation, it is clear that teaching and learning are good overall. Particular strengths are teachers' knowledge of the subject and

practical expertise. In one very good Year 13 lesson the teacher's carefully structured approach of explanation, illustration and discussion, and practical application helped students to make considerable progress. They 'understood by practising' different aspects of Stanislavski's acting theories and recognised the value, and possible drawback, of these ideas for the actor. Students respected the teacher's expertise and showed this by their enthusiastic participation and very good working relationships. Subsequent discussion with this group revealed good attitudes to drama: all recognised they had gained in confidence, independence and maturity, and most enjoyed and valued the experience. In a satisfactory Year 12 lesson, though the different elements of the lesson were valuable, the teacher spent too long on a carefully prepared presentation and thus limited the amount of time in which students could participate actively in their learning. Nevertheless, even at this very early stage of their course, students were responding well to the opportunities the teacher provided for learning about the Greek chorus and worked well together.

155. The new head of department is already providing good leadership because he is a very good teacher in his own right, is perceptive about what needs to improve, and has a clear sense of direction and a purposeful approach to raising standards. One matter not in his control is the state of the accommodation for drama. Though adequate as teaching spaces, the rooms are worn, shabby and unpleasant. Their condition does not do justice to the department's contribution to the school's work, its aspirations, and its obvious capacity to improve further.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers have good specialist knowledge.
- Lesson planning is good.
- Students have good positive attitudes to the subject and teacher/student relationships are good; both enhance learning.
- Teachers show great enthusiasm for geography, which is transmitted, to students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teachers need to raise levels of attainment and achievement in sixth form courses.
- Reviewing sixth form courses and their specifications, taking appropriate action to ensure courses meet students' needs.
- Closer monitoring of students work.
- Creating opportunities for independent learning.

156. GCE A-level results in 2001 were well below the national average with only a quarter gaining A or B grades compared with two fifths nationally; a quarter of students failed to gain a pass. This represents unsatisfactory achievement for this group of students even though their level of entry was well below the national levels expected for entry to the A-level course. Standards show a decline from 1998 to 2001. However, the provisional A-level results for 2002 show that there has been some improvement in standards. The 2001 AS results were well below the national average. These students did not achieve well in terms of their transition from GCSE work. There are no significant differences between male and female attainment. The students starting their courses in geography normally complete them and retention rates are good. A small

minority of students in previous years has absented itself from lessons and has not undertaken sufficient work, especially outside the lesson. AS and A-level course structures and specifications need further modification to better suit students. These factors have led to standards and achievement both being well below the national average in both A-level and AS courses. Open enrolment of students regardless of their prior attainment, the change of examination board and long-term staff absence are additional factors which have also contributed to depressed standards and examinations; as a consequence there is some underachievement. In lessons seen, this underachievement is now being addressed.

157. In work seen standards in both Years 12 and 13 are just below average. Students' attitudes are good. They respond well to the relationships established by their teachers and behave in a mature and committed manner. Students co-operate with each other very well in group work, sharing responsibilities fairly. They listen to each other and argue positively to reach a consensus. In a Year 13 class students working on coastline features produced an analysis of how features were formed, which was then discussed in the whole class group. They join in discussions with enthusiasm and get many opportunities to discuss topics. Students use numerical skills appropriately as seen in a lesson related to urbanisation; they make good use of technical words like stump and quaternary industries. Students use ICT for Internet research and presentation of work, much of which is done outside lessons.
158. The quality of teaching seen, during the first week of the new academic year is good; however, learning in lessons and in scrutiny of work is only satisfactory. This is a consequence of long-term staff absence, students not realising that they need to do more work outside of lessons and the open enrolment of students. The good teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge evident in the good explanations which teachers give to students, for example, in a Year 12 lesson, explaining the problems of coastal erosion and the different coastal management strategies. Students respond well; for example, a high attaining Year 12 student made a substantive analysis of a beach coastline giving very good reasons for its Mediterranean location; however, lower attaining pupils found analysis difficult. Teachers are confident and enthusiastic about geography and this is transmitted to their students. Teachers have the ability to generate confidence in students. To a considerable extent this is because they are inclusive and have a commitment to support students who may have difficulties with data interpretation or statistical analysis. Tasks provided for students indicate good planning of sixth form work, for example, providing a wide range of coastal photographs in order to illustrate erosion, deposition and the related human aspects. The learning objectives for each lesson are very clear and shared with the students. In most lessons, there are opportunities for students to work individually and in small groups; some start to use their initiative. Some students are beginning to take some responsibility for their learning; however, this is an area for further development. Year 13 students successfully use numeracy skills to draw a choropleth map in order to analyse the development of the European Community. Probing questioning, as seen in a Year 13 lesson on global change, successfully challenges students about their understanding of European Union and its functions. Good knowledge, good planning and good student management promotes confident learning as they try to improve their knowledge, evaluative and analytical skills. Students are encouraged to engage in open debate with each other in order to improve the depth of their learning. This was well demonstrated in a Year 12 lesson where students discussed the difference in urban and rural definitions in different countries. Students' work is assessed; notes and assignments are checked for content and structure. Some marking is good and thorough with developmental annotations and summaries; however, some is less thorough. Overall, students are attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in the subject, which enhances their learning.

159. Strategic leadership and management of sixth form courses are satisfactory. The head of department has identified some areas to be modified in the A-level and AS course structures. The low level of entry for the AS course linked with an increase of numbers of students, with a low entry grade to the sixth form course, constrain standards. A fifth of this group does not have A\*-C grades at GCSE and a small minority have not studied geography. Classes are taught in a wide range of mixed ability groups, which has an effect of depressing standards. Assessment, monitoring and tracking of students' progress are developing; however, they need to be even more rigorous in order to ensure students' examination results improve.
160. Standards in examination results have declined since the last inspection; however, there are indications that this situation has been halted. Many aspects of sixth form work have improved, for example, tracking students' progress, recruitment of students to study geography, greater staffing expertise, teaching and planning. The teaching seen in Years 12 and 13 is consistently good.

## History

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

### Strengths

- Improving results at A-level; in 2002 all students obtained pass grades with most of them showing good achievement in relation to their previous attainment.
- The teaching of history is good overall with teachers using their subject knowledge effectively to promote good learning.
- Students show very good attitudes towards the subject; they appreciate the support and encouragement received from teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Reducing the use of non-specialist classrooms that currently has a negative impact on learning.
- Fieldwork and the application of ICT in the subject.
- Monitoring and evaluating sixth form courses, especially the quality of teaching.

161. The department offers AS and A-level courses in history. Currently there are 38 students in Year 12 and 16 in Year 13. There are good levels of retention with most students completing their courses.
162. A-level results in 2001 were in line with the national average although the percentage of students gaining A or B grades was well below it. Results in 2002 rose significantly with all students obtaining a pass grade and more than half of them obtaining A or B grades. In 1999 results were well above the national average but they declined over the next two years. Results at AS-level in 2001 were in line with the national average; the percentage of students obtaining pass grades in 2002 was close to the figure for 2001.
163. By the end of Year 13, standards in work seen are above the national average. These standards match those in recent examination results. Most students have good knowledge and understanding of historical issues such as the Spanish Inquisition and the conquest of Granada in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. They can use, analyse and evaluate historical sources in context. Year 13 students were able to use source materials to analyse the motives for the conquest of Granada and draw comparisons with the motives for war today using well-balanced and convincing arguments. Students studying the Spanish Inquisition demonstrated their ability to assess the significance of the period taking into account a variety of historians' views. Their work has not included sufficient use of ICT and teachers use a limited variety of sources of information.

164. Students achieve well and make good progress in developing appropriate historical knowledge, understanding and skills. Year 12 students were observed developing their ability to use source materials in order to make presentations about life in Tudor Britain. Other Year 12 students demonstrated their increasing understanding and use of historical terms and concepts when giving a convincing explanation of the difference between autocracy and dictatorship.
165. Overall the quality of teaching is good. It was very good in one of the four lessons observed and good in the three others. Teachers have a good subject knowledge that is used effectively to introduce and explain topics. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and a structure that includes a variety of stimulating and interesting activities. Teachers give good levels of support to students, particularly on an individual basis, and do much to encourage them. As a result, learning is good with students making rapid increases in the range of their knowledge and depth of understanding. Extensive use of source material ensures the development of historical skills. In a lesson on the Russian Revolution, Year 12 students were observed developing their analytical skills when using a variety of sources in order to describe social, economic and political events. Occasionally the pace of some lessons could be improved by reducing the amount of time allocated to individual activities. Students show very good attitudes to the subject. They are prepared to reflect on historical issues and events and work very well together, showing high levels of co-operation. Their views on the subject are very positive; they recognise the good quality of teaching in the department and are grateful for the support and encouragement received from teachers.
166. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Sixth form history courses are well co-ordinated by the head of history working closely with a small team of teachers. There are good policy documents and development plans. These have resulted in an improvement in A-level results from 2001 to 2002 because they have focused the department on developing students' independent learning skills and preparing them for examinations. The department has therefore made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The curriculum has been enhanced through the provision of visits and fieldwork activities and some application of ICT. There has been some improvement in the quality of non-specialist classrooms used. These are still areas for further development, however, together with monitoring and evaluating sixth form courses, especially the quality of teaching.

## Psychology

The quality of provision in psychology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Above average and improving attainment, particularly at A-level.
- Lively, flexible teaching.
- Increasing numbers of responsive students.

### Areas for improvement

- Size and number of specialist rooms.
- Scope of resources accessible to students.
- Building in differentiated activities in response to student performance.

167. Attainment at A-level has recovered from below average to above average in the last two years. Attainment is now also above that of the other subjects the students have taken. Numbers taking the subject at AS and A-level have increased considerably. AS

attainment is average. There has been a change of syllabus in this period, changing examination boards from AQA to OCR.

168. Standards of work are above average. Students have good knowledge and understanding of a range of psychological concepts. They are aware of research methodology and are mostly confident in judging the value of these approaches. In a Year 12 lesson students used a simple experiment well to distinguish between vision and visual perception. In a Year 13 lesson, on stress, students effectively drew upon their own experience to engage in a lively and informed discussion about the issue. Teachers used the contributions from students, in exploring reaction to stress, to build up their knowledge.
169. Students respond well to effective and purposeful teaching. Teaching and learning are very good. This is evident from the lessons seen, planning documents and students' work. Students in both years respond enthusiastically to clear and well-paced lessons. Students are stimulated by the variety of teaching methods used to bring the syllabus to life. Concise notes giving the basic facts required for the course support this. There is an emphasis on accurate use of technical terms and the regular setting of homework. The higher attaining students are able to explore and extend the topics introduced by the teacher. An AS class responded positively to being split into groups to research evidence for the nature and nurture explanations of criminality, while a third group had to be aware of both sides of the argument in order to judge their respective validity. This provided opportunity for information research, leading to oral presentations and finally a written assignment.
170. Students develop good skills in structuring and writing practical reports. Written work is good. Project assessments are clearly written on appropriate topics and well presented. Feedback lists areas for improvement and guidance on the general interpretation of the feedback.
171. Students are happy at their choice of subject; most follow it through to A-level standard. They feel very thoroughly prepared for examinations.
172. There have been recent changes of teacher in this subject. They work within the supportive framework of the business and social sciences department. They demonstrate a clear view on the teaching of the subject and are developing resources to support this work, having recently decided on a change to a more appropriate syllabus. The base room is in the sixth form centre. Groups have now reached a size where this facility is becoming inadequate.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Above average standards in English Literature because of the good teaching and learning.
- The very good subject knowledge and understanding of the staff, enabling students to learn effectively.
- The very good relationships that inspire trust and respect.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Monitoring of entry criteria for English language in order to enhance standards.

• Assessment procedures that guide curriculum planning and set clear targets.

173. English literature and English language are offered at AS and A-level. Around 50 students study these subjects each year and most complete their course.
174. Results in the 2001 GCE level English literature examinations were above the national average and in English language were broadly in line with the national average. Students have gained better results in English literature than they did in most other subjects and did not perform as well as most other subjects in English language. Results in 2001 are similar to those in 2000. Results in the new AS examinations appear to continue the trend of good attainment.
175. In the work seen during the inspection, students' attainment is above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. This represents a good level of achievement, especially in English language, because those students' standards were not as high on enrolment. Students who are high attainers make the same good progress as all other students because their needs are recognised and acted upon. All students have a good knowledge and understanding of their work and clearly relish the subject. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion and only falter when the teacher's questions are misunderstood and there is insufficient time for reflection. Students make valid and cogent observations and use technical vocabulary in their writing. Extended writing is a feature of the students' work although their independent research skills are less well developed. They read widely and choose challenging texts. Students make sophisticated inferences from texts and sustain detailed textual analysis. Many students make good use of ICT to aid the presentation of their work.
176. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons there is a brisk pace, students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy their work with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. In a very good Year 12 lesson, comparing prose and poetry, students spoke confidently and accurately about William Blake's poetry and then enjoyed providing everyday examples of poetic language, at football matches for example. This was just one aspect of a lesson that combined vigorous and rigorous teaching to further the learning of the students. A good lesson in Year 13 on the play *Translations* was well prepared using a methodical approach to ensure that students covered all aspects of form and structure to shape meanings. A dramatic rendering of the characters by the teacher and the students brought to life the political nature of the play and deepened students' understanding. The teacher's planning included the teaching of language to inform the study of literature. In a satisfactory lesson students learnt less because of a more pedestrian pace and less skilful probing of students' knowledge. The teacher's questions were answered by the teacher in the main and therefore students had insufficient opportunity to extend their own learning. The study of historical and multi-cultural texts deepens students' understanding of literature and life. Very good relationships are evident and students respond positively to their teacher and each other.
177. The strong leadership of the department provides a vision for staff and students that reflects the school's aims. Teachers are mutually supportive and respect each other and the students. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work, which encourages equality for the students, and the development of staff. A mutual observation of lessons is developing teaching styles, learning styles and classroom management, and maximising the learning of students. Teachers are aware of the particular needs of male students and plan work accordingly. The department selects texts and plans lessons in order to improve students' results. Assessment data is available but is not used early enough to monitor the entry criteria for students of English language so that the students' aspirations match course requirements.

