

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MINSTER SCHOOL**

Southwell

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122898

Headteacher: Canon P J Blinston

Reporting inspector: Mr D Driscoll  
11933

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249647

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 aided
Age range of pupils:	8 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Nottingham Road Southwell
Postcode:	NG25 0LG
Telephone number:	01636 814000
Fax number:	01636 817358
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A W Poole
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> November 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11933	D Driscoll	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9086	R Watkins	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
4145	C Harrison	Team inspector	Science	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design	
10297	D Cox	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	
15832	J Vanstone	Team inspector	History	
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31705	J Mason	Team inspector	Music	
12985	S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
14516	A Skelton	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	
11720	P Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
2597	C Jackson	Team inspector	Business education	
23698	J Schaffer	Team inspector	Junior department	
30825	K Hayton	Team inspector	Biology	
4689	M Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology	

2740	B Barratt	Team inspector	Psychology	
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The inspection contractor was:

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

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Minster School is a much bigger than average comprehensive school educating pupils between the ages of 8 and 18. There are 1472 pupils at the school, 773 boys and 699 girls. The school has a junior department of 18 pupils who are all either choristers or able musicians; standards on entry to the junior department are well above average and quite exceptional in music. The school draws its pupils from a very wide area indeed. Overall, the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are well above average. The great majority of pupils are white, with only a few from several different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who come from homes where English is an additional language is low and all are completely fluent in English so no special provision is necessary.

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is improving and is now well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well below average. Most pupils who have a statement or whom specialist is supporting have emotional and behavioural difficulties, although several have physical impairments or are autistic. There are also a few pupils with a range of other needs. The school is very popular with parents and has more applications than there are places available.

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

This is a good school where pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well as a result of good teaching. The junior department is very good. The school is led and managed well and provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- The very good leadership provided by the headteacher has turned the school from one that was underachieving to a good school.
- Teaching and learning are now good, so pupils leave with better results than would be expected given their standards on entry.
- Pupils in the junior department achieve very well because the teaching is very good.
- Geography and music are real strengths in the school; geography is outstanding in the sixth form.
- The school now goes to very good lengths to communicate with parents.

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

- Pupils do not do well enough in history in Years 7 to 9 and information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 because the teaching is unsatisfactory and the leadership is not driving up standards.
- Students in the sixth form are underachieving in French because the teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Some teaching is only satisfactory because the teachers are not implementing the school's policy on improving teaching and learning.
- Pupils are not getting enough opportunities to use computers in their everyday lessons.

*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 2000, when it was found to be underachieving. Very good progress has been made in the last two years. The managers and staff at the school have been tireless in their efforts to improve and this is reflected in the much improved quality of teaching and the better achievement of the pupils. Pupils now gain better results in the national tests than would be expected from their attainment on entry to the school and GCSE results have improved from below to above the average for

similar schools. Results at A level declined after the last inspection but improved significantly in 2002. Excellent progress has been made in addressing the key issues in the previous report to the extent that many of the weaknesses identified previously are now strengths of the school's work.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B
A levels/AS levels	N/A	B	*	

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

\*National comparisons for AS and A levels are not yet available.

Results in the 2002 national tests for pupils in Year 6 were very high in English, mathematics and science. Overall, the results place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Standards are also very high in music. Pupils achieve very well in the junior department and standards have been very high for some years.

Results for Year 9 in 2002 were well above average in English, mathematics and science and pupils achieved well, given their test results when they were in Year 6. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in most of their subjects, but underachieve in history. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average in most subjects and pupils achieve well. In information and communication technology, however, standards are average and pupils are underachieving. Results in both the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are improving rapidly.

Standards in the sixth form are well above average and students achieve well. Of the subjects inspected in detail, standards are very high in graphics, where results are in the top five per cent nationally, and students achieve very well in design and technology as a whole, as well as geography, music and physical education. Standards are only average in French and students are underachieving. Standards in the key skills of communication and use of number are well above average, but information and communication technology skills are not as good, as students do not get enough opportunities to use them.

The school's managers have set demanding targets for its performance and these have been met or exceeded in almost all cases.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good, although attitudes are very good in the junior department and the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, and very good in the junior department. The number of exclusions is low.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good and their relationships are very good.



Attendance	Well above average.
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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	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 very good in English and science in the junior department and is good in mathematics. Teaching is good in most subjects in the main school, including English, mathematics and science. The best teaching is in music and also in geography in Years 10 and 11, where it is very good. Teaching is unsatisfactory in history in Years 7 to 9 and information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.

Teaching in the sixth form is good. The best teaching is in geography, where it is excellent, and the worst in French, where it is unsatisfactory.

The best teaching uses the school's policy of a three-part lesson to settle pupils and get them down to work straight away so no time is lost. The approach continues with a pacy mix of activities that maintains pupils' concentration and gets them to work hard at a level that they find demanding. These lessons end with a summary so that all pupils know what they should have learnt and how well they have understood it. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well, but teachers do not make enough use of computers. The weaknesses in teaching stem from a lack of consistency, where some teachers do not implement the school's strategy.

The teaching meets the needs of pupils and students well. This could be very good for pupils with special educational needs, but the very good practice in the special needs department is not backed up in some lessons where teachers do not use methods or materials that meet the pupils' needs.

One great strength in the learning is the pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and what type of activity helps them to learn most quickly.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in the main school and sixth form and very good in the junior department.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good in terms of the central provision, but its effectiveness is reduced by teachers not always following the guidance in individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school makes very good provision for pupils' and students' spiritual and cultural development and good provision for their moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall, with good assessment procedures.

The school has a very good partnership with parents and works very hard to keep them informed. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good and there are very good links with the community. The school has very good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior managers provide very good leadership and manage the school very well. Many other managers fulfil their roles well, but the leadership of history and information and communication technology is not good enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have played a full part in its improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The systems for checking on the school's performance are rigorous and ensure a high degree of accountability.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school has improved significantly, while at the same time wiping out a deficit budget.

The school has enough rooms and resources, and a good match of teachers and support staff to its needs. The way that the managers have identified the most important aspects of the school's work to improve, implemented the actions to bring about such changes and have managed the finances, is excellent. The school is now very good at seeking to provide the best value for the money it receives because it seeks the views of parents, pupils and students and takes notice of what they say.

## 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>• The progress that their children make.</li> <li>• The good teaching.</li> <li>• The way in which they can approach the school with questions or problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information about progress.</li> <li>• The leadership and management of the school.</li> <li>• The way that the school works with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views, but find no grounds for the concerns raised by them. Information about progress is good and better than that found in most other schools. The school is working very hard with parents. The very good leadership and management of the headteacher, governors and senior management team have turned the school around.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than most other sixth forms; there are currently 138 female and 161 male students. The students come from a range of backgrounds that are very similar to those of the main school and study courses at AS and A level. The great majority of pupils stay on to the sixth form and some join from other schools. Students are usually required to have an average of an equivalent to a grade C across all of their GCSE subjects, with a grade B in the subjects they wish to study at AS level. However, the school accepts students with a grade C in their chosen subjects and even a grade D in some special cases. Attainment on entry is generally above average and there are no students who have statements or require extra support.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form now provides a good education for its students and meets their needs well. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and leave the school with standards that are well above average. Standards were declining in the sixth form and, in 2001, students were underachieving. Since then, standards and results have improved considerably under the very good leadership of the new head of sixth form. The sixth form is very cost effective.

### Strengths

- Standards are improving rapidly as a result of the school's strong focus on improvement and the very good leadership provided by the head of sixth form.
- Students now achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- The provision for geography is outstanding.

### What could be improved

- Students are underachieving in French because the teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers do not make enough use of computers in their teaching.
- Teachers do not pay as much attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar as they do in the main school.

*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>Satisfactory.</b> Results were below average in 2001 but improved considerably in 2002. Standards are now well above average. Students do as well as expected as a result of satisfactory teaching.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Results were below average in 2001 but improved considerably in 2002. Standards are now well above average. Students are now achieving well as a result of good teaching.

Physics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were below average in 2001 but improved considerably in 2002. Standards are now above average. Students do as well as expected as a result of satisfactory teaching.
Design and technology	<b>Very good.</b> Results were very high in 2001 and were similar in 2002. Standards are now very high. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
Business studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were above average in 2001 but fell in 2002. Standards are now average. Students perform as expected as a result of satisfactory teaching.
Computer studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002. Standards are now well above average. Teaching is good and students do well at A level. However, several students underachieved on the AS course because they were not given good enough advice about its content and nature.
Physical education	<b>Very good.</b> Examinations will be taken at A level for the first time this year. Standards are now well above average. Teaching is very good and students are achieving very well.
Art and design	<b>Good.</b> Results were above average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Standards are now well above average. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Music	<b>Very good.</b> Results were above average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Standards are now well above average. Teaching is now very good and students are achieving very well.
Geography	<b>Outstanding.</b> Results were average in 2001, but saw a huge rise in 2002 to become the best in the school. Standards are now well above average. The teaching is excellent and students do much better than their GCSE results would indicate.
Psychology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were below average in 2001 but improved significantly in 2002. Standards are now average. Teaching has improved this term and is now good, but this is too recent to raise achievement above satisfactory.
English	<b>Good.</b> Results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Standards are now above average. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
French	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Results were average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Standards are now average. Students are underachieving as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good overall. Most get very good advice about courses in the sixth form and in higher education, but the advice for those planning to study computing at AS level is not good enough.

Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The new head of sixth form and assistant headteacher are working hard to ensure that all teachers are aware of all their students' potential and how this can be reached. Standards are rising rapidly as a result. Governors play the same very good part as they do in the rest of the school.
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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 help and guidance provided by their teachers.</li> <li>• The range of subjects on offer.</li> <li>• The responsibility they are given</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The facilities for private study.</li> <li>• The size and position of the common room.</li> </ul>

The team agrees with the views of students, although the size and position of their common room is not having any real impact on standards.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### **Junior department**

1. The school's results in National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2002 were very high in English, mathematics and science. These results were among the top five per cent of schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, results in English and science were again in the top five per cent, but those for mathematics were just a little bit lower, being well above average. Pupils' achievements are very good as they build on the well above average standards that they bring to the school and attain at an even higher level. Since 1999, the school's results have been among the top five per cent in the country for nearly every subject most years. However, the science results are slightly better than those for English and mathematics. In 2002 every pupil attained the higher level (Level 5) in science. The school's results have been consistently very high in science over the past four years and this subject is a particular strength. In English pupils attain higher standards in reading than writing and the school has identified the need to focus more on developing pupils' writing skills. The current standard of work in Year 6 is of the same exceptionally high standard for science and English. In mathematics, it is a little lower, reflecting the fact that with small groups, such as this, individual strengths and weaknesses need be taken into account. The school introduced the numeracy strategy in January 2002, two years after most schools. This has meant that some pupils are not as comfortable in the use of mental strategies to work out mathematical problems as would be expected and this contributes to their attainment in mathematics being slightly below that of the very high standards they achieve in English and science.
2. On occasions, pupils are admitted who are gifted in music, or have exceptionally good singing voices, but have special educational needs in other areas. These pupils make very good progress because their individual needs are met very well. They are given specific targets to work towards and their progress is monitored carefully. Because they are given very good encouragement, they are exceptionally keen to succeed.
3. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils' attainment in music is very much higher than would usually be expected for pupils of this age. In religious education, history, geography, and physical education the standard of their work is above average. In art and design, and information and communication technology standards are average. No judgements on standards were made for design and technology, as this is only taught in the spring and summer terms.

##### **Main school**

4. Standards are well above average and pupils are achieving well. Girls tend to do better than boys in examinations, but the gap between them is significantly smaller than that seen nationally. Results at both the end of Year 9 and at GCSE have improved at a rapid rate since the school was last inspected. When last inspected, higher attainers in particular were found to be underachieving. This is certainly not the case now, as all groups of pupils achieve well. The school's managers have focused

their attention on improving the quality of teaching, which has paid rich dividends in improving standards.

5. The results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average in English, mathematics and science and these standards are being continued with pupils currently in Year 9. Pupils achieved well given their results at the end of Year 6. Results have been rising very quickly over the past two years, Standards are also well above average in design and technology and geography, and above average in all other subjects except history where they are average. Pupils achieve well, given their standards on joining the school, in all subjects except information and communication technology, French, German and music where their achievement is satisfactory. In history, pupils are not reaching the standards of which they are capable and are underachieving.
6. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average overall. When pupils' best eight results only are taken into account, the school is in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Pupils achieved well given their results at the end of Year 9. Results were well above average in almost all subjects, but only average in art and design, information and communication technology and German. Pupils achieved well in most subjects, but there are some where this was not the case. Achievement was satisfactory in German, where pupils only started the course in Year 9. Pupils also did as well as expected, given their standards at the end of Year 9, in art and design and history. However, in information and communication technology they underachieved.
7. The standards and achievement of pupils currently in Year 11 largely reflect the examination results in 2002, so, for example, standards in English, mathematics and science remain well above average and pupils are achieving well. However, there are some important differences. Achievement is now good in art and design and standards are above average as a result of improved teaching; the standards seen currently reflect a continuation of the rising trend in GCSE results in the subject. Standards in history are above average, rather than well above, because pupils did not make enough progress in Years 7 to 9 and so are further behind by the time they start their GCSE course. In Years 10 and 11, their achievement is satisfactory, rather than the good achievement seen in most other subjects, because the teaching is only satisfactory. Achievement is also satisfactory in French and German, because the teaching is satisfactory. Achievement is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology because the teaching is not good enough and because pupils do not get enough opportunities to use computers in their other lessons.
8. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. By the end of Year 11, the number gaining five or more A\*-G grades at GCSE is well above the national average, and above the average for similar schools. A significant minority of pupils achieve very well in reading. Because of good support, pupils improve their learning skills and this helps them make progress in lessons and develop very good attitudes to their studies. They know their strengths and weaknