

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **DE ASTON SCHOOL**

Market Rasen

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120663

Headteacher: Mr A H Neal

Reporting inspector: Ms J Jones  
12460

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249646

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Willingham Road
Postcode:	Market Rasen LN8 3RF
Telephone number:	01673 843415
Fax number:	01673 840823
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs G Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12460	J Jones	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? What should the school do to improve further?
15918	J Goodchild	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion, including race equality	Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
8756	P Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10124	P Ramsden	Team inspector	Science	
4689	M Christian	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
3896	B Tonks	Team inspector	Art and design	
21803	L Ramsey	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30545	D Castell	Team inspector	Geography	
19915	P Hooton	Team inspector	History	
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form)	
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music	
4676	M Griffiths	Team inspector	Physical education	
	I Birnie	Team inspector	Religious education	
13734	H Davies	Team inspector	Geography (sixth form) Citizenship	How well is the school led and managed?
30825	K Hayton	Team inspector	Chemistry Business education	
23528	A Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)	
28199	P Lawley	Team inspector	Sociology	
31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	English (sixth form) Drama	

20729	J Berry	Team inspector	Biology Special educational needs	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is bigger than average with 1284 students aged 11 to 19. There are 246 students in the sixth form. There is a boarding house for 74 students. Although most of the students come from Market Rasen and the surrounding villages, a number, mainly in the boarding house, are from abroad, some from the Far East. Some of these students speak English as a second language, and a few are at an early stage of learning English. Approximately 15 per cent of students are identified as having special educational needs and three per cent have a statement of special educational need. This is broadly average. The school is designated as one which makes suitable provision for students with moderate learning disabilities, specific learning difficulties and physical disabilities. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Students' attainment when they start in Year 7 is close to, but a little below, average.

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

The school is effective in giving its students a good education. Standards are above average in the core subjects of English and mathematics and at least average in all other subjects. Students' achievement is good, and teaching and learning are good. Leadership is good, management is satisfactory and the school provides good value for money.

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

- Standards are rising, particularly in English and mathematics where GCSE results are above average.
- Teaching is good in all years, including in the sixth form.
- Students' achievements are good
- The curriculum offers a wide range of choice from Year 10 through to the sixth form.
- Activities outside school hours, and the broadly based cultural education, enrich students' education and personal development.
- Links with the community are excellent and contribute to the quality of students' education.

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

- Boys do less well than girls in some subjects and underachieve in English literature, modern foreign languages and geography examinations.
- Some senior managers have too much to do.
- Behaviour during the long lunch break is unsatisfactory, and also in a few lessons where teachers have to spend too much time insisting that a few do not disturb others.
- The school does not meet the requirements for teaching religious education to all in Years 10, 11 and 13.
- The very good school library is not used enough because it is not open all day.

*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 March 1997. Improvement since then has been satisfactory. Teaching has improved, and there is now a higher proportion of very good and excellent teaching. The curriculum for teaching design and technology and modern foreign languages has improved. There is still insufficient time to study the locally agreed syllabus for religious education adequately and the action plan from the previous inspection did not address this effectively.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

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

### *National test results and achievements of Year 9 students*

Between 1997 and 2001, results in tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 were average, improving at a similar rate to that seen nationally. They were below average overall when compared to schools with a similar level of free school meals entitlement but well above average for students who had similar test scores at the end of Year 6. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results over the same period have been average, improving in line with the national trend. The GCSE results were in line with those in similar schools. The school met most of its targets for GCSE in 2002. Overall achievement is good in all years. Students do better at the school than would be expected from their standards at entry.

In work seen, standards, including in English, mathematics and science, are above average overall by the ends of Years 9 and 11. Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average. In general, however, boys do less well in tests, examinations and the work seen than do girls. Overall, students with special education needs, included the gifted and talented, make good progress, as do those for whom English is an additional language.

A-level and AS results were above average in 2001. There are no national comparisons for 2002. The school has a policy of allowing all who want to join the sixth form to do so, and attracts students across the full ability range. The current Year 12 and 13 students' standards of work are above average overall and represent good achievement.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most students come to school willingly and work hard. They enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities such as dance and sport.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Although behaviour in most lessons is good, a few students in Years 7 to 11 waste the teacher's time and slow the pace of lessons. During the long lunch hour too many students not taking part in activities have too little to do and some are rowdy. There were no students permanently excluded from school last year. The number of times students were excluded for short periods was above average last year, though most exclusions were for one day only.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Most students work and play well together, although some Year 7 students complained about incidents of bullying.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	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.*

Teaching is good overall in all years. In about three quarters of lessons observed the teaching was at least good, and in about a third it was very good, or, occasionally, excellent. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good in all years, and in art, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT) and history most of the teaching is very good. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching, although there is some in music. Students learn well because teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide lively activities that involve students and generate enthusiasm. Students of all abilities are challenged to think hard and not to be satisfied with superficial knowledge, and they learn to be independent. Teachers use the community effectively in their teaching; for instance, there are visits to local churches in religious education lessons and in business studies examples are drawn from typical local agricultural industries.

Skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well in English and mathematics respectively, and other subjects also contribute to students' ability to use language effectively and develop an understanding of numbers.

Teaching in the sixth form is also good, with an even higher proportion of very good teaching.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form. However, the requirements for teaching religious education are not fully met. There are many very good opportunities for activities outside lessons. The good citizenship course fits well with the well-organised personal, social and health education programme. Work experience in Year 10 is well planned and useful. Links with the community are excellent.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. Students are well supported through extra lessons and with help in class. Students with physical disabilities are well provided for.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. There is additional effective help for students for whom English is not their home language. This enables these students to follow the same curriculum as their peers.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision for spiritual, moral and social development, and very good for cultural development. The many opportunities to take part in artistic and musical activities help students appreciate the non-materialistic side of life. They learn about morality through study of history, literature, geography and many other subjects. Assemblies and time in each morning with tutors usually reinforce students' understanding of moral questions but many make little contribution to their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. The school is a safe environment and arrangements for child protection are good. There are good procedures for assessing students' work, and help is given to those in danger of falling behind in their work. However, systems for monitoring and recording behaviour are cumbersome and unhelpful.
Links with parents	Satisfactory. Parents are given sufficient information about their children's progress. Links between parents and the learning support department are good. However, attendance at parents' meetings is low, at around 60 per cent.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The headteacher's vision of a school that welcomes and includes students of all abilities and from all cultures is fully shared by staff and governors. The school runs smoothly, in spite of the headteacher's absence last year fulfilling an official appointment. However, a

	deputy head who left at the end of July has not yet been replaced, so some of the existing leadership team are overstretched. Most subject departments are very well led.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have recently changed their committee structure to increase their involvement in monitoring the school's effectiveness. They are playing a significant role in decision making but have not ensured that the school meets all requirements relating to teaching religious education.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school uses information from test and examination results to evaluate performance, and arrangements for assessing the quality of teaching are very good. The school has recently consulted teachers extensively in order to improve its practice but does not evaluate the effectiveness of all its other practice.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school endeavours to get best value from purchases and services and has carefully considered the best way to spend additional money on new buildings.

There are enough teachers to meet the needs of the broad curriculum. Accommodation for teaching is good, but there are limited areas for students during wet lunch hours. Most resources are used well, but the library, which is fully stocked with books and periodicals, is underused because there is no librarian or other staff present in the mornings.

Provision for boarders is good; accommodation is satisfactory and arrangements for students' welfare are good.

## 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>• Children enjoy school and make good progress.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations and children with special educational needs are given very effective help.</li> <li>• There is a good range of outside activities.</li> <li>• They feel the school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of parents were concerned about the amount of homework. Most think there is not enough, but some feel there is too much.</li> <li>• About a quarter of the parents who returned the questionnaire were unhappy about the school's links with parents and information about how well their children are progressing.</li> <li>• A few parents expressed concern about behaviour and discipline.</li> </ul>

Generally inspectors agreed with the things parents like about the school. They disagreed about homework – finding that it usually develops research skills and reinforces what is done in lessons. Inspectors felt that parents are given sufficient information about their children's progress, though annual reports need more details. Inspectors found most students behave well, and in many lessons they behave very well. A few students do not respect the school's code of behaviour in lessons, and a greater number are rowdy in the long lunch hour.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large 11 to 18 comprehensive school has 246 students compared to the national average of 166 students. There are roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. At the time of the last inspection in 1997, there were 259 on the sixth form roll. There are 16 boarders in the sixth form, some of whom come from ethnic minorities. Attainment on entry is average and all who want to continue in education after Year 11 are allowed to enter the sixth form. It provides a wide range of subjects and vocational courses. Sixty per cent of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. Very few students fail to complete their courses. Examination results at A-level are above average.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It is cost effective and does not take any subsidy from the main school. Students learn effectively and achieve good results. Achievement is good and broadly based. The quality of teaching is good in most subjects and particularly good in English, design and technology and physical education. The sixth form caters well for its students and provides a rich environment for their personal development. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and the head of sixth form provides very clear educational direction. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

### Strengths

- Students' examination results are above average.
- Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects.
- Students are positive towards their courses and work independently.
- A very good range of subjects and courses is provided.
- The quality of information and guidance provided about the sixth form to potential students is good.
- The school provides good private study facilities for students.
- The sixth form is very well managed and led.

### What could be improved

- The quantity of higher education and careers advice does not meet students' needs.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are not effective enough.
- The provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements.

*Further areas for improvement are included in curriculum area reports.*

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching is good and students achieve well. They are very highly motivated.

Chemistry	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Teaching and learning are good. Students' practical skills are well developed, but they are passive in class and could be further stimulated by more challenging questioning.
Biology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Satisfactory teaching and learning enable students to achieve standards in line with expectations.
Design and technology	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average and students achieve well as a result of very good teaching.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good. Students have very positive attitudes but research skills are insufficiently developed.
Physical education	<b>Excellent.</b> Students are achieving very well. This results from very good teaching and the positive attitudes of students.
Art	<b>Very good.</b> Students are achieving very well in terms of their drawing and painting skills, but there are fewer opportunities for imaginative responses and risk taking.
Drama and theatre studies	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good and students achieve well.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average as a result of good teaching and students' positive attitudes to their work.
History	<b>Good.</b> Teaching methods involve and support students. Standards are rising.
Sociology	<b>Good.</b> Course is well structured. Lessons are well planned and backed by a good range of resources. Good teaching results in very good overall achievement.
English	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good and students achieve well over time.
French	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve well as a result of good teaching, very good relationships and positive attitudes towards their learning

Other subjects visited include:

**Law:** Good teaching and learning. Standards of students observed above average.

**Physics:** Very good teaching and learning. Standards are well above average.

**Psychology:** Good teaching and planning are raising standards and students feel confident about the course and the good progress they are making.

**Music:** Standards are average overall and the standard of musical performance is high. Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good.

**General studies:** Some very good presentation work was observed in a lesson on issues in contemporary society. In another lesson, students displayed good independent research skills in the art and culture module.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Regular feedback from teachers and tutors helps students to understand how well they are doing and how to improve. Teachers are always willing to give advice and support, which is appreciated by students.

Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed by a hard working and conscientious head of sixth form who has a number of whole school responsibilities in addition to her sixth form duties. She is well supported by the upper school co-ordinator. Tutors and subject heads carry out their roles effectively to maintain high standards. Students have free choice of study, though for some courses, such as sciences, a minimum qualification at GCSE is required.
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### 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 range of courses available to meet students' needs.</li> <li>- The quality of teaching they receive.</li> <li>- The quality of assessment.</li> <li>- The way they are helped to study independently.</li> <li>- Teachers are always accessible to help students.</li> <li>- They are treated as responsible young adults.</li> <li>- They enjoy sixth form life and would recommend the sixth form to others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is not enough advice about higher education and employment.</li> <li>- Students would like more support and help with personal problems.</li> </ul>

Students overall are very positive about their sixth form experience, the range of opportunities offered them and the teaching, guidance and support they receive. The facilities for independent study are very good. Inspectors agree with the students' positive views about their sixth form experience. They consider that support provided for students with personal problems is good and many students interviewed backed up this view. Inspectors agree, however, with the need to improve access to advice about careers and higher education.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

##### *Standards in tests and examinations*

1. The school's test and examination results are summarised in the tables below:

##### *Tests at the end of Year 9*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>2001 results in relation to national standards</b>	<b>Trend over last three years</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>English</b>	Average overall but above average Level 5+	Level 5+ Upwards Level 6+ no change	In 2002, some staffing instability depressed standards. The most able students had less teaching time.
<b>Mathematics</b>	Average	Results dipped in 2001	Results rose again in 2002.
<b>Science</b>	Above average	No change	Boys do about as well as girls.

##### *GCSE results at the end of Year 11*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>2002 results in relation to national standards</b>	<b>Trend over the last three years</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>English</b>	Well above average	Upwards	Significantly more A*-C than anticipated by end of Year 9 results. Boys achieved well above the national average for boys. Girls' results are very high for girls nationally.
<b>English literature</b>	Below average	No clear trend	Results are below average because more than the average number of students are entered. Boys underachieved.
<b>Mathematics</b>	Above average	No clear trend	Girls do better than boys, but the difference was smaller in 2002.
<b>Science</b>	Average overall	No clear trend	Above average number of higher level grades in the double science award. Single award results are below average.
<b>Art and design</b>	Average	No clear trend	Boys results were better than average in 2001, but results for both dipped slightly in 2002.
<b>Design and technology</b>	Above average	No clear trend	Although girls did better overall than boys in 2001, boys achieved more A*-B grades.
<b>Geography</b>	Below	Variable	Results fell in 2002. Girls do significantly better

	average		than boys.
<b>History</b>	Average	Variable	Results for boys and girls were not very different.
<b>Information and communication technology</b>	Below average	Rising steeply	In spite of the rapid improvement in the proportion of higher grades, the proportion of students obtaining no grade is above average.
<b>French</b>	Below average	Declined	Boys' results are significantly lower than girls'. The decline in results is partly due to the increase in the proportion of students taking the examination. This is higher than in most schools nationally.
<b>German</b>	Above average	No clear trend	In 2002, all students achieved at least grade F and boys did nearly as well as girls.
<b>Music</b>	Numbers are too small for comparison	No clear trend	Most students achieved the higher grades in 2001 and 2002.
<b>Physical education</b>	Above average	Rising	Significantly more boys than girls take the examination. The subject is increasing in popularity.
<b>Religious education</b>	Well above average	Little change	Numbers fluctuate, and are low in some years. More girls choose the subject than boys, and get better results.

2. The average point score<sup>1</sup> is close to the national average, but the average score for the best eight subjects for each student – a new statistic introduced for the first time in 2002 – is well above the national average.

#### *Standards seen in lessons*

3. Standards in most lessons are above average overall. By Year 9 standards in design and technology, history, geography and music are average. The most able students produce work of a high standard in all subjects, and particularly in English, mathematics and science, which together take up over a third of their lesson time. In all other subjects, standards are at least average.
4. By Year 11 students have consolidated these standards and inspectors saw work that overall is above average in many subjects. In English, particularly in language-based work, standards are well above average in the current Year 11. Many students write accurately and expressively and can communicate ideas and arguments convincingly in speech and writing. In mathematics standards are above average, though not as far above as in Year 9. In art too, standards are well above average. Across the curriculum students use number confidently and draw and interpret graphs as needed.
5. Standards are well above average in physical education, both in the core lessons taken by all students, and in examinations; dance is particularly strong. In art too, standards by Year 11 are well above average. In all other subjects, standards are at least average.
6. In lessons, boys generally learn as well as girls, but they are more easily distracted, and in some subjects they take less care with their coursework.

<sup>1</sup> Where A\*=8, A=7, B=6, C=5, D=4, E=3, F=2, G=1

### *Students' achievement*

7. Overall students' achievement, that is, the progress they make over a period of time, is good. The range of attainments of students starting in Year 7 is close to average, but a little below. In the current Year 9 there were more students at the lower end of the attainment band than above it when they arrived in Year 7. Now, in Year 9 students have made good progress to achieve levels that are at least average overall, and in many subjects are above average. In history, geography and design and technology students arrive with little prior knowledge and achieve well to reach average standards.
8. In Years 10 and 11 students achieve well on the whole, though there is a difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The school's own analysis of results shows that in a number of subjects girls frequently achieve higher results than predicted from their test results in Year 9, but boys do less well than predicted in several subjects. A striking example is English literature, taken by nearly all students, where boys underachieve significantly. In contrast, boys do well in English language, though they are still outstripped by the girls, whose results are significantly higher than predicted. In geography, French and German, boys underachieved in GCSE in 2002. In mathematics there is little difference in the progress of boys and girls, and in the examination in 2002, both groups did at least as well as expected.
9. In general, the best progress is made by the higher attaining students. Students in middle groups make satisfactory progress, but some, especially boys, could do even better. This was particularly evident in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
10. Students with special educational needs, and others in lower groups, benefit from being taught in smaller groups, often with additional help, so that they achieve well. Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress. For those who are at an early stage of learning English, the good achievement is due to the good support the school provides.

### **Sixth form**

11. The sixth form's test and examination results are summarised in the tables below: Standards recorded are for 2001 A-level examination results.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>2001 results in relation to national standards</b>	<b>Trend over last three years</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Mathematics</b>	Above average	Results improved in 2002	The department is adding good value based on students' GCSE performance. Girls attain at higher levels than boys and also better than female students nationally
<b>Chemistry</b>	Above average	Upward trend	No gender variation in results
<b>Biology</b>	Significantly above average	Results above average in 2002	Girls achieve at higher level than do the boys.
<b>Design and technology</b>	Significantly above average	Steady upward trend	Steady rise in point scores over 1998-2001.
<b>Business</b>	Above average	Upward trend but fewer A/B grades in	Standards are improving steadily. Students achieve well in relation to GCSE grades.



		2002	Girls achieve at a higher level than the boys do.
<b>Physical education</b>	Below average	Below average in previous three years	Significant improvement in 2002.
<b>Art</b>	Well above	Upward trend	New developments in AS and A2 examinations will require a more systematic and planned approach if standards are to stay high.
<b>Drama and Theatre Studies</b>	Average	Upward trend	Numbers are rising and students' achievement in 2002 was good.
<b>Geography</b>	Above average	Some fluctuation – well above in 2000, in line in 2001 and above in 2002	Girls have achieved higher results than the boys have in each of the last three years. Satisfactory value added in relation to GCSE results in 2002 and 2001 and good added value in 2000.
<b>History</b>	Average	Rising average points score	Boys achieved better results than girls except in 2002 when girls achieved highest grades. Satisfactory achievement in 2002, but fewer higher grades.
<b>Sociology</b>	Average	Results have fluctuated. Well above average in 1999, average in other years.	Girls have achieved better results than boys except in 2002 when equal.
<b>English</b>	Average	Results have been in line with national average except in 1999 when they were above average	Average point scores have been just below the national average in last three years.
<b>French</b>	Below average	Consistently below average.	Average point scores well below the national average 1999-2001.

12. These results are evidence that overall students' achievement, in relation to performance at GCSE, is good. Standards are well above national figures in art, biology and design and technology. They are above in geography, mathematics, chemistry and business. History, sociology and English are in line with national statistics. Standards attained in 2001 were below the national average in physical education, drama and French. Girls did better than boys in mathematics, biology, geography and business.
13. Standards of work seen during the inspection, from observation of lessons and from analysis of written work, were well above average in mathematics, art and physical education. Progress over time in relation to attainment at the start of the course is good in mathematics and art and excellent in physical education. In business, sociology, history, geography and design and technology standards are above the average. Achievement against prior attainment is good except in business, sociology and design and technology where it is very good. Current standards are average in the remaining subjects and students achieve well except in chemistry and biology where progress over time is satisfactory.

14. Progress over time is weakest when lessons are directed too closely by the teacher so that students are not sufficiently challenged to become independent thinkers and learners.

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

15. The attitudes of students' towards school are good. A high number of students, both boys and girls, as well as those from different ethnic groups and backgrounds, take part in a range of school productions not just as performers but supporting through stage management and organising the promotion for these events.
16. The standard of behaviour within the school is satisfactory overall. In four out of five lessons students behave well, and in nearly half of lessons they behave very well. However, in six per cent of lessons behaviour was considered unsatisfactory. Sometimes this was related to a tolerance of a low standard of behaviour or the non-application of the school's behaviour management procedures. Nevertheless, there are groups of students in the school who consistently fail to respond despite teachers' skill at managing students. Currently there are not enough strategies in place to help these students to improve their behaviour. In a number of lessons where learning is satisfactory, it would be good if the teacher did not have to spend time insisting that a few students, usually boys, pay attention. During the long lunchtime, too many students, not taking part in activities, have too little to do and are noisy and boisterous. This contributes to the difficulties teachers sometimes have in managing behaviour and settling students to work after the lunch break.
17. No students were permanently excluded last year. However, the number of fixed term exclusions has risen significantly since the previous inspection. Last year there were 109 fixed term exclusions involving 87 students.
18. Relationships between students and with teachers are good overall, although some students in Year 7 were concerned about bullying. They said that the way these incidents were dealt with varied between members of staff. The lack of a whole school recording system that provides an overview of bullying incidents hampers the school's efforts to monitor this. Students interviewed in Year 9 said that younger students are sometimes teased, but seemed unaware that this might be upsetting.
19. However, when given the opportunity, students willingly show initiative and demonstrate responsible attitudes. Last year 35 students in Years 9 and 10 volunteered to train and act as buddies to the incoming Year 7 and also to any students new to the school. These students are allocated to a tutor group and are beginning to act as peer educators for students during morning tutorial sessions.
20. The overall attendance level of students last year was broadly in line with the national average. Although the majority of students attend well, there is a significant minority of students, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11, whose attendance is low. For example, 33 per cent of students in Year 11 had attendance below 90 per cent and of these 15 per cent were below 80 percent. The school is working hard with the small group of parents who do not co-operate with the school by ensuring that their children attend school. This ultimately affects these students' overall performance in GCSE examinations.

## Sixth form

21. Students have good attitudes to their education. They enjoy being in school and show a serious interest in their work. However, some do not attend assemblies as required.
22. In lessons they show consistently good relationships with each other and their teachers. They are pleased with the good levels of support and the good teaching they receive. In their responses to questions during the week of the inspection, students were very positive about their courses. They were appreciative of the time, effort, help and support given to them by the staff, particularly the head of the sixth form. The sixth form have their own council and a common room committee. They take responsibility for organising their end of year sixth form ball. They are a responsible group of young people who enjoy sixth form life and who nearly all complete the courses they start.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. Only three per cent of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory and in about three quarters of the lessons, teaching and learning were good. These figures are better than those seen nationally and are a credit to teachers, and to the way teaching is supported and monitored. Teaching was at least very good, and sometimes excellent, in nearly a third of all lessons. Overall the quality of students' learning is also good. During the inspection a very high proportion of teaching in physical education and information and communication technology (ICT) was very good. In both subjects around two thirds of the lessons in Years 7 to 11 were very well taught, and students' learning was correspondingly good. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in music, where students are sometimes not clear enough about what is expected of them.
24. Teachers usually manage students well, keeping them busy and working hard throughout quite long lessons. Teachers expect students to concentrate and work hard, and because lessons are well planned and interesting, students enjoy the challenge and produce work that shows their own commitment to high standards. Sometimes there is a need for firmer handling of students who disturb other students' learning through inattention and wasting the teacher's time.
25. Most lessons are longer than average at 70 minutes, but teachers are skilled at breaking the time up with a series of short tasks that often require a variety of skills. Only in the lowest attaining groups, particularly in the afternoon, do students flag towards the end of the lesson.
26. Some of the techniques originally devised for the Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>2</sup> and initially introduced into English and mathematics lessons are now being used widely. For example, most lessons now have good introductions in which students are told clearly what they will be learning, and what will be expected of them. Most lessons also finish with a session in which teachers and students review the lesson together. In the best lessons this is an opportunity to get students to think about both what they have learned, and how they learned, so that they are becoming more and more aware of what they need to do to improve, and recognise that ultimately, their success is in

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<sup>2</sup> A national initiative to improve the transition between primary and secondary schools.

their own hands. In a few lessons, this final session is too brief and is just a reminder of what the lesson set out to do.

27. Computers are used well in most subjects to reinforce topics in lessons or to help students to work independently at, for example, research from the Internet. Computers are not used well enough in art and design, geography and religious education.
28. Work by numeracy and literacy co-ordinators has been successful in making sure teachers are fully aware of the way their subjects reinforce skill with language and number. For example, key words are used well to help students describe or explain aspects of such subjects as history or science accurately in the correct technical language. In all subjects students are encouraged to spell accurately.
29. Teachers use questions well to involve students and to help them recall what they have already learned. This helps them remember from lesson to lesson, so that over time even students who find learning difficult acquire a body of knowledge and skills that they can use subsequently. The quality of learning is evident when, as was seen in a number of lessons, students not only respond to questions, but ask more of their own. In some lessons students' enthusiasm for what they are learning erupts into spontaneous and lively debate. For example, in a GCSE English group studying *Of Mice and Men* a heated argument about whether the book would appeal most to boys or to girls grew out of the interesting task – to find ways to persuade an eleven year old to read the story.
30. Teachers are good at finding ways to involve all students, for instance by targeting questions at individuals to make sure all answer, or by getting students to work in pairs before doing their individual writing or presentation. In mathematics teachers use small individual whiteboards well to get students to display their answers to quick-fire questions. This makes sure all contribute without fear of looking silly in front of the rest of the class.
31. Where students with special educational needs are taught in the learning support unit they receive very professional specialist teaching relevant to their needs. Where they are supported in class the quality of the help that they receive is good.
32. Teachers are good at ensuring that students whose home language is not English are fully included in lessons, sometimes by getting them to work with friends who will support them sensitively.

### **Sixth form**

33. Teaching is good in the sixth form. It is excellent in physical education and very good in history and design and technology. In biology, it is satisfactory and in the remaining focused inspection subjects it is good. Eighty per cent of teaching seen was good or better and almost all of the remaining teaching was at least satisfactory. Other sixth form subjects were sampled and the quality of teaching was again good or better. Psychology has not been a successful subject in the past, but recent improvements in the staffing and organisation mean that teaching is good and students are now achieving well.
34. A major strength of teaching is the very good subject knowledge teachers possess and their mastery of the relevant concepts and skills related to their subject areas. They effectively provide clear, coherent and carefully argued expositions of subject

content and most ask students challenging and probing questions to develop their thinking and extend their knowledge and understanding. In design and technology teachers use their knowledge to help students to build up their understanding of design practice. History teachers have very good subject knowledge combined with a passion for the subject and are creative in choosing learning strategies, which involve students actively in their learning. In English, teachers use their expertise well to explain the finer points of linguistic and literary analysis.

35. Aims for lessons are clear and teachers usually summarise well at the end of lessons to reinforce the learning which has taken place. In mathematics, teachers structure lessons well, maintain a brisk pace and provide high levels of challenge. In some geography lessons students are challenged very effectively and they develop research and independent learning skills. In French and geography, activities are well sequenced, enabling students to build effectively on previous learning. Marking is good overall except for some delays in returning work in geography. In English, teachers put a great deal of effort into marking essay drafts and providing valuable advice on how students can improve. In biology, the curriculum lacks visits and field study to enhance the curriculum provided.
36. In many subjects, written work is carefully assessed and the diagnostic comments accompanying grades give students a clear picture of their standard and progress. In art, however, while teachers provide encouraging verbal assessments, students do not fully understand the criteria being used to grade their work as there is no formal system of ongoing assessment.
37. While teaching is good overall, in some lessons the teacher directs the lesson too closely, to the detriment of independent learning. In chemistry, biology and business opportunities to challenge and stimulate students are sometimes missed. This results in students becoming too passive. This weakness was also observed in a small number of geography lessons. In mathematics, strategies to engage students in discussion to confirm their understanding are overlooked. Teachers provide well for individual student needs but in physical education tasks and resources are not always adequately provided for students with special educational needs. In chemistry, tasks do not always challenge the higher ability students sufficiently.

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

38. The overall quality and range of learning opportunities are very good, although the amount of taught time is less than found in most schools. Within subjects, what is taught gives students a broad experience of each subject. This is very good in religious education in Years 7 to 9 and in physical education in all years. It is good elsewhere. During Years 7 to 9 students take drama and have the chance to take German or Spanish in addition to the National Curriculum. Higher attaining students in Year 9 have the opportunity to take Latin.
39. There is a very wide range of courses in Years 10 and 11. This gives students of all attainments very good opportunities to achieve. The breadth of choice realises the principle that underpins the curriculum as set out in the students' guidance book: 'Your Year 10 courses will be made of subjects that you prefer to do.' These courses include subjects such as dance, drama, Latin, sociology, ICT and business studies. There is a vocational course in health and social care. The principle of equal opportunity also clearly underlines students' choices.

40. In response to the previous inspection, the school ensures all Year 10 and 11 students can follow courses in design and technology, either through a short or long course, and modern foreign languages. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, the arrangements for the teaching of religious education are still unsatisfactory during Years 10 and 11. The school is not providing sufficient time to ensure that the locally agreed syllabus requirements for religious education are met. Other than this, the curriculum meets statutory requirements.
41. Students are prepared for the next stage of education through an effective careers education programme that raises their awareness of the need to make appropriate choices when deciding on which subjects to study at GCSE, to help them later in further education or work.
42. The curriculum provided for students with special educational needs is very good. It embraces many special features to meet their requirements. They have a homework club in the unit every lunchtime where they can get help, advice and companionship. A large well-trained staff is deployed to support them in mainstream classes. Students with physical disabilities, such as those in wheelchairs, are able to access all buildings and are well supported to allow the fullest participation possible. Students withdrawn from subjects such as French are given well-targeted work to meet conditions such as dyslexia. A course in life skills is in place for students who would benefit from it before leaving school. Certificate of Achievement courses are run to recognise some students' abilities. A computer-based teaching programme developing numeracy and literacy skills is used well to build up students' skills and confidence.
43. Students whose home language is not English play a full part in school life. Additional help for those whose English is not fluent enables students to learn English quickly.
44. Efforts to encourage and challenge students with special gifts and talents are not systematic; nevertheless these students are challenged well in lessons. Students with particular gifts, for example in the field of music or sport, are given many opportunities to develop their talents and shine.
45. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. These are a major aspect of the school's life and very well supported by teachers and students. Provision is particularly strong in dance, drama, music and sport. There is a full fixture list for teams and games throughout the school. Other activities include: field trips, community service, a termly newspaper, charity and fundraising, residential visits, and international exchanges with the Netherlands, Norway, Ireland, Poland, France and Namibia. The house system involves many in extra-curricular activities.

### *Personal development*

46. The school provides students with good opportunities for personal development, through a wide range of cultural and social activities. Students are well prepared for life in a multi-cultural society, through the presence of boarding students from other countries, through opportunities within the curriculum, and through extra-curricular opportunities, such as the well-forged link with a school in Namibia. The achievement of the Artsmark Gold award earlier this year is a testament to the range of dance, drama, art and music activities enjoyed by many students both within and beyond lessons. Dance performances are of a very high standard, and involve many students. Students play an important role in organising productions, and gain confidence and the ability to shoulder responsibility as a result. Artistic enterprises of

all kinds raise students' appreciation of wider issues than tests and examinations and enable the creative sides of their natures to flourish.

47. Within the last year, a student council has been introduced and this represents the views of the school community well. The council has formed itself into sub-committees that cover environmental issues, social activities and student welfare. They have been successful in getting the school to agree to refurbish their toilets and have been involved in drawing up the designs. For several years the school has run a Youth Action Group who regularly visit local primary schools to give talks on a range of topics. All of these opportunities contribute significantly to the overall personal developments of students. A comprehensive personal, social and health education programme covers all the relevant aspects of this area of students' personal development such as sex and drug education and study skills.
48. In many lessons students are encouraged to think about the ideas and issues that concern society, both here and abroad. A good range of visits, for example to art galleries nationally and locally, helps students to see beyond the narrow confines of the classroom. Discussions about ethical issues, such as the plight of flooded villagers in Bangladesh, and the study of the Troubles in Ireland, in which Year 11 students have to consider the views of both sides, effectively counteract any parochialism that might result from living in such a rural area.
49. Students are prepared for the next stage of education through an effective careers education programme that raises their awareness of the need to make appropriate choices when deciding on which subjects to study at GCSE, to help them later in further education or work.
50. The learning support department invites students to reflect on their successes and progress, encouraging them to become more confident and assured of their worth. The department catalyses its students' social development well, making good use of its lunchtime club and drawing other students into its support activities in the classroom.
51. Opportunities to explore aspects of spirituality within assemblies or in the form time 'Thought for the Day' session are disappointing. These are too often used for routine and practical business, and serious matters, such as the uprising in Tiananmen Square, are mentioned, but not given the weight such serious subjects deserve.

#### *Links with the community*

52. Links with the community are excellent. This is a real strength of the school. There is a high level of involvement by the school with its local community by supporting and being part of many events such as the Christmas Market. This provision makes a significant contribution to students' personal development and awareness of citizenship.

#### **Sixth form**

53. The curriculum opportunities are very good with very good breadth and balance. Provision is deeply rooted in principles of open access and equal opportunities. The school purposefully makes provision for the widest range of abilities. Students with special educational needs have access to the full range of courses and achieve well. In addition to 'traditional' courses students can take AS and A2 courses in subjects such as sociology, psychology, law, theatre studies and business. In addition, about

one in five students takes courses that lead to vocational qualifications at different levels: advanced level courses in leisure and recreation, health and social care and information technology; intermediate courses in leisure and tourism and health and social care.

54. The very good provision results in the school effectively meeting the needs and aspirations of all students, building very effectively on their previous qualifications. Sixth form courses at De Aston are very popular with De Aston students and with students from other schools. A high level of recruitment is matched by an equally high rate of successful course completion at all levels of attainments.
55. Extra-curricular activities are very good particularly in the arts, sport and opportunities for residential activities such as work experience abroad. Every fourth week there are off-site activities such as white water rafting, climbing and cable water skiing. The school further enriches the provision through teaching the key skills of communications, numeracy and ICT and a general studies course.
56. Despite these strengths the arrangements for religious education are unsatisfactory. The school is not providing sufficient time to ensure that the locally agreed syllabus requirements for religious education are met. No teaching of the subject, apart from in examination courses, occurs in Year 13 and there is not enough time given to it in Year 12.

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

57. The educational and personal support and guidance that students receive are good overall. Care is given to the transition of students from primary school to secondary school. Students are placed in houses related to their primary schools. These small communities provide a secure base for students and help them to integrate into the larger school scene with ease. Tutors spend time with their group each morning, and the citizenship curriculum during the tutorial period helps them establish a working relationship with students. They do, however have difficulty finding time for monitoring both personal development and academic progress.
58. A team of teachers who have formed themselves into an unofficial ginger group aiming to raise attainment has for the last three years identified students in Year 8 who are underachieving. Last year 24 students were part of an eight-week mentoring programme that teachers gave up their non-teaching time to run. Students who have been mentored in the past told inspectors that they found the support very helpful and a big factor in their later success.
59. Since the previous inspection the school has introduced a computerised attendance recording system. This is being developed to provide information in a more accessible form that will help identify earlier students whose attendance levels are a cause for concern. A small but significant number of students have attendance levels throughout the school that are below 90 per cent. Phone calls are made on the first day of absence for identified students but the attendance clerk does not call on the first day for other students, as is desirable.
60. Procedures for child protection and ensuring students' welfare are good. The arrangements for child protection are generally satisfactory in that the nominated person has received training and all the appropriate procedures are in place. Health and safety procedures are of a high standard and ensure the safety and protection of students.



61. The school's procedures for promoting good behaviour are satisfactory overall and lead to generally orderly behaviour. However, the tolerance of rowdy behaviour at lunchtime, bad language on the school field, and breaches of school uniform, gives mixed messages to students.
62. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are monitored by tutors but the current system of recording these incidents makes it difficult for heads of house and senior managers to have an overview of the frequency of these. At present the computerised system is not working and all records are on paper. Over the last year a recording system has been introduced for detentions and exclusions. This allows senior managers to identify students who are beginning to get into trouble but, again, because the system is not computerised, it is difficult to link detentions and exclusions, and look for patterns.
63. There is a lack of cohesion in the co-ordination of educational inclusion and this aspect of the school's work is unsatisfactory. While there is a senior member of staff with responsibility for social inclusion, this does not sufficiently embrace the educational aspect, such as monitoring the link between exclusions and detentions and ensuring that students likely to be excluded have suitable alternative provision through the funding allocated to this aspect of the school's work. Behaviour is the responsibility of a different senior manager, and because systems are paper-based rather than electronic, it is difficult to transfer information from one to the other.
64. Although there is good individual provision for a small number of students who have become disaffected with education, provision reacts to need and there is no planned programme.
65. Care for the welfare of students and students with special needs is good. A large number of trained staff offer good support. Individual education plans are well focused and regularly reviewed. Key teachers are nominated to oversee academic and pastoral matters for individual students and to liaise with parents. There are good links with primary schools, which enable continuity and understanding. Every effort is made to include all students with special needs in all aspects of school life; at the same time their lunchtime club provides a social base and source of help. Buildings have been adapted to meet the needs of disabled students and to provide a physiotherapy room. There are good links with outside agencies that provide extra professional advice. Information provided to departments on what the students needs are and how these can be met is very good. The learning support department has worked with some curriculum areas, such as science, to provide them with materials appropriate to students with special needs. Students with behaviour problems are given support, but even so, there are times when they disrupt the learning of others in classes.
66. Whilst the monitoring of students' progress and taking effective action where needed are good for the targets identified on their individual education plans, it is not nearly so well focused outside this area. Taking subjects individually and as a whole there is insufficient knowledge in the learning support department of whole school targets, and how these students are progressing towards them.
67. Gifted and talented students are identified and supported within subjects through the way they are grouped and by giving them more challenging work when appropriate.

#### *Boarding*

68. The boarding provision is good and boarders say they are happy to 'go home' to the boarding house at the end of each day.
69. There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the welfare of these students. Social activities and visits are organised for students at weekends, with appropriate degrees of autonomy for older students. The 'Childline' telephone number is displayed prominently. There is no designated 'independent listener' for students to turn to. However, there is a suitable alternative through the Schools Health Service that is based on the De Aston campus. All students are notified of this and know they can use the service if they need independent and confidential advice.
70. There are social care workers in place during the day for students who are unable to attend school for any reason, and sufficient resident houseparents on call at night. The individual needs, and where possible the preferences, of students are met. Vegetarian food is available and the customs of students from ethnic minorities are respected. Medicines are kept securely and administered by houseparents.
71. Accommodation is satisfactory and there is good provision for students to do supervised homework in the evenings, followed by suitable social or relaxation activities. Health and safety regulations are checked and observed correctly.

#### *Assessment*

72. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. The results of external examinations are systematically analysed. National test results from primary schools, and data from the school's own assessment procedures, are used to build up a profile of students' attainment when they enter the school. This forms a baseline for tracking students' progress over their time in school. The information is distributed to all teaching staff.
73. The use of information from assessments of students' work and examination results is satisfactory. Some departments, for example the English and mathematics departments, use the wealth of information well to see how effective their strategies are. However, some staff do not feel confident interpreting the information and therefore do not make best use of it. Predicted grades for end of Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations are based on reliable information about students' attainment when they start school. These enable teachers to set appropriate targets for students, and monitor their progress. Students are not always aware of the level they are working at and the school is considering improving the system to make it more accurate.

#### **Sixth form**

74. Effective academic assessment is in place in lessons and in the marking of work. The head of sixth form has built the necessary procedures for monitoring students' progress and attainment on a regular basis. Students who are identified as underachieving are given additional support and their progress monitored closely. The school uses a nationally recognised system to see how well the sixth form adds value to students' overall progress in learning. This data is also used well to set targets for students to achieve in external examinations and forms a baseline for staff to monitor the progress of students towards achieving them.

#### *Advice, support and guidance*

75. The overall provision for advice, support and guidance in the sixth form is good and is appreciated by students. Students interviewed described induction arrangements, at the beginning of both Year 12 and Year 13, as being comprehensive and helpful. They are able to talk to teachers about subject content and course requirements and sample lessons are provided in the subjects they plan to study. Full and useful documentation is provided about courses. When still in Year 11, potential sixth form students have the opportunity to put questions to Year 12 students. The induction course, immediately prior to entry into the sixth form, enables them to settle quickly and effectively into their studies. Tutors meet with students daily and are aware of their needs. Subject teachers give good day-to-day advice and support within their subjects and the sixth form team, led by the head of sixth form, is always willing to provide guidance to students. Regular reviews are carried out on both personal and academic development across the sixth form. Students are fully involved in monitoring their own progress, and working with staff to set targets.
76. The system for recording attendance in the sixth form is not fully effective, nor is punctuality fully monitored.
77. Guidance on careers and university application is satisfactory and is provided through daily form time and by subject teachers. Students receive impartial advice that is effective in guiding them towards courses and other appropriate career opportunities. A good range of up-to-date careers literature and university prospectuses is available in the careers section of the library. The students interviewed, however, were concerned about the accessibility and quantity of specialist advice from the careers service.

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

78. Forty parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection and 23 per cent of parents completed the questionnaire on parents' views.
79. The parents who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting felt their child liked coming to school, was expected to work hard and was making good progress and that the school had high expectations of its students. They would feel comfortable about approaching the school if they had any concerns. The concerns they expressed were about the amount of homework, the information they received about their child's progress and the ability of the school to work closely with its parents. Thirteen per cent of parents expressed concerns about the behaviour of students.
80. Inspectors agreed with parents' positive comments. The team felt that the setting of homework was satisfactory and generally extended students' learning and the development of independent learning skills. A small but important minority of students who have behavioural difficulties do affect the learning of other students.
81. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about the progress of their child, is satisfactory. Parents receive an annual report followed by a consultation evening. Annual reports are well presented although targets for improvement are mainly pastoral rather than being about how students can improve their work. Parents are also told the achievement targets that have been set for students' progress in relation to them. A range of letters is sent home to parents when concerns arise about such things as attendance or behaviour as well as letters of congratulation when students have achieved well.

82. The contribution of parents to children's learning is satisfactory. The Parent Teacher Association organises both social and fund-raising events. However, there is a relatively low attendance at parents' consultation evenings, about 55-60 per cent on average, and the school is having difficulty recruiting parent governors.
83. The learning support department works well with parents. Parents are invited to be involved with individual education plans and their reviews, and also with annual and transitional reviews. Parents can meet members of the department at Year 6 reviews in primary schools and at parents' evenings in the school. Parents have the opportunity to raise any problems at any time with their child's Key Teacher.

### **Sixth form**

84. Parents' views about the sixth form are positive. They are pleased with the high standards achieved and the progress students make in their sixth form courses. They consider the sixth form to be successful and well managed.
85. Students in interviews with inspectors expressed their satisfaction with the sixth form and the support and range of opportunities it provides. In discussion they expressed their appreciation of the help given to them by the head of sixth form, by tutors and by their subject teachers. They were particularly pleased with the opportunities to develop independent learning and research skills. They feel that the school enables them to develop as independent learners, bridging the gap between the highly structured nature of GCSE courses and the freer demands and expectations of higher education and employment. They consider that they are treated as young adults and realise that while their views are listened to it is not always possible for the school to respond. They found the induction arrangements into the sixth to be very helpful in settling them down to sixth form courses. Despite the pressures of the AS year they found it to be a most valuable experience. Their one complaint concerned the accessibility and quantity of higher education and career advice from outside careers advice services.

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

86. The leadership of the head teacher and key staff is good and at present management is satisfactory. In the period, extending over a year in length, when the head was away on an official national appointment, the acting head and assistant heads ensured that the school ran smoothly and provided for the needs of students. One of the deputy head teachers left at the end of the last academic year and has not as yet been replaced. This has necessitated the sharing out of this deputy's responsibilities. Senior staff have coped well but some carry a large workload. There is satisfactory delegation to senior and middle managers but some current job descriptions lack clarity.
87. There is satisfactory monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance carried out by senior managers attached to specific departments. The school uses information from test and examination results to evaluate performance, and arrangements for assessing the quality of teaching and learning are good.
88. The newly reviewed management structure has yet to achieve consistent monitoring practices by all heads of department (although English is outstanding) because some managers have weak relationships with their departments. Some subject heads do not receive clarification and guidance on certain procedures, for example the use of numerical information about students' progress. The school does not fully evaluate

the effectiveness of all its other initiatives, such as the mentoring of students. Current targets include developing the role of middle managers.

89. The quality of most middle managers is very good. Subject departments are well run and overall provide good teaching, guidance and support to students. The learning support department is well led and managed, at present by an acting head due to the maternity leave of the post holder.
90. The governing body has a good idea of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be improved. They supported the acting headteacher very well during his period of office. The review of leadership and management structures they commissioned has given them a useful overview of the management systems and of areas where the management could be more effective. They have outlined suitable priorities for future planning, and their newly formed policy committee, consisting of the chairs of the main committees, is an appropriate body for improving strategic planning.
91. The school has a suitable policy on racial harmony and students from different racial groups are well integrated into the school.
92. The school does not use computerised recording systems as effectively as it could. An example of this has been noted earlier in this report, under the section on inclusion.
93. Although priorities for development have been established, the school improvement plan is for one year and does not provide strategic planning for the longer term. Both the whole school plan and subject department sections lack detailed strategies for implementation.
94. The school copes successfully with paperwork resulting from the requirement to report on a number of matters. These range from different forms of funding (with the additional demands of the Learning and Skills Council), as well as other reporting requirements including the need to write bids for funding, and record and check the validity of information used in the national publication of examination results. However, this has placed an additional and unwelcome burden on an already overstretched management team.

### *Efficiency*

95. The school's financial management is satisfactory and effective in ensuring that the school operates efficiently and provides best value for money. The school bursar brings good financial expertise from the commercial world and is well supported by the administration staff. The governing body has a good awareness of the financial situation of the school. Daily routines operate smoothly and are unobtrusive and responsive to need. The process of financial planning is satisfactory. The cycle of review and development priorities leading to curriculum planning and setting the budget is satisfactory. Target funds coming into the school are applied to the areas for which they are intended and the budget supports the priorities in the school action plan. Recent funding has supported the refurbishment of buildings, staffing and ICT across the school. The current balance of over six per cent of the budget is higher than average but is earmarked for a building programme that is due to start next term.
96. The boarding house is self-financing and the finances are kept entirely separate from the main school budget.

97. The use of the library is inefficient because there has been considerable investment here, but it is not fully used for half the day. Staff are generally deployed well, but a number of teachers give a lesson or more to supporting students with special educational needs in class. Sometimes these teachers do what could be done by non-teaching assistants, and this is not an efficient use of teachers' time.

### *Staffing*

98. Provision is good overall because there is a culture which values professional development and a team that monitors effectiveness. The skills of lesson observation and support are a continuous theme operating well in different guises. Performance management is up to date and there are procedures to enable teachers to observe each other's lessons at any time. A very large number of staff take leading roles in school-based training events and pursue personal development at courses outside. Currently the school is sponsoring over 20 teachers on the 'European Driving Licence' computer qualification course, done in the evenings.
99. The match of specialist teachers to their subjects is good. Technician support is satisfactory and in science this is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Provision of learning support assistants and qualified teacher assistants is good but monitoring is inadequate because situations arise where the quantity of support to need does not take into account the size of the whole class or the views of departments about the best deployment of teacher support.

### *Accommodation*

100. The accommodation for learning is good overall. Teachers ensure that space is very well used as in geography and displays of work celebrate students' learning, as in modern foreign languages. Rooms are large enough for most classes but a history room is too small for a Year 12 group. Rooms are close together, ensuring that the subject has a common purpose. However, this is not so in English which has rooms in three different areas of the school. One teacher has no regular base. The art and design accommodation is badly organised and has old furniture.

### *Resources*

101. Resources are satisfactory. Most subjects of the curriculum have sufficient resources of good quality to support students' learning. ICT now has very good computers as a result of wholesale replacement and upgrading. The library is a very good resource with a good selection of books and periodicals. There are computers and video facilities. However, the library does not support students' learning sufficiently in the main school because it is open for only a limited time each day. There is no full-time librarian in school to ensure that the library is open throughout the school day. HH

## **Sixth form**

### *Leadership and management*

102. The sixth form is led and managed very well. Clear educational direction is provided by the head of upper school, her deputy and by sixth form tutors. The head of upper school ensures that there are supportive relationships and all students have equal access to the wide range of opportunities provided. Students are provided with good information before entering the sixth form and they are helped to settle into their studies. Tutors and subject teachers give freely of their time and experience to assist and advise students. As a result of the temporary arrangements put into place in the absence of the headteacher, fulfilling a national appointment, the head of upper school has a heavy workload, with many responsibilities in the school as a whole. This means that she is not always as available to students as she would like to be. Sixth form provision is cost effective.
103. Heads of subjects and teachers monitor teaching and learning effectively. Teachers and tutors carry out their roles well and this contributes to the effectiveness of the school and to the above average standards students achieve overall. There is a very good match of teachers to the needs of the sixth form curriculum. Teachers keep up to date with developments in their subjects and in the courses students are following. Performance management procedures are well in place and are now being linked with school and subject development planning.
104. Governors are supportive of the sixth form. They have, however, failed to ensure that the school is meeting statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form.

### *Resources*

105. Resources for the sixth form are generally good. Departments have their own stock of suitable books that students can borrow to supplement their work from textbooks. Some departments, for example biology, have a minimal number of computers available to sixth formers.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

106. In order to raise the attainment of students, the governors and management should:

- 1) Raise the achievement of boys in those subjects where they underachieve at present by identifying methods and strategies that are effective in other subjects and sharing those with all staff. (Paragraphs: 8, 9, 107, 108, 129, 155, 157, 161, 167, 175, 180, 182, 201).
- 2) Redistribute some of the workload on the senior management team by:
  - Analysing the jobs currently done by members of the senior management team and revising them to ease the load on individuals, in the light of future decisions about the size of the senior management team. (Paragraphs: 86, 90, 102).
  - Providing more clerical or electronic support for managing records of such information as detentions bullying and exclusions. (Paragraphs: 62, 63, 92).
- 3) Improve the behaviour of the small minority who at present let the school down, and reduce the number of exclusions, by:
  - Improving the provision for students at lunchtime, so that those not involved in activities have less unsupervised time on their hands. (Paragraphs: 16, 61, 79).
  - Providing guidance for all teachers in the management of the few students who present behaviour problems. (Paragraphs: 16, 24, 61, 80, 111, 122, 125, 130, 157, 161).
  - Providing structured and systematic support in school for students at risk of being, or who are currently, excluded. (Paragraphs: 17, 64, 65, 80, 157, 161, 184).
- 4) Meet fully the requirement to teach religious education in Years 10 and 11. (Paragraphs: 201, 203, 204).
- 5) Make the library accessible to students throughout the school day. (Paragraphs: 97, 116).

### Sixth form

- 1) Improve the quality of information and advice about careers and higher education. (Paragraph: 77).
- 2) Improve the system for recording attendance and ensure that all students follow it. (Paragraph: 76).
- 3) Meet requirements to teach religious education in Year 13. (Paragraphs: 56, 104).

In addition to the above key issues, the governors should consider including the following minor issue in the action plan:

Improve strategic planning to take a longer view than one year of the staffing and resources needed to meet and sustain identified priorities.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	156
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		77

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	6	41	72	31	4	0	0
Percentage	4	27	46	20	3	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	4	14	24	7	1	0	0
Percentage	8	28	48	14	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1038	246
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	81	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	37	3
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	161	7

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

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	49
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	64

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	124	100	224

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	74	88
	Girls	74	69	69
	Total	136	143	157
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (63)	65 (80)	70 (73)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (23)	42 (46)	29 (31)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	87	80
	Girls	81	75	74
	Total	154	162	154
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (76)	73 (85)	68 (62)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (39)	46 (49)	27 (38)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	111	87	198

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	46	102	106
	Girls	53	82	85
	Total	99	184	191
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	50 (56)	93 (94)	96 (99) ?
	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 student	School	41.1 (40.3)
	National	39 (39)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	34	88
	National		N/a

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13) report 1

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	40	48	88

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	44	48	92
	Average point score per candidate	17.5	16.8	17.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	40	48	88	7	3	10
	Average point score per candidate	18.5	16.1	17.2	4.3	12	6.6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

### Ethnic background of students

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

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1254	107	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
4	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
12	0	0
4	1	0
0	0	0

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

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.48
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.8

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	586.75

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.8
Key Stage 4	22.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,803,260
Total expenditure	3,878,160
Expenditure per student	3,039
Balance brought forward from previous year	336,380
Balance carried forward to next year	261,480

### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.05
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.25

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.11
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1284
Number of questionnaires returned	302

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	45	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	48	5	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	54	11	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	54	17	3	2
The teaching is good.	31	55	6	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	41	22	5	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	46	3	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	41	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	44	18	5	10
The school is well led and managed.	32	47	5	3	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	53	7	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	41	4	1	7

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- GCSE English results have been well above average for the last two years and are reflected in the work of the current Year 11.
- The head of department provides outstanding educational direction.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The rigorous curriculum planning in Years 10 and 11 ensures students are well prepared for examinations.

#### Areas for improvement

- Boys' results in GCSE English literature are below their results in English.
- There are some inconsistencies in teaching in Years 7 to 9.

107. Standards in Year 9 are above average and better than in previous years because more write with the qualities associated with the highest National Curriculum levels. These students sustain accuracy and clear expression, and make progress in using engaging vocabulary. As a result of recent changes in the leadership of the department, students are only now receiving increased curriculum time and a more explicit emphasis on the criteria used to assess their work. When discussing texts they make specific comments about the impact of language such as the effect of exaggeration in news reports or the astonishment of Macbeth when he encounters the witches. Imaginative use of puns when devising headlines showed a skilled confidence in using language. Most middle attainers do not have this flexible confidence with language but write with standards associated with average standards, through well-organised, punctuated and paragraphed writing. About one in five, mainly boys, makes too many spelling, punctuation and presentation errors to reach the expected level.
108. Standards in Year 11 English are well above average, matching examination standards of the last two years. Around seven out of ten work at levels associated with grade C or better in English. The standards of the higher attainers are very high. Discussion and writing revealed a closely analytical approach to the theme of xenophobia in *Othello* and the socio-political background to *Animal Farm*. Consistently evaluative comments and probing observations on relevant quotations are the hallmarks of these students' work. Those in the middle bands lack detailed comments, especially on language, but write with purpose, clarity, accuracy and much improved organisation through suitable paragraphing. The expression of other students prevents them reaching the higher grades and some make too many punctuation and spelling errors. However, there is evidence of boys improving in English literature because of the teachers' very good demonstration and coverage of the skills they need to develop and an increased focus on managing the examination paper effectively. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of this initiative in examination terms but coursework suggests boys' standards in literature are higher than in previous years.

109. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and therefore standards by Year 9 are higher than expected from students' standards when they joined the school in Year 7. The focus on what is required in external tests, however, is not as strong as in Years 10 and 11 where achievement, as the result of recent changes, is very good, since these students' performance was only average when they were at the end of Year 9. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 rigorously deals with the assessment requirements of the GCSE syllabus and ensures the students develop the range of skills required for success.
110. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students. Lessons showed teachers have the same high expectations of them as others. Year 7 students grappled successfully with the language in Blake's *Tyger Tyger*. The probing and ambitious teaching drew out their understanding of the poem's symbolism.
111. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. High expectations drive the teaching and learning for students of all attainments. As a result of their teacher's excellent shared writing task, the confidence and engagement of lower and middle attainers were greatly enhanced when studying Armitage's poetry. This was an illuminating example of how features of the Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>3</sup> are having a positive impact on learning throughout the school. An emerging strength is the use of thoughtful and probing reviews of what has been learnt to reinforce the students' understanding. Teaching methods are motivating: a good blend of whole class, group and pair work. The use of marking and assessment in Years 10 and 11 to support learning is very good and has a significant impact on the students' knowledge of how well they are doing and their improved achievement. This is emerging in Years 7 to 9 but is not rigorous enough. The highly challenging writing that is required of all students in Years 10 and 11 is not yet sufficiently part of the provision in Years 7 to 9. Most lessons use time very well but some lacked rigour and not enough was done. Behaviour, often very good, was unsatisfactory where this happened. Computers are frequently and effectively used by teachers and students.
112. The head of department provides outstanding educational direction. Under his leadership all the development points in the previous inspection report have been dealt with effectively. Significantly, there is now a consistent team approach to planning and greater consistency in effective approaches to teaching and learning. The strong emphasis on improving examination skills throughout Years 10 and 11 has had a major impact. Results at A\*-C have increased by 14 per cent since the head of department's arrival. Yet, the teaching still makes a good contribution to the students' personal development, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and their motivation. The capacity for further improvement is very strong with the head of department and his team fully aware of the need to ensure students in Years 7 to 9 are as prepared for external assessment as those in Years 10 and 11, while retaining the effective personal development. However, continuity of learning is hindered by the very high proportion of shared classes throughout Years 7 to 9.

## Drama

113. Standards in current Year 11 are broadly average. One Year 7 lesson was observed. Standards were average, although the students are making good progress in applying the techniques of what is a relatively new subject to them. The teaching is very good with the teacher's broad repertoire of subtle, patient and effective control techniques enabling good progress, despite the students' only satisfactory concentration and

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<sup>3</sup> A national initiative to improve the transition between primary and secondary schools.



attention skills. Drama makes a significant contribution to the extra-curricular life of the school. There is a long history of school productions, theatre visits and workshops. Currently students are rehearsing for a production of *The Ash Girl*. Drama is taught as a separate subject throughout the school and is well led by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist.

## Literacy

114. All subjects aim to enhance understanding and use of key vocabulary but this is most effective in geography, through lively starter activities, and history, through frequent questions and answers about terminology. The range of written contexts in history and geography is also very good: it includes letters, news articles, diaries, tourist brochures and postcards. Help for writing is also a strength in both subjects, through sorting relevant ideas and points into paragraphs or the use of methods such as frameworks to help students organise their ideas. The independent planning, thinking and writing of low attaining Year 10 geography students were distinctly enhanced by a stepped writing frame. One student neatly summed up this help on his coastal landform work: "It shows you what you have to do without telling you the answers." Both subjects adopt an effective and systematic approach to reading. They encourage skimming and scanning techniques, highlighting relevant texts and identifying relevant information simultaneously from different sources.
115. These examples of very good practice were observed in other subjects. The intensity and consistency of their use in history and geography provides a good model for other subjects.
116. The library is a good resource but its restricted opening times curtail its involvement in constantly enhancing independent research and critical reading skills.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good and the impact is shown in good achievement and improving standards.
- Students enjoy mathematics and are keen to participate in lessons.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and management to a team of enthusiastic, specialist teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- There are good assessment systems but these are not always used consistently.
- A few students are badly behaved, or too boisterous, in lessons and this slows their progress, and sometimes that of others in their classes.

117. Students enter De Aston with standards in mathematics close to, but a little below, national averages. In all years, nearly all students make good progress due to good teaching and their own hard work and positive attitudes. As a result, the standards reached by students in Year 9, and also in Year 11, are above average and their achievement is good. This is evidence of an improving department, since the attainment of the current Year 11 was close to average two years ago when they were in Year 9.

118. In Year 9, higher attaining students understand the use of indices, expand quadratic expressions and find unknown angles in a range of different situations. Average attaining students calculate areas and perimeters of a range of shapes and represent data graphically and solve linear equations. Lower attaining students interpret bar charts and use the information to answer questions; they calculate simple percentages and recognise simple equivalent fractions.
119. In Year 11 higher attaining students use the cosine rule to find unknown sides or angles in non right-angled triangles. They calculate and use standard deviation when analysing data. Average and middle attaining students use fractions or percentages to find parts of a quantity and calculate the volume of prisms, or given the volume, the cross-sectional area. Lower attaining students can use the four operations to solve simple problems, such as those involving speed and time, and represent data graphically.
120. Throughout the school, standards are similar across all aspects of mathematics. As students get older, their knowledge and use of basic mathematical skills increase. This is linked to a deepening understanding of topics and of how to approach different types of problems. Students are able to record their methods of solution in writing, and describe them orally. They become skilled at justifying their choice of methods, due to an emphasis in teaching on developing oral and written communication skills. Some students find it difficult to record solutions fully in writing, preferring to give just an answer. Higher attainers develop their algebraic skills well and by Year 11 are able to use them with confidence, accuracy and sophistication. Students who are especially gifted and talented have opportunities to begin some AS-level topics in Year 11. Nearly all students are entered for GCSE mathematics, a higher percentage than nationally, and nearly all achieve a grade.
121. In all years there was no significant difference seen in standards reached or progress made by boys and girls. Sometimes boys, especially when they were in the majority in classes, were allowed to dominate discussions.
122. Nearly all students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. The use of learning support assistants is carefully targeted to provide appropriate help, and effective planning helps teachers to provide suitable tasks and activities for all groups of students, whatever their needs. Teachers are also skilled at choosing appropriate resources to help learning, for example making sure that if a student in the class is colour-blind the colour of ink chosen for whiteboard work is visible to all. The few students with English as an additional language make good, sometimes very good, progress in mathematics. A few students with behavioural difficulties do not make as much progress as they should as sometimes their poor behaviour makes it difficult for them to learn successfully.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It was at least satisfactory in all lessons, good or better in about three-quarters and very good or excellent in a quarter. This is a big improvement since the last inspection. Thorough preparation, based on effective planning and secure knowledge of mathematics, provides a clear framework for each lesson. For example, in a Year 11 class, a starter activity on multiplying numbers by powers of ten helped students to improve the accuracy of calculations involving standard form in the main part of the lesson. Resources are used effectively to help students grasp ideas. For example, in a lower attaining Year 7 class, individual packs of different geometric shapes helped students to find out that the sum of angles on a straight line is 180 degrees. Larger thicker shapes, easier to handle, had also been prepared in case any students had difficulty in handling the smaller ones. This use of

practical resources meant that students were able to cope with more difficult work than initially possible. Teachers have good, often very good, class management skills, and this helps them to minimise the impact of a few badly behaved or boisterous students.

124. Homework is used effectively to help students make progress by reinforcing topics covered in class. The department has developed a good system to help students assess their understanding of particular topics. This, in conjunction with teachers' marking of their work, helps students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
125. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good, sometimes very good, and most clearly enjoy their mathematics lessons. In a very few cases the poor behaviour of a few students spoils the atmosphere for others and slows the pace of their learning. The planned and effective use of ideas and methods from the National Numeracy Strategy results in fast paced and lively lessons. These ideas are also influencing teaching strategies in Years 10 and 11. For example, whiteboards were used effectively in a Year 11 lesson so the teacher could quickly assess students' skills in curve sketching.
126. Departmental planning is good, building well on national frameworks and criteria and adapting these to the requirements of each group of students. Systems for assessment are good, although there is some inconsistency in the ways they are used by different teachers. The department has a very strong commitment to equality of opportunity and this is implicit in its work.
127. Standards and teaching have improved since the last inspection. The access to computers is much better and ICT is used well. The strong leadership and management of the head of department have been key factors in the very good improvement made since the last inspection.

## Numeracy

128. Students have good numeracy skills. They receive an effective foundation in mathematics lessons and they use these skills to help them learn in other subjects. Examples of this are graphical work in science and measurement in design and technology. Mathematics teachers, led by the numeracy co-ordinator and the head of department, delivered a very successful training session for the whole school. This has led to increasing co-operation between other departments and that of mathematics. An example of this is carrying out an audit of the use of numeracy in different subjects and then discussion on common methods and terminology.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Students show good achievement and results are above average.
- There is good teaching from enthusiastic well-qualified teachers.

### Area for improvement

- Some topics in the school's current Years 7 to 9 teaching scheme are not well planned.

129. Standards seen in lessons and in work are above average in both Year 9 and Year 11 for both boys and girls. However, particularly in the double award course the standard of girls' work overall is higher. Students show a good understanding of science and can communicate this confidently. They also show considerable skill and confidence in practical work. Higher ability Year 9 students use their good knowledge to design an investigation into rates of photosynthesis and suggest subtle improvements to their method. Low ability Year 11 students identify patterns in the diffraction of sound waves and relate these to simple features of speaker design.
130. Standards of behaviour are good overall and sometimes very good. Students usually settle well, are willing to contribute to class discussion and remain on task when working individually or in groups. They treat the fabric of the department well as they do the apparatus and their own books. However, in several classes there were some small groups of students who needed very positive management from teachers and sometimes support staff, in order for the lesson to proceed successfully.
131. Teaching and learning are good overall in all years. Very good and good teaching was seen where students were being constantly challenged to think hard about their science and a wide range of activities was provided which placed the science in a relevant context. These included good use of ICT, such as data-loggers, TV-microscope links and computer projectors. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and an enthusiasm for science and learning. They are supported by comprehensive schemes of work which make provision for all abilities, for example with alternative routes through a topic or alternative worksheets that cater for differing levels of literacy. They mark work regularly and give students regular feedback on progress. Support staff and teachers work well together to enable those students with special needs to make good progress. Nothing was seen in the lessons or in scrutiny of teaching schemes to suggest reasons for the better performance of girls in double award science.
132. Achievement is good. Both boys and girls of all abilities make good progress in relation to their prior attainments in all years.
133. Since the last inspection the amount of help from technicians has been increased to a level which is now adequate to meet the demands of the science curriculum and the quality of technical support is now excellent. The department has continued to develop and value scientific investigation skills and these are in evidence whenever students do practical work. Schemes of work were reviewed to take account of the revision of the National Curriculum orders and opportunities for more independent research by students were added.
134. The department is reviewing its teaching schemes for Years 7 to 9 in the light of the scheme produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. This is enabling the department to weed out material that is now being taught in primary school and ensuring that the science is always developed in the most modern and relevant context for students. There is still some work to be done here.
135. Accommodation, staffing and resources are all good and have a positive effect on standards but there is a shortage of textbooks and revision guides to supplement the wide range of handouts and worksheets currently used.
136. Management of the department is good and there is comprehensive documentation covering all aspects of the department's activities.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is rarely less than good because teachers use their very good specialist knowledge well.
- There is very good class management and a positive climate for learning.
- Homework is closely linked to work in class and contributes to the high quality of finished artwork.

### Areas for improvement

- There is not enough choice and selection for students, when determining the size and materials for their work.
- ICT is not used enough for manipulating images and exploring visual ideas.

137. Standards seen in work seen in Year 9 are above average. Most students have good skills in drawing from observation and make very good use of secondary sources for developing final compositions. Students organise and combine images in their work and understand the importance of research. Students show a good understanding of line, tone, colour and texture, and their work often makes imaginative use of media, especially when expressing ideas in sculptural form. Homework is well linked to work in the classroom and students understand how it contributes positively to standards. Higher attaining students achieve very high standards and students with special educational needs make good progress.
138. Standards of work in Year 11 are well above average. Students continue to make good use of the formal elements of line, tone, pattern, shape and texture in their work and use their imaginations well. They can develop their ideas towards a finished outcome, from a given theme or starting point. Students very ably use an understanding of the art of other cultures, to enhance and inform their own ideas for personal work. They can discuss their artistic concerns and give reasons for choosing visual information from a wide range of genres, styles and traditions. Students often show an exploratory and experimental approach to combining and using media in their work journals, but some research work is fragmentary and does not fully develop the original idea.
139. The quality of teaching in all years is usually at least good and is often very good. Effective class management and organisation ensure that all students make good progress. The specialist art teachers are fully committed to creating a stimulating learning environment, and provide informative classroom displays for use as teaching resources. Teachers demonstrate techniques well and share their extensive subject knowledge with the learners. There are not enough opportunities for students to exercise choice and selection, particularly when deciding how big to make their final pieces of work, and what materials to use.
140. Students make good progress in the first three years and very good progress in GCSE. A key feature is that teachers inspire students with their own enthusiasm for the subject. Consequently, students develop a good work ethic, sustain effort and concentration, and persevere with their work. Students work with commitment and contribute well to discussion. The routines for learning are fully understood and respected.

141. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership through teamwork and by the creation of a climate of trust and mutual respect. There is a shared commitment to improvement of the subject and the capacity to succeed. The art department reflects the school's aims and values in its work and achievements. The arrangement of accommodation in one of the art rooms is unsatisfactory, inhibiting some art and design activity and the safe storage of students' work and materials. The art department has made good progress since the last inspection, but development priorities still include improving provision for ICT and increasing opportunities for group work.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- Extensive and thoughtful planning has been carried out to introduce citizenship as a National Curriculum subject.
- Teaching and learning strategies enable students to develop skills of enquiry and communication.
- Students are encouraged to be involved in school, community and wider activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and effectiveness of the subject are still in their early stages.
- Regular training in the teaching of the subject for new staff to the school is not fully in place.
- Assessment methods are not refined enough to help students know how they are doing.

142. Overall, students are reaching average standards at the end of Years 9 and 11. They are mainly attentive in class and take a satisfactory interest in their work. They have only recently started the subject but most are making satisfactory progress in developing appropriate knowledge and skills.
143. Most students show a growing knowledge of the nature of democracy. In Year 7, students study the organisation of government by examining the role of the school council. In one Year 9 lesson, students showed good knowledge and awareness of the role of the Prime Minister within the structure of cabinet government. A good example of the development of thinking and communication skills was observed in a lesson where students effectively played the role of the Home Secretary, examining issues such as vandalism and other aspects of crime. In Year 11, one group made satisfactory progress in understanding basic legislative processes.
144. From the observation in lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. A small number of lessons were good when the challenge and quality of questioning resulted in effective involvement and progress. In only one lesson observed were teaching and learning less than satisfactory. The materials used in this case were inappropriate for the wide range of abilities in the class and no opportunity was given for discussion. Assessment systems are not yet fully in place to provide clear guidance to students on how they can improve.
145. The curriculum is very well planned with modules taught by tutors in the twice-weekly, 30-minute lessons, plus planned input from other subjects, particularly social studies, personal and special education, religious education and geography. In history,

geography and religious education, students are encouraged to make decisions, to understand the nature of conflict and the maintenance of peace and to appreciate the role of the individual and different faiths in modern society. Skills of participation and responsible action are implicit in the work of the physical education department. In science, opportunities are taken to examine the subject's impact on society, for example drugs education, speed and accidents and the implications of the greenhouse effect. There are good opportunities in most subjects to develop skills of enquiry and communication. De Aston is a community school and provides a range of activities to enable students to appreciate and consider other people's experiences and participate in community action groups and charitable fundraising.

146. As a result of very good subject leadership, a well-written and organised citizenship programme has been written. It builds on the strength of the work which was already part of personal and social education over many years. Some very good teaching materials have been prepared but there has not yet been a comprehensive training programme for all staff. At present too little is done to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the quality and appropriateness of the materials used. Currently some monitoring is carried out by the co-ordinator, but he cannot cover all the tutor groups. Currently there is no monitoring by senior staff.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 11.
- Teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned.
- Students' achievement is good at the end of Year 11, where boys do better than girls.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Class sizes are very large in all years, so students cannot be given enough opportunities to work independently.
- Lack of computer software and control equipment limits progress in design and manufacturing.
- Marking does not always tell students how to improve.

147. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. Standards of the work seen in Year 11 are above average and achievement is good. Students enjoy design and technology, show interest and enthusiasm, and over time through working in a range of material areas make gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In GCSE examinations boys have done better than girls in the last two years.

148. The large class sizes in Years 7 to 9, which teachers manage through the use of tightly structured tasks, impede the development of design work, and limit the opportunities for students to decide how to approach work and think for themselves. This in turn has an impact on their achievement, which is satisfactory, in spite of good teaching. Students in Years 10 and 11 have more freedom of choice and so they are developing a good understanding of design processes. Higher attaining students have good design skills and drawing techniques so that they produce good quality work. Students who have special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in line with their ability.

149. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and the consistency in the quality across all material areas is a strength of the department. It is mostly good and in Years 10 and 11 about a third of the teaching seen was good. The principal strengths of teaching are clear lesson planning, good organisation and management, good subject knowledge and high expectations. The best teaching introduces new knowledge and skills, and reinforces existing learning through a series of well-planned activities. It has a significant impact on students' work and generates good learning. Where teaching is less effective, the pace and demand of students in their learning lack challenge, and in consequence small numbers of students in some lessons are uninterested. In these lessons students would benefit from the use of a wider range of teaching strategies.
150. Teachers do not make enough use of product analysis and investigative work. Further provision for computer-aided design and manufacturing and computerised control, and the development of units of work in which they are fundamental to the design activity, are needed. Most students have good attitudes to learning and relationships between students and teachers are good. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for students to progress and achieve well. There is, however, need for further recognition of the particular contribution design and technology can make to students' spiritual and cultural development.
151. Assessment and marking are consistent, but are often lacking in constructive comments and targets for improvement. It is not as helpful to students as it might be. Not enough use is made of end of the assessment at the end of lessons by targeting of questions on individuals or checking their understanding. This is needed to enable teachers to adapt lesson plans to suit the needs of particular learners.
152. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department leads by example and by monitoring the teaching and students' performance. He deploys the teachers effectively across the material areas and courses. The technician supports the subject well but is limited in what can be done by the time allocation.
153. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The statutory entitlement for all students in Years 10 and 11 is now being met. Standards have improved in food technology and textiles as a result of the good leadership from the co-ordinator for these areas, and teachers becoming more skilled and confident in teaching the design process. The two food technology rooms have been refurbished to reflect a modern technological zone. The condition of accommodation and level of resourcing in the construction material and textile areas are unsatisfactory. They do not reflect a modern technological image of the subject that would enhance and promote students' technological thinking and learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching maintains students' interest and geography is a popular option in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a good match of materials and methods to the attainment of different groups of students.
- Students develop very good enquiry skills.



#### Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys at GCSE is below average.
- The poor behaviour of boys in some Year 11 classes affects the progress of the class.
- There is insufficient access to ICT facilities in lessons.

154. Standards are below average on entry to the school but students' achievement is good because they make good progress during Years 7 to 9, so that by Year 9 standards of work are average. Students' map skills develop well in Year 7 and their knowledge of place and use of subject-specific vocabulary grow through Years 8 and 9. Students have good enquiry skills: they carry out individual research tasks well using a variety of sources including web-sites and can use evidence to weigh up the benefits and disadvantages of schemes such as the Narmada water management project. They work well in small groups and present their work clearly in a variety of ways.
155. Standards of work in Year 11 are average overall. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' and the difference in attainment at GCSE is greater than nationally. Year 10 students were able to explain clearly their understanding of coastal processes that they had gained by working from a number of sources. However, students seen in Year 11 classes were less successful in taking notes from a video and were reticent in oral work. GCSE coursework based on a traffic management enquiry in Market Rasen shows that students are able to evaluate their results thoroughly and use ICT very effectively to present their findings. However, limited access to ICT facilities for class work restricts the range of ICT applications which can be used.
156. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Students make steady gains in skills, knowledge and understanding and in their ability to investigate issues. This is helped by schemes of work which are designed to consolidate previous learning. There is no difference in the achievement of girls and boys. Students at all levels of attainment make good progress through provision of challenging extension activities for higher attaining students and well-designed materials to support lower attaining students.
157. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, although girls achieve better than boys. Higher attaining students and those with special educational needs continue to achieve well. Year 10 classes seen during the inspection were achieving very well; behaviour was good and students worked enthusiastically. However, the achievement of a significant number of students in the Year 11 classes seen was unsatisfactory. The disruptive behaviour of a number of boys impeded the progress of other students in these lessons. Achievement is also limited by the large size of classes which contain students with a very wide range of attainment. The fall in attainment at GCSE in 2002 was most marked in the two classes, out of four, which had the widest range of prior attainment; these two classes, which achieved below expectations, were also affected by staff changes during the course.
158. Teaching is good overall. Teaching in lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good in both all years. Learning is good in all years from Year 7 to Year 10. In Year 11 learning is no more than satisfactory although teachers employ strategies which are appropriate for large, widely attaining classes which contain some disruptive students. In all years teachers have good relationships with students and exercise firm control. Lessons are planned to take account of the needs of different groups of students in the class and are structured well in order to make good use of time and resources. Lessons move at a good pace and engage students' interest. Teachers make the aims of the lessons clear and take care to consolidate students'

learning. The schemes of work provide a variety of learning experiences, including a very good programme of fieldwork, and are based on a commitment to an enquiry approach which students find exciting. Geography is a popular option in Years 10 and 11, and is regularly chosen by over half the students. The geography department makes a significant contribution to teaching literacy skills.

159. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory although GCSE results have fallen to average overall in recent years, in which there has been a succession of syllabus changes. On the other hand, there has been very good progress in providing for the different needs of students and developing new fieldwork units. Some progress was made in extending the range of ICT uses, for example weather-logging, but has been lost by the re-location of computers and the department's difficulty in gaining access for class use.
160. The head of department is working part-time until a successor is appointed and takes up post, but the department continues to be very well organised. Despite a history of staff changes in recent years, there is a strong accent on teamwork. However, there is a need for a greater priority to be placed on monitoring the work of the department.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' skilful planning, energetic use of time and resources stimulate enthusiasm for learning.
- Learning is enriched by use of computers and visits to local historical sites.

### Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for students to interpret essential numerical and graphical data.
- There are not enough regular meetings between all staff to share and evaluate good practice.

161. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average in Year 9. There are many impressive high attainers in Year 9 whose aspirations are rising because they are involved in predicting their own National Curriculum levels for each topic-based assessment. Boys and girls do equally well in most classes. There is underachievement by a small number of boys in Years 8 and 9 because of thoughtless behaviour and poor listening, despite interesting learning opportunities. Students with special educational needs learn well through skilfully graduated steps or when supported by learning support assistants or support teachers, although one very small class currently does not need both. Marking is thorough and sensitive; advice is practical. Students know the skills they must demonstrate in their assessments and they keep their own record of accumulating achievements, responding to the teacher's comment with one of their own. Consequently, taking into account their attainment on entry to the school, they make good progress and achievement overall is good.
162. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are average, but there is evidence that gains in knowledge are accelerating through effective new teaching initiatives. Students know their predicted grades and how to improve. They learn techniques for organising information and planning essays; they annotate specimen essays, identifying skills demonstrated, and have revision guides. Lunchtime tutorials, 'catch-up' sessions,

contact with parents and re-timed coursework, all support students with specific difficulties and attendance problems. All these actions, based on analysis of the department's performance, are pointing to better GCSE results for 2003, and very good achievement by these students. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.

163. Throughout the course, students' efficiency in scanning and extrapolating information from a variety of sources means they accumulate knowledge rapidly and use it to arrive at judgements. In Year 9, they interpret events and the work of significant individuals to appreciate the value of cultures across Britain, Europe, America and the Middle East. In Year 11 they refer across time to understand progress and regression in the field of medicine, and the roots of conflict in Ireland and America. They develop independence, enquiry and research skills by using computers and through fieldwork in Market Rasen, Lincoln, Gainsborough, and the Thackray museum in Leeds. They write with historical accuracy, re-processing what they know in letters, newspaper articles, essays, and putting themselves in other people's shoes. They accept homework as an integral part of preparing for the next lesson or enhancing knowledge. There are too few opportunities for interpretation of statistics and presenting information in graphical and other numerical forms.
164. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11 because students' skills are well consolidated through a conscious initiative to monitor day-to-day progress. Two thirds of all teaching is very good or excellent, reflecting creative use of time, excellent planning, high expectations and a concern to develop literacy. A Year 10 lesson typically exemplified this synthesis. In just over half an hour, this unusually large GCSE class moved rapidly through ten short episodes. Feeding back into the full group after each one, students recalled previous learning, discussed mnemonics for the Mormons' journey westward, read sources aloud, collected main points in a spidergram, turned it into a hostile letter to a newspaper about the Mormons, listened to examples of each others' work and started to explore the alternative view, replying as if they were the Mormon leader, Brigham Young! Teachers develop students' confidence because pair and group work feeds into class discussions and understanding is clear. The recently introduced emphasis on active learning is already having a positive impact on the numbers of students choosing the subject at GCSE. Tasks matching students' different needs are available in most lessons, and students often use computers, particularly for research. In satisfactory lessons there is a lack of pace and learning is less coherent.
165. Very good, sensitive leadership has led to improvements in teaching and assessment so that improvement since the previous inspection is good. More frequent sharing of good practice would get the very best of this talented, powerful team and ensure that teaching methods in lessons match targeted history skills more closely.

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

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

### **Strengths**

- Leadership of the department is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good and results in very good quality learning.
- Teachers set high standards, bringing about improved test and examination results.
- Students have access to very good quality computers, which are very well maintained by the technician.

### **Areas for improvement**

- There are not enough displays of assessed work in the ICT classrooms to show what is achievable at various grade levels.
- Marking does not always show students how work could be improved.

166. Standards in lessons and students' work files are above average at the end of Year 9 and most students use computers confidently. There is no discernible difference in attainment between the girls and the boys, except that the girls tend to present their written work more neatly. Students have good keyboard skills, control the mouse successfully and know how to access files and save and print their work. In addition, students use animation programs to present information, making images appear on screen from different directions. Higher attaining students cope well with the challenge of creating and the ones with low levels of literacy use templates to help them with spelling, capital letters and forming sentences. Students understand how to set up a database and a spreadsheet, but only the higher attaining students really understand how to use a formula to get immediate results.
167. Standards seen during the inspection in lessons and students' work files are above average at the end of Year 11. The GCSE work in Years 10 and 11 is more demanding and students have to be self-reliant when solving realistic problems. Most students produce enough work in their files and on the network, and show skill in accessing and using information, word processing, presentations and use of databases and spreadsheets. They all know about the moral and social implications of using ICT in business, industry and leisure. A few boys do not produce enough coursework, and this is depressing the overall results. Standards are above average on the short courses of accreditation and average for students who do not opt to take examinations in ICT.
168. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Students enter the school with below average skills and knowledge but make very good progress. The scheme of work from Year 7 onward ensures students learn the basics and become responsible for their own work.
169. Achievement in Years 10 to 11 is good. Students build well on the skills gained earlier in school and develop faster keyboard speed, greater control of the mouse and better knowledge of the menus and facilities within programs. As their confidence increases, they become more self-reliant, and build up understanding of how to complete their work more professionally and ways of presenting information to an audience. Improved equipment purchased recently is helping all students to get the best out of lessons. Year 11 students are making the most of the increased opportunities and, with the help of skilled teachers, moving standards that were average two years ago to above average now.
170. Students have very good attitudes to the subject, say they like working with computers and try hard in lessons. Boys are keen to get to the computers but girls are more methodical in their approach, by planning their work before committing it to the screens. Students concentrate, want to do well and persevere, even when they encounter difficulties. Behaviour is very good. Students are polite and respect the teachers and the equipment. A few students, especially boys, show maturity by helping others if the teacher is busy, showing genuine friendship. Students appreciate the efforts of others and applaud them, especially during presentations.
171. The overall quality of teaching is very good, resulting in very good learning in most lessons. The main strengths in the teaching are in good subject knowledge, high

expectations, very good teaching methods, provision of resources and very good one-to-one help during lessons. These things ensure that students learn what they should, see effective demonstrations, are well challenged, use very good quality equipment and are helped to make progress in lessons. Teachers reinforce literacy and numeracy effectively. For example, they create good quality support sheets, so students gain independence and appropriate word and number skills. Extra sessions are available for students who need more help with and time to complete coursework. Students with special educational needs usually have additional adult help in lessons, but in some lessons they need easier support sheets to match their reading levels. Displays in the ICT rooms do not include enough examples of students' assessed work at varying levels in all aspects of the subject to show students what is achievable. Marking is too often solely congratulatory and does not always state how work could be improved. For this reason, overall achievement is good, although learning lesson by lesson is very good.

172. Leadership is very good and there has been very good progress in the subject since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is better and new members of staff have been appointed, including a well-qualified technician. All the teachers in the department are committed to improving the subject; they are observed teaching by colleagues and share good practice. This is helping to raise standards of students' work and accounts for the better work seen in the inspection than previous results suggest. Assessment is good and there are new schemes of work for students in all years, including a wider range of examination courses for students in Years 10 and 11. The schemes follow the requirements of the National Curriculum, but the timetable time allocated is low in Years 7 and 8 and very low in Year 9. Accommodation and resources have improved and the ratio of computers to students at 7:1 is in line with provision nationally.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

173. The use of ICT by most other departments is better than in most schools. Many teachers have received recent training in the use of ICT in the classroom; they introduce students to new equipment and programs and allow students to demonstrate their skills. Most departments often use the available equipment for communication, presentation and searching for information. In art and design, design and technology, music, physical education and science, students use special equipment to digitise images and record work, control robots, compose, record fitness levels and log changes over time.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Latin and Spanish were also sampled. Teaching and learning in both are good and result in good achievement and above average standards.

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards attained overall in German and in French and Spanish in Years 7 and 8 are above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Students have positive attitudes towards their learning and want to do well in lessons.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Standards attained in GCSE examinations in French are below average.
- Timetable provision for French in Years 7 and 8 adversely affects continuity and progress over time.
- The department does not always make effective use of assessment.

174. In work seen during the inspection, standards in French in Year 11 are below average. In German they are above average. This represents good achievement in German in relation to prior attainment but there is some underachievement amongst average attaining students in French.
175. Girls perform better than boys in examinations and students do better in other subjects than they do in French. They do as well in German as they do in other subjects. However, the school's own calculations indicate some underperformance by boys in both subjects in 2002. All students display a good understanding of grammar and in writing higher and average attaining students apply it successfully to communicate their ideas in the past, present and future; lower attaining students adapt set phrases to write short accounts and descriptions or write following a model. Listening skills are well developed and students respond appropriately to questions and instructions in French and German. In German, speaking and listening skills are very well developed but in French students are less confident in manipulating the language for themselves or responding spontaneously to questioning.
176. By the end of Year 9, students' standards are broadly average. In French, standards are average. In German they are above average. Standards are improving significantly because of the introduction of new teaching and learning strategies which encourage students to use their initiative and are successful in increasing both their range of language and their confidence in speaking and responding.
177. Students' attitudes towards their learning are positive. They behave well, listen attentively and concentrate on tasks set. When asked to complete surveys or to work in pairs and small groups they do so sensibly and stay in the language being learned as much as possible. In Year 7 to 9 students are keen to participate in class oral activities.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, resulting in good achievement in all years. Examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen in German. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it very effectively to conduct activities in the language being learned. Activities in Years 7 to 9 in particular are designed to enable students to succeed in using the languages for themselves. Teachers provide a good variety of activities that maintain students' interest and increase their confidence in using new language. Very good use is made of games and songs to reinforce learning and students respond with enthusiasm, and teachers are making increasing and effective use of computer presentations. Students are given frequent opportunities to use the language in class activities and to practise informally in pairs and small groups. This is effective in increasing their confidence and competence. They make the best progress in tasks where they are required to give and gather information but opportunities for them to do this are sometimes missed.
179. Progress in developing listening and reading skills is sometimes slowed because feedback and plenary sessions are conducted orally so that students are not always sure of how they could have done better. In German, excellent use is made of computer presentations to introduce new language clearly and excite interest, enabling students to identify patterns, predict and construct sentences for themselves. Good support is given to lower attaining students and to students with

special educational needs, enabling them to succeed in tasks set. Lower and average attaining students have difficulty maintaining concentration when they are not directly involved in activities themselves so that when activities are closely directed by the teacher for lengthy periods this slows their progress.

180. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The recent development of teaching and learning strategies is having a significant impact upon standards achieved and proving successful in ensuring that boys' attainment more closely matches that of girls. The department makes a significant contribution towards students' spiritual and personal development since the learning strategies now being employed in Years 7 to 9 promote students' belief in themselves as competent linguists and develop their independence in learning and using the languages.
181. Since the last inspection there has been good progress in developing ways of assessing students' work and students are encouraged to evaluate their own work. There is scope to use assessment to plan more effectively for the progress of groups of differing ability within lessons and to ensure average attaining students achieve their potential. All students now have access to a language and to two languages from Year 8. This has improved access and choice but since time is taken from French these students now have only one lesson each week in both languages and this is hampering students' long-term progress. The department work well as a team and frequently share ideas. As a result there is a high level of consistency across the department and the department has a very good capacity to improve further.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve well at GCSE level and standards of performance and composition are above average.
- Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good.
- Music is a popular subject and extra-curricular activities are of high quality.

### Areas for improvement

- There is some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- The department does not yet use assessment information to help plan for raising standards through more effective teaching and learning.
- The interrupted timetable in Years 8 to 9 does not allow students to make sustained progress.

182. Students overall achieve satisfactorily between Years 7 and 9, so that by Year 9 standards are average. It is difficult to sustain the good progress made in most Year 7 classes because students in Year 8 only have a lesson for half of each term. Also the higher attainers in Year 9 have music lessons for only two terms. Girls achieve more highly than boys but not significantly differently from what is seen nationally. Students with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress at this stage because they are well monitored and given appropriate work to do. In Years 10 and 11 students make good progress, especially those that have instrumental lessons and take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. These considerably enhance their experience of music. Boys and girls achieve equally well in the examinations and in lessons.

183. Students enjoy music at every level. They are keen to play instruments and to compose. They choose to study the subject at GCSE in good numbers. One hundred and eighty students in the school learn to play an instrument and they take part in choirs and groups.
184. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Between Years 7 and 9 teaching varies and there is some unsatisfactory teaching. Many features of teaching are very effective and of the lessons observed two were good. There were, however, two unsatisfactory lessons at this stage. Where teaching is good, students are given clear objectives for the lesson. Work is well focused and appropriately challenging for each student. The teacher monitors students' progress well in practical work. Students, although lively and enthusiastic, are well managed and they behave responsibly and with purpose. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, behaviour is not appropriately managed and a few students are allowed to disrupt the lesson. Rehearsal tasks are not sufficiently focused and students drift from their work when the teacher is helping others. Group rehearsal time generally could be better organised with shorter time targets and more class updates. This would allow all students to learn from each other as they regularly listen to and evaluate short but telling examples of the work they are doing. It would also provide greater focus to group work and lessen the number of students drifting from rehearsal.
185. Learning support assistants help students with special educational needs effectively even though they have no expertise in music. In a Year 7 lesson a learning support assistant helped a student in a wheelchair play a rhythm on the triangle correctly and perfectly in time. Students at this stage presently do not have opportunities to use ICT in lessons because only two of the department's computers are running effectively. They have opportunity to talk about the quality of each other's work and for this they are beginning to use some musical words confidently. They also assess their own work briefly in writing at the end of each unit. Students are regularly assessed and know the grades they achieve. However, the grades cover a wide range of skills and knowledge and students do not know their National Curriculum grades, so they do not have a detailed knowledge of how they are doing. Used regularly in assessment, National Curriculum grades would enable teachers and students to set more focused targets for improvement. The information that assessment is providing is not yet used to enable teachers to plan to raise standards.
186. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. Work sampled on the disc of a concert held before half term to show-case GCSE performances and compositions, demonstrated how well prepared these students were and the high standards that were being achieved. Students had taken care to present and perform well. Sampled compositions in a Year 11 lesson showed a developing understanding of compositional techniques, which comes from carefully planned and well-delivered teaching.
187. All extra-curricular activities observed were of good quality as a result of very good direction by the teachers and high levels of commitment from the students. They are proud of their success in 'Jazzplus', choir, junior band and the folk group. The quality of instrumental teaching is also very good.
188. The leadership of the department is good overall. There is a very clear vision for practical music making in the school and for providing students with opportunities to experience high quality music through workshops such as the Gamelan project, and performances such as that provided by Tubulaté Brass Group. The school folk group



performed in Dublin. Leadership in these aspects is of high quality. Management of the department is satisfactory. Within the limitations of the way the whole-school curriculum is arranged in Years 7 to 9 the music curriculum is well planned. The department's future plans, however, do not yet match those of the school. Standards in teaching and learning are not yet monitored and discussed sufficiently to ensure good quality throughout.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- There is excellent leadership of a committed department.
- Standards are above average and students' achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards of behaviour are very good.
- There is excellent provision of extra-curricular sporting activities.

### Area for improvement

- Planning for individuals with special educational needs is not detailed enough.

189. Standards of work in Year 9 are generally above average. In hockey, boys have good control of sticks and can push a ball accurately to a partner. They can maintain long periods of intensive effort indicating that they are fit. However, many are inclined to use both sides of the stick rather than using only the flat surface to play the ball. In gymnastics, when building on work done in previous years, it is clear that they are maintaining standards that have been taught by handling apparatus well. When using a partner to balance, boys are not nearly as inventive as girls and as yet they have little aesthetic appreciation of movement.
190. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average. Students devise their own fitness testing programmes following their weeks of work to improve fitness. They organise themselves well and work without direct supervision from time to time. In GCSE theory lessons they show good understanding of aggression in sport and can identify sports likely to be taken up by introverts and extroverts. They argue knowledgeably about whether or not aggression is necessary in sport.
191. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and students make steady gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of gymnastics, dance, badminton, basketball and netball. This is largely due to the fact that students are tested on entry to the school giving teachers a clear picture of their individual capabilities. For this reason students are banded for physical education with others of similar abilities. Students with special educational needs make good progress, largely through suitable tasks that enable them to achieve to the best of their ability. They are sensitively supported, not only by teachers but also by their peers. This enables them to respond well to the challenges they are set.
192. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Students currently in Year 11 have had the benefit of dynamic leadership in the department over the last three years and their standards have risen significantly since they were in Year 9. This applies to all students, including those who are gifted and talented. Teachers who have a high level of subject expertise challenge and extend them. There is little difference between the

achievement of boys and girls, although boys have a tendency to be better games players.

193. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This accounts for the high standard of students' interest, concentration and independence. Teachers' knowledge and understanding and their expectations of students are almost always very good and are sometimes excellent. Their high level of commitment motivates students well and encourages them to develop safe practice throughout all aspects of the curriculum. There is excellent management of students throughout the school. Teachers use the very good resources and excellent accommodation to maximum effect.
194. Dance is delivered as a unit of work within the physical education curriculum in Years 7 to 9; the quality of teaching and learning is good. Occasionally it is very good. The quality of teaching for GCSE and in club activities is very good and is often excellent. All teachers make very good use of high quality, professional dance work on video to improve students' level of understanding. Very good classroom management ensures that students give their full concentration to what is required of them. Sufficient time is allowed for students to work on and improve their ideas. All teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and successfully motivate students to want to learn. Dance provides no barrier for students with special educational needs and they are encouraged to participate at their own level. For example students in wheelchairs dance with their year groups.
195. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Improved teaching has had a positive impact on raising standards, which are good throughout the school. Expectations are now high in all lessons as the pace of lessons determines that every opportunity for activity is used to maximum effect. Excellent leadership of this department ensures that good procedures for assessing students' attainment are effectively used to guide future curriculum planning.

## Dance

196. Dance is a popular option in Years 10 and 11. By Year 11 standards of work are well above average. Most students are accomplished movers and are capable of remembering and performing complicated routines. On the occasions that they forget the order of movements they confidently improvise until they become familiar again.
197. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is excellent as students consistently perform to a high level. Improvisation was a strong feature of some work demonstrated by a Year 10 boy, who had no inhibitions performing in front of over 30 younger students at a minute's notice! Opportunities for gifted and talented students are numerous through extra-curricular clubs and a youth group run throughout the year. Here, work is centred on preparing for and giving public performances.
198. Since the previous inspection, dance has continued to be a major strength of the school, along with other aspects of physical education. Excellent leadership ensures that it is given a high profile and that community links and access to professional dance work are maintained.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths
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- The quality of teaching and management of the subject is good.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of religion in Years 7 to 9 are good.
- Standards achieved by students in external examinations are above average.
- There are good resources to support and enrich teaching.

#### Areas for improvement

- Courses in Years 10, 11 and 13 are not in accordance with agreed syllabus requirements and expectations.

199. The judgement that religious education is unsatisfactory is based on the unsatisfactory curriculum and does not relate to the effective teaching and learning that takes place in the limited time available.
200. Standards of work in Year 9 are average. Students have made a study of Christianity and the principal religions represented in Great Britain. A focus on Judaism and Hinduism provides an opportunity for progression of knowledge and understanding of these faiths. Students are 'learning about religion' and are increasingly able to 'learn from religion' as they discuss and reflect on their encounter with lived experience different from their own. They are respectful of difference and handle artefacts and other materials with sensitivity. Further development is required in respect of students 'learning from religion'.
201. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory when judged against agreed syllabus expectations. In GCSE studies, standards are above average. By Year 11 students can deploy research skills, analyse a text, record data relevant to their studies and engage in high quality reflective discussion. Results achieved are indicative of students working on the frontiers of their capability. It is the case that the religious studies examination courses are almost wholly taken by girls. The performance of girls in both examinations is consistently better than that of boys.
202. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and is good in the examination courses in Years 10, 11. Students with special educational needs are well supported in all years and achieve very well.
203. Teaching is very good in all years. A scholarly classroom ethos engages students as active learners in a community of enquiry. An extensive collection of resources for learning supports teaching. The use of ICT is limited by few classroom computers and difficult access to central provision. Learning is good in all classes. Students have a sound knowledge of religion and this will be enriched further as revised courses provide students with a greater opportunity to reflect on key beliefs of religions from the position of their own search for personal meaning. At present the concepts framing the revised agreed syllabus, namely, 'authority', 'the sacred', 'celebration', 'religious belief and life style' are not dealt with in sufficient depth, so that learning, though good, does not match the very good teaching.
204. The statutory agreed syllabus determining the provision of religious education is the Revised Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus. The quality of provision is good in Years 7 to 9 and the arrangements for teaching are well managed, but provision is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where insufficient curriculum time is provided to secure the teaching and reporting of agreed syllabus programmes. This circumstance was identified as a key point for action in the 1997 inspection report; it remains to be addressed.

## ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS

205. Lessons in business education and health and social care were sampled. Teaching and learning were satisfactory and students acquired additional knowledge and a deeper understanding of the requirements of the GCSE and GNVQ courses. In these lessons teachers planned work carefully and most students enjoyed working at tasks they could see were relevant to their own lives. For example, the business education lesson set a problem in the context of the local agricultural scene.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

***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	21	95	87	38	43	6.10	5.8
Chemistry	8	100	90	50	43	6.5	5.9
Biology	8	100	88	63	54	7.5	5.25
Design technology	7	100	91	86	30	8.86	5.38
Business	26	100	92	27	32	5.85	5.5
Physical education	7	86	92	14	25	4.0	5.07
Art	15	100	96	67	46	8.4	6.57
Drama and theatre studies	9	89	N/A	11	N/A	4.9	N/A
Geography	14	94	93	29	38	6.0	6.74
History	8	75	88	38	35	4.75	5.45
Sociology	19	84	86	37	35	5.26	5.32
English	27	100	95	22	37	5.48	5.91
French	8	88	89	13	38	4.00	5.59

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus during the inspection was on mathematics, chemistry and biology. Physics was sampled. Teaching and learning in the one lesson observed were very good. Students were highly motivated.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- A-level results are well above national averages.
- Teaching is good and sometimes better; consequently students are highly motivated and work hard.
- The standard of work which students produce is well above average; they are achieving well.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

##### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not make enough use of methods that would engage the students in discussion.
- The use of assessment information to inform students of their progress.

206. The standard of work seen during the inspection is well above average with some examples of outstanding work. Nearly all students complete the courses they start.

207. Students' files are very well organised and contain a good balance of worked examples and extended exercises. Computers are used well when completing coursework. Students in Year 12 are only a short way into their courses, but have made good progress moving on from their GCSE work into new areas, making effective use of past work. For example, when working on polynomials and the remainder theorem in pure mathematics, students are confident in using algebra. In Year 13, students recall knowledge well and are able to apply it confidently both in class and through their written work. In one lesson, for example, independent work on identifying and expanding binomial expressions was extended to include partial fractions. Overall, the department is enabling students achieve well in both AS and A-level courses.

208. Teaching is good overall. Students learn well on the AS, A-level and further mathematics courses because the teaching is good. All work is carefully planned and lessons have clear objectives, though they are not always communicated in detail to students. Teachers structure the lessons well, maintain a brisk pace and provide high levels of challenge that are intellectually demanding and deepen understanding. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good, and this enables them to explain new work clearly. As a result, students are highly motivated, work hard and are prepared to think for themselves. Students make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing. Where teaching is very good, work is set in context well. However, opportunities to engage students actively in class discussion or group work to confirm their understanding are often overlooked. A variety of teaching methods need to be employed to 'lift' the dialogue between student and teacher. Students' work is marked up to date with comments that tell students what they need to do to correct mistakes

and misconceptions. The use of assessment information that reflects examination requirements and shows students how well they are doing in relation to the grades they are hoping to get is inconsistent. Extended work for the gifted and talented students is not defined clearly enough. The teaching of the application of number leading to the key skills qualification is good.

209. Leadership and management are good. Educational direction is clear. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed. Assessment procedures are good. Accurate and critical analysis of improving examination performance has resulted in realistic and achievable targets for continuing improvement. The department is committed to achieving specialist school status in mathematics and ICT by 2004. Student numbers continue to increase, enabling additional courses that meet the needs of all students to be introduced. Monitoring of teaching is effective in enhancing teachers' skills. There is a shared commitment within the department to build on what has been achieved. Teachers share good practice as part of their professional development and give up much of their non-contact time to support the students.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students have a very positive attitude to their studies.
- Practical skills are well developed.
- The A-level course is well organised.

### Areas for improvement

- Some lessons lack challenging questioning in class to further stimulate students.
- The range of tasks provided does not always meet students' needs.
- Students are co-operative but too passive in lessons.

210. The standard of work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of students' work was at least average for all students.

211. Teaching is good and the AS and A2 courses are well organised. Time in lessons is well managed and the practical work done complements the theoretical aspects of the subject. Teaching uses good question and answer techniques but the students are inclined to be monosyllabic in their responses. Lessons are very closely directed by the teacher and not enough opportunities are taken to challenge and stimulate students. For example, in practical lessons the teachers could spend the time questioning students rather than focusing on servicing their immediate practical needs. There should be a greater challenge in the range of tasks set and in questioning in order to stimulate the highest attaining students. Students' learning lesson by lesson is good and their attitude and ability to keep on task in lessons are also good. However, they are too dependent on the teacher and need to develop the skills of self-learning in order to consolidate what they learn and translate it into good, rather than satisfactory, achievement. This would be helped by a greater variety of teaching styles to increase the students' participation in lessons.

212. For example, where new work is introduced in Year 12, and the class needs to be reminded of GCSE work, the teacher may introduce the topic by a question and answer session. Most students remember the GCSE work raised by the questions,

but not all answer them. There are not enough challenging and varied introductions that force them all to take part.

213. Following the previous inspection there was a dip in performance in the late 1990s but the department is now achieving satisfactory progress for its students and this has been helped by the change to a new A -level course.
214. The management of the department is good and there is good communication amongst the teachers. Students' level of satisfaction is high and the department surveys the opinions of students each year and acts appropriately on the results of these surveys. The department has good resources of books, equipment and ICT and the technical support is of a high standard.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- The enthusiasm of the teachers stimulates learning.
- Good relationships and a willingness to help students.
- The large amount of practical work.

### Areas for improvement

- Students are not sufficiently involved in the formulation and development of ideas.
- The standards of boys which is below that of the girls.
- Visits and field courses do not enhance the curriculum.

215. Taken as a trend over the last few years, standards are rising. Achievement, in relation to students' GCSE results, is satisfactory. Analysis of the work of Year 13 students together with lesson observations shows that their standards are average. Students in Year 12 have built on their GCSE knowledge and skills well and their standards are also average. This was confirmed in a lesson where students were making stained slides and using the high power of their microscopes to interpret the result. The numbers opting for biology in the sixth form, while variable, are healthy and tend to exceed those of the other sciences. Most students who start courses go on to complete them: only one student who set out on the AS-level course last year failed to complete it and all who started the A2 course finished it.
216. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory and it enables the students to make satisfactory gains in learning. Strong features of the teaching include a very good subject knowledge, which is well used to produce informed and interesting lessons and results in satisfactory learning. All the teachers demonstrate an obvious enthusiasm for their subject and use a good variety of approaches, including much practical work, to promote first-hand experience and interest. There is too much emphasis on teaching students facts with frequent checks that they have understood, rather than by making them think and develop topics for themselves. For instance, describing the stages of mitosis from diagrams rather than asking students what happens and why, does the work for the students instead of engaging their intellects. For this reason, whilst students are keen to learn they pose few questions of their own, even when they are unsure of the facts.
217. Most work is well marked with good corrections and suggestions for improvement, but only infrequently does it bear an AS or A2 suggested grade to allow students to



monitor their own standards. Teachers are always willing to help students with problems in their own time if asked and also will identify to students areas that they feel will need reinforcement. Good homework is set, asking for topics to be read up and researched, which encourages independent learning.

218. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a good scheme of work with an emphasis on practical approaches. However, a programme of visits and field courses does not enhance the curriculum. There are good systems of assessment, but the students are not always well informed about how their standards relate to A-level grades. The resources for learning are good; nevertheless there is sometimes a problem with booking an ICT room when it is required. The department also has a library full of useful materials for students. The accommodation is good, offering both theory and practical areas in one laboratory. Standards are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus was on design and technology.

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards of work are high and students have a very good level of understanding, knowledge and skills, which they apply well to their 'design and make' projects.
- Results are above average.
- Students achieve well, make good progress and produce high quality work.
- Teaching is very good and teachers have very good subject knowledge, which is used well to help students to build up their understanding of design practice.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The pace of learning is sometimes set by students.
- Provision for using software related to manufacturing and control processes is limited.

219. Standards are above average and the quality of work has many outstanding features, particularly in Year 13. All students show a very good understanding of design and manufacturing practice as they make substantial gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills throughout the course. In Year 13, students show good knowledge and understanding of the materials and processes they had used as they reviewed their work, explaining how they had reached their decisions and what had been successful or unsuccessful. Nearly all students go on to complete the courses they start.

220. Students' achievement is well above what would be expected in view of their attainment at the start of the course and they make substantial gains through Years 12 and 13. Year 13 students following the A2 courses consider increasingly complex opportunities for design and constraints in terms of function. They have a well-developed understanding of design processes, and their design notes and sketches proposing ideas for their products are rigorously researched, recorded and analysed. Drawing techniques in the main are of a high quality.

221. Students learn well. They make very good progress, concentrating hard and taking pride in producing high quality work. This results from teaching which is consistently very good. The principal features of the best lessons are clear planning with specific learning objectives. Pace is good, and appropriate tasks and time deadlines are set. Teachers show very good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations, and introduce new knowledge and reinforce existing learning. This has a positive impact on students' work and generates very good learning. Students rise to the challenge when asked to produce high quality work.
222. Teachers expect students to work hard. Learning is continually assessed and students are aware of how to improve through individual discussions and clear set targets. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and the different learning styles they experience. However, although students are highly motivated and engrossed in their work, in some lessons they set the pace of learning. Students use computers and resource material with confidence. They approach this work maturely, and are very willing to explore and innovate. Teachers know their students well and there is a high level of individual support at all times both in and out of lessons.
223. Teaching encourages a mature approach to work and students have excellent attitudes and are very positive towards the subject, particularly in Year 13. In Year 12, some students at this early stage of the course are still coming to terms with the more autonomous ways of working in the sixth form. The curriculum offered provides very good opportunities for students to progress well. There is, however, too little recognition of the particular contribution design and technology can make to students' spiritual and cultural development
224. The leadership and management of the course are very good. All staff work together as a team and there is a commitment to build on what has already been achieved and to improving students' learning and personal development. Provision for the use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing work, which is fundamental to the design activity, is limited and this restricts the development of understanding of current industrial production methods. There were no specific areas for improvement identified in the last report for sixth form provision.

## **BUSINESS**

Business education at AS-level and A2 level was the sole focus.

### **Business education**

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Departmental organisation is good.
- Students have a very positive attitude to the subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- Research skills are insufficiently developed.
- Teaching methods lack variety.
- Too little use is made of computers.

225. The standards in the department are improving steadily and nearly all students go on to complete the courses they start.
226. The written work seen during the inspection is at a standard above the national average and shows a good understanding of business principles. Over the last four years the achievement of girls has been good and better than that of boys. The department is developing strongly and business is now one of the most popular sixth form subjects. Analysis of the written work of the students shows that the work is at a good standard but is mainly composed of essays and analyses produced in response to quite closely defined parameters. There was little evidence seen of extended writing on the part of the students.
227. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very thoroughly prepared and teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. Timing is good, explanations given are clear and these are backed up by involving the students by the use of skilful question and answer sessions supported by individual work sheets. Lessons are, however, very much focused on the teacher and there could be more active involvement from the students by using role-plays, mini-presentations, debates etc. Students are well motivated and have a very good attitude to their studies and consequently their learning is good in lessons. Written work is thoroughly assessed and the evaluative marking gives students a very clear picture of their present performance and the things they need to do to improve. However, there could be more opportunities to develop research skills, particularly using the Internet as a resource. Individual students do use computers both for presentation and information gathering but there is no planned use in the AS and A2 courses.
228. Advanced business studies was not reported on specifically in the previous report but the department has made good progress over the last four years, attracts an increasing number of students and provides an effective learning experience.
229. Leadership and management in the department are good and teachers work closely together. Work schemes are clearly defined and are in the process of further review. There are good book resources in the department, both textbooks and reference books, although the provision in the main school library is inadequate. The accommodation is in designated rooms and it is good, creating a positive learning environment.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### Physical education

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

#### Strengths

- Standards of students' work are well above average.
- There is excellent achievement.
- The quality of teaching and learning is excellent.
- There is excellent access to a full and varied curriculum.

#### Area for improvement

- There is limited attention to the identification of specific tasks and resources for students with special educational needs in short-term planning.

230. Standards of work seen overall are well above average. Nearly all students go on to complete their courses.
231. In Year 13, standards are well above average in both dance and games. This is partly because physical education is timetabled and taught by specialist teachers with very good knowledge of their subject. This has not only raised the profile of the subject but has continued to develop interest and enthusiasm in both practical and theoretical elements of the programme. Students play a very good standard of rugby, hockey and football. They play with precision and fluency and are able to use advanced skills, techniques and ideas. Throughout their work they consistently apply appropriate knowledge and understanding of fitness.
232. Standards of work in Year 12 are also well above average. Occasionally they are excellent. A-level courses enable students to analyse specific movements and many can identify which groups of muscles are the prime movers and antagonists in a particular action. They are also knowledgeable about the particular planes in which actions are carried out. When focusing on the development of sport for women students have a good understanding of the effects of gender and sexism on participation in sport. They extend their perceptions through the excellent use of video footage.
233. As a result of positive attitudes combined with excellent teaching, students are achieving exceptionally well. Boys and girls contribute equally to technical discussions, as do students with special educational needs. They frequently make positive contributions to both theory and practical lessons. Students take greater responsibility for their own learning, making effective use of computers to carry out research for their assignments.
234. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is excellent. Teachers' expertise, high expectations and excellent student management, encourage greater independence. Teachers produce resources that stimulate interest and enthusiasm in topics and often there is a strong literacy focus, that identifies key words in the subject and encourages their correct use. Numeracy is also a strong feature as students carry out calculations, conversions and recordings of their heart rate and lung capacity at rest and after exercise. Lesson planning is very detailed but does not sufficiently identify what students with special educational needs will do if they are unable to achieve the learning objectives that have been planned.
235. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, particularly in relation to students' achievement. This is due to good extension of opportunities for physical activity. Excellent leadership of the department inspires teachers to produce a high standard of work. This, in turn, motivates students to raise their performance in lessons and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Activities are not stereotyped and there are opportunities for girls and boys to participate in all areas of physical education and dance, for example boys in dance and girls in football and rugby. Good opportunities are taken to further their involvement through club, county and area representation in a number of sports.

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

The focus during the inspection was on art and design, and drama. Music and dance were sampled. Teaching and learning are good in music. In dance the quality of teaching in the sixth form is excellent and standards of work by Year 13 are very high.

## Drama

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, with teachers having very good subject knowledge.
- Students' achievement is at least satisfactory.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

### Area for improvement

- The range of resources available for teaching and learning is limited.

236. The standard of work seen during the inspection is overall in line with the national average and nearly all students go on to complete their courses.
237. Work in Year 12 is above average and that of Year 13 is below. However, both groups are working at levels that indicate at least satisfactory achievement in relation to their levels of attainment when they started the courses. They can use a variety of dramatic and theatrical techniques to convey character, mood and emotion. They have good knowledge of the work of theatrical practitioners, such as Artaud, Stanislavski and Brook. Early on in the course students are introduced to aspects of early Greek theatre and the great Greek playwrights. Higher attaining students are able to show quite sophisticated changes in character through voice, movement and gesture. Lower attaining students perform in a less subtle fashion, and are more hesitant in expressing their ideas.
238. Teaching and learning in the sixth form on the AS and A-level courses are good, and some very good teaching was seen during the inspection. In a lower sixth lesson, students learnt a lot about the conventions of physical theatre. The teacher's very good subject knowledge underpinned her explanations and enabled her to challenge the students appropriately. She reinforced technical terms (including linguistic vocabulary – the use of transitive verbs), and the students' own very positive attitudes contributed to the high quality learning in the lesson. Accommodation and technical resources are satisfactory, but in two lessons seen, if the teacher had been able to illustrate her points with well-chosen video clips, the students might have understood even more. The current lack of a television and video player is a disadvantage and has a negative impact on learning.
239. Leadership and management are good. The department has responded well to the demands of the new AS and A-level courses, and the subject plays an important part in enriching the wider life of the school, through productions and theatre visits.

## Art and design

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

### Strengths

- The teaching of drawing and painting skills is very good.
- Exploratory work in students' work journals is very good.
- Students reach high standards in art, history and contextual studies, through the 'personal study'.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations.

### Areas for improvement

- There is too little use of computers to investigate, research and generate images to extend studio activity.
- Assessment lacks formal procedures to ensure students understand the criteria used in grading their work.

240. Standards in the sixth form are well above average. There is a very low drop-out rate from courses. A high level of skill in recording from observation is maintained whilst the outstanding exploratory work, seen in students' practical work 'journals', shows they are receptive to new ideas and new ways of working. Students recognise the expressive potential of a range of materials and processes for developing their ideas and personal responses, but they are missing opportunities for utilising the full potential of computers for generating and manipulating images. Students' excellent submissions for art history and contextual study indicate good historical understanding and evaluation skills. Very good learning is taking place.
241. Students effectively use the working vocabulary and specialist terminology associated with art and design and show good subject knowledge and understanding, including the art of other cultures. They make strong connections between their own work and that of other artists, past and present. Students are very keen to learn and are able to work independently. They respond very positively to opportunities for sharing their developing expertise and insights with each other. Achievement for all students is very good in art and design, with the higher attaining students making exceptional progress.
242. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. The specialist art teachers have excellent subject knowledge and through good skills in explaining and demonstrating, students learn an appropriate range of art techniques, which they develop to a very high standard. Students' progress is helped by the teachers' sensitive intervention with encouraging verbal assessments but students do not fully understand the criteria being used for grading their work. In order that students can make further improvements, a more formal system of day-to-day assessment needs to be implemented. Teachers establish very good working relationships and have high expectations of the students. They are enthusiastic and highly committed. In turn, students have a mature attitude to learning, thus ensuring good progress in lessons and very good achievement over time.
243. The art department has maintained the high standards reported during the previous inspection. Visits to national art galleries, including the recent visit to a major exhibition in London, have a significant impact on the quality of students' artwork. Good provision for independent study is made with a designated sixth form art studio, but access is seriously constrained by dual use for storing students' artwork, materials and visual resources. There is an excellent art library and teachers make very good use of the outstanding displays of students' work in the classrooms, to exemplify particular techniques and standards. Teachers understand developments in higher education and vocational routes in art and design and ensure that students receive informed careers advice.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus was on geography, history and sociology. Law and psychology were sampled. In law, teaching and learning are good and students are achieving well. Psychology lessons are well taught and students learn well because teachers concentrate well on what students need to know to do well in examinations, while making the work interesting.

### **Geography**

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers' subject knowledge is very secure
- There is a good range of fieldwork and independent learning opportunities.
- Students have a very positive attitude towards the subject.
- Case studies and practical tasks are used effectively to relate theory to practice.

### Areas for improvement

- Some lessons are too closely directed by the teacher.
- There is inconsistency in marking and students sometimes have to wait a long time for marked work to be returned.
- There are no computers in geography rooms and this creates problems of access for teachers and students.
- The subject development plan lacks emphasis on strategies for implementation.

244. From observations of files and lessons, standards in both years are above average, and students' achievement is good. Nearly all students go on to complete their courses.
245. Students are able to work independently and think about the geographical ideas they are studying. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson examining changing river channels and the implications for flood management, and in another when students were researching the rapid rate of industrial growth in Taiwan. Note-taking skills are satisfactory and students are able to carry out individual research competently. The higher achieving students have produced some extremely good individual fieldwork projects. They possess well-developed analytical and evaluative skills. This was seen in investigative work on the environment in Lincoln, coastal features of the Holderness coast and river processes on the River Rase.
246. Teaching is good overall and students' learning is also good. There is some very good teaching practice but in some of the satisfactory lessons, teachers are over directive and do not challenge students sufficiently. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and most lessons are well planned and structured. Planning builds upon students' existing knowledge and a good range of resources is used to motivate and extend understanding. In the good and very good lessons, students are fully challenged and are expected to work independently and in groups. This, combined with very positive attitudes on the part of students, results in good and sometimes very good learning taking place. In a lesson on industrialisation in the Pacific Rim, students were challenged to analyse data and make decisions and then report back to the group. Case studies are used appropriately, together with other practical work, to enable students to relate theory to the real world. This was observed in Year 12 when students were working very effectively in groups, exploring case studies on river flooding and the impact of changing characteristics of load, discharge and recurrence levels. Marking is inconsistent in its quality and some students were concerned that work is not always returned quickly.
247. The subject is well led and there is a good team spirit in the department, with a commitment to raise the quality of teaching and learning. The effective coverage of the syllabuses and the use of up-to-date case studies and materials contribute well to learning. The subject makes good input into students' personal development. No key issues were raised in the last report other than a general comment on the use of computers. Students in the sixth form use computers well as a source of information and for the representation of data. But as the department has only one computer, time is often wasted when students have to find an available machine in another part of the school.



## History

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

### Strengths

- There are a wide range of teaching methods, which develop students' understanding and responsibility.
- There is a high level of commitment by students.
- There is a good range and effectiveness of students' study skills.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of computers for graphical presentation and numerical interpretation is too limited.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to explore the spiritual aspects of topics through 'feelings-based' experiences and judgements.

248. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and students continue to follow the courses they embark on. Half-termly assessments, quality written feedback to students and identifying good practice in specimen examination answers lead to shared responsibility for keeping in line with targets. In their 'exhaustive search of available evidence', students use a range of techniques, including annotating, diagrammatic plans, information grids, highlighting and note-making for organising complex and linguistically challenging information: techniques particularly effective for students with special educational needs. They make reference across epochs to interpret ideologies and consequences of war and peace in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain and Germany and to examine 100 years of mass media. By Year13, they can unravel hypotheses in discussions and writing, confidently explore conflicting evidence and apply judgements in accurate terminology. Higher attaining students write concisely, and demonstrate profound understanding and joy in language through telling images. "WW1 was not the glorious parade of national unity and grandeur...expected in 1914": one boy's essay introduction impressively encapsulating contemporary attitudes. Collaboration in pairs and groups, presentations, a willingness to question assumptions, develop commitment to learning.
249. Unsurprisingly, all students, including new arrivals from other schools and students who had not studied history at GCSE, show good achievement. There are not enough opportunities, however, for students to sense the spirit of the times they are studying, through the popular arts and day-to-day preoccupations of 'ordinary' people. Extending the use of computers beyond word -processing and Internet research to interpretation of statistics and presenting information in graphical forms would broaden the challenge of using evidence and ensure that the good learning, lesson by lesson, is converted into very good overall achievement.
250. Very good teaching reflected in careful planning in tune with students' needs leads to very good learning. A passion for teaching history, enriched by regular professional development, means that the two sixth form teachers are open-minded and creative in choosing learning strategies which involve students actively, expecting them to illustrate and reason through a viewpoint, at length. They ensure students are confident with essay writing by helping them to identify relevant factual information from knowledge built up over time and discussing literacy aspects about starting points, conclusions, connecting phrases and intermittent summarising to keep the theme in view throughout. All students share their own texts for each aspect of the course, supplemented by a wide range of others for reference, including current editions of several history periodicals.

251. Perceptive conclusions by the head of department, appointed since the previous inspection, about the fall in numbers of students taking history has resulted in a different examination, better tracking of students' progress and changes in teaching styles towards active participation by students. There is very good support for the newly qualified teacher, already an asset to the department. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## Sociology

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

### Strengths

- There is very good achievement, and above average results in both years.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject.
- Lessons are well planned with varied activities that simulate students' curiosity and interest.

### Area for improvement

- Students' making and use of notes to summarise and confirm their knowledge is a weakness.

252. The standards of work observed at AS and A-level level during the inspection are above average, matching those indicated by the most recent results. This improvement is a consequence of better teaching methods, and the appointment of good, well-qualified staff, who plan lessons carefully to build understanding from students' interest and capability. Achievement, therefore, is good, and nearly all students go on to complete the courses they start.
253. Year 12 students progress rapidly in the early stages of their studies because they apply a relevant range of good general knowledge, think independently and benefit from challenging homework. They understand well the status and value of different types of data, framing good analytical questions and exploring social issues in depth. For example, one group studying gender and educational performance grasped quickly the difference between quantitative and qualitative trends and the extent to which they could be interpreted from basic statistical data. Here, in response to well-focused teacher questioning, they related statistical findings confidently to personal experience.
254. Year 13 students achieve very well, again because they deploy good independent thinking skills, and carry out research with great independence, making good use of documents and information from the library and the Internet. They build on their good comprehension of the theoretical foundations of the subject and produce particularly thorough research projects. These deploy a wide knowledge of key sociological concepts and authorities, applied autonomously to well-designed studies, based on a good knowledge of methodological techniques, independent analysis and well-drawn conclusions that are grounded firmly on evidence. In some cases, students find it more difficult to summarise and communicate fully what they have learned, because their summary and note-making skills have not yet been emphasised sufficiently. Girls' standards match those of boys.
255. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are excellent. They discuss ideas sensibly, with enthusiasm, self-confidence, and commitment. In addition, they explain their thinking fluently and respond very constructively to teacher questioning, which prompts them to extend their understanding in detail. This committed approach to

discussion in the classroom is also manifested in their diligently-researched written assignments, which are presented with considerable pride, as well as a clear, logical layout, which shows well-organised thinking and an ability to communicate lucidly to the reader.

256. All teaching is at least good. Students' written work is checked helpfully, with suitable advice given to tell them how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. Improved performance has been achieved by better methods in class that question, probe and prompt students, building on their existing knowledge and challenging them supportively to develop their understanding further.
257. Lessons feature very good subject knowledge on the part of teachers. Lessons are well planned to stimulate students' curiosity and interest by well-chosen resources, varied activities, and very good opportunities for them to express themselves and extend their thinking together in whole-class and small group discussions
258. The quality of management is good. It has ensured that effective methods and good resources have been shared. Lessons are evaluated collaboratively, and productive action taken to make them more interesting, challenging and varied to match students' interest and need. In consequence, teaching has improved and achievement levels have increased.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of the inspection was on English and French.

### **English**

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good, with teachers' specialist subject knowledge used to good effect to extend students' learning.
- Students are encouraged to develop independent study skills.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

#### **Area for improvement**

- Students do not contribute sufficiently in lessons.

259. Students follow either the English literature A-level or the combined literature and language course. The standard of work seen was in line with the national average, with some variations according to year group and course. Students can analyse literary texts successfully and are able to compare and contrast treatments and themes. Higher attaining students write accurately and stylishly. Those studying language understand and can use technical linguistic terms. Literature students use the techniques of literary criticism well to comment on writers' intentions and the methods used to achieve specific effects. A particularly interesting piece of work was seen from a student who had written about the roles of women in *Hamlet*. Students start the courses with attainment levels below those found nationally, and achievement is good during the two years. Nearly all students go on to complete their courses.
260. Teaching and learning in the sixth form on the AS and A-level courses are good, and some particularly strong teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers have

very good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions of the students, as well as to explain the finer points of linguistic and literary analysis. In a lower sixth group studying *Hamlet*, the students made excellent gains in learning about how to both structure an AS-level essay and gain maximum marks, and in understanding a range of critical thinking about the play. The teacher's appropriately high expectations of what the students could achieve, combined with very careful lesson planning and the students' own exemplary attitudes, all combined to make this an excellent lesson. In two lessons seen, the teacher was working harder than the students, and one area to develop is to find ways to encourage students to participate more actively in lessons. Teachers mark students' work well, using A-level grade criteria to assess their attainment. They put a lot of time into marking drafts of essays, giving students careful advice as to how they could improve.

261. Leadership and management are good. The department has responded well to the demands of the new AS and A-level courses, and teachers have had good opportunities for in-service training.

## French

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good and result in good achievement.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- Curriculum provision is good and is enhanced by access to native speakers, exchanges and opportunities for students to take part in work experience abroad.
- Assessment is used effectively to raise standards of writing.

### Area for improvement

- Opportunities are missed to encourage students to work independently of the teacher and of each other to improve confidence in speaking and responding.

262. Standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly average. Very few students fail to complete their courses. Students present their ideas clearly and use a good range of vocabulary and structures but writing often contains many basic errors. They write at length and in detail on a variety of contemporary issues. They organise their ideas well in writing to present arguments, produce accounts and express their views on a variety of topics. Listening skills are well developed and students respond promptly and appropriately to the exclusive use of French in lessons. Speaking skills are less secure; students sometimes have difficulty manipulating the language spontaneously and some are reluctant to express their views in lessons.
263. Students' attitudes towards their learning are very positive. They have very good relationships with their teachers and are concerned to do well. When asked to take part in pair work or discussion they are keen to participate, and stay on task. They appreciate the help, guidance and time given to them by their teachers and the open access they are given to the department's resources. They also appreciate the opportunity to talk with native speakers and the opportunities to visit France.
264. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and provide very good role models for their students. Activities are well sequenced, enabling students to build effectively on previous learning and give students the opportunity to explore issues and to practise using the language to

express their ideas informally. Reading skills are developed effectively through the analysis of a variety of texts from the media and the Internet.

265. In spite of good teaching in most lessons, achievement is satisfactory because students sometimes have difficulty in expressing their ideas since lessons are focused more on the issues and topic vocabulary than on sentence structure. Students would benefit from more structured language models to work from or practice when completing tasks in order to increase their range of language and increase their confidence in manipulating the language. Students frequently work in pairs to exchange views and explore contemporary issues but often conversations are unevenly balanced, with one partner making little contribution to the discussion. Opportunities are missed to require students to take full responsibility for one aspect of a task and to report back or present their ideas independently to others.
266. The department makes very effective use of ICT to provide students with feedback on their written work. The range of learning opportunities available to students is good and is enhanced by the opportunity to participate in exchanges and to take part in work experience in France.