Students' work is marked regularly and consistently to a high standard although some comments are bland and do not target improvement.

178. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards have improved slightly and teaching has also improved.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### French

The provision for French is **good**.

#### Strengths

- In work seen standards achieved at AS and A-level are above average and improving.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is excellent.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good and ensure imaginative use of the very good resources available.
- The extra-curricular opportunities available to enable students to consolidate and extend their learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Ensure all students achieve their full potential in examinations.
- The development of opportunities for students to increase in confidence and independence in speaking and responding.

179. Standards attained by students at AS and A-level in 2001 were broadly average. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B was below the national average. There is evidence of some under-achievement in examinations in relation to prior attainment. In the past year standards have improved and the standards of work seen during the inspection was above average. In work seen during the inspection students achieve well in relation to prior attainment. By the end of Year 13 students write at length and accurately, obeying grammatical rules and using a very good range of vocabulary and structures to discuss moral and contemporary issues and to analyse and comment upon themes in literary texts such as Maupassant's *Boule de Suif*. Listening skills are very well developed and they respond promptly to the exclusive use of French in lessons and display a very good understanding of idiom and register. They display a very good understanding of contemporary French culture and have a good knowledge of French history and the political system. They read from a variety of sources including the Internet and use the information gathered effectively, both in discussion and in their essays. Speaking skills are less secure. Students are generally hesitant and respond briefly to questioning.

180. Students' attitudes are very positive. They listen attentively and have very good relationships with their teachers. They concentrate on tasks set and clearly enjoy their learning.

181. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, both of the French language and of French culture and history. They use this very effectively to plan appropriate and well-sequenced activities which allow students to build effectively on previous learning in their lessons and to conduct activities exclusively in French. This is very effective in developing students' listening skills, extending their vocabulary and providing them with excellent role models. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this is contagious. Students respond

very positively and are equally enthusiastic about their learning. Resources available to the department are used effectively and imaginatively to promote learning; for example, students are expected to watch news bulletins and other programmes on satellite television on a regular basis and enter into discussion about the topics covered. They have free access to an up-to-date resource centre and use the Internet to update their knowledge of France, contemporary issues and political events. Teachers use a variety of strategies to involve and engage students in discussion. For example, in a Year 13 lesson students took part in a brainstorming exercise to explore the notion of democracy and extend their understanding of the French political system. In another Year 13 lesson, video clips of extracts from a film based on *Jean de Florette* by Pagnol were used very effectively to stimulate oral work. Students were asked to play the role of police interviewer and witness to the events and to retell what had happened. This was very effective in developing their speaking skills. Similarly, in a Year 12 lesson a *PowerPoint* presentation was used as an effective stimulus for descriptive work. In all lessons observed students' progress was monitored closely and teachers intervened sensitively and effectively to ensure all students made good progress. However, opportunities were missed to enable students to work independently of the teacher and as a result students rarely had to use their initiative and responses were often brief. There are too few opportunities for students to use the language themselves for real purposes to give or gather information orally and to gain in confidence in doing so, and as a result speaking is often hesitant.

182. The department is very well led and teachers work very well as a team, developing resources and exchanging ideas; as a result there is a good degree of consistency across the department. They are encouraged to use resources imaginatively and creatively. This has resulted, for example, in students producing a variety of materials, including a *PowerPoint* presentation in French for visitors to the local tourist office. Marking and other feedback on students' work is thorough and gives valuable guidance about how to improve, and the use of assessment is being developed to raise standards further. The department is also developing independent learning strategies and has had in-service training in this recently. The department provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities where students are able to extend and enhance their learning. For example there is the opportunity to take part in a visit to France, take Spanish and Latin to GCSE level and to take part in community projects such as the one described with the tourist office. Students also have access to native speakers to develop their conversational skills. Since the last report standards achieved by students have improved as has the quality of teaching and learning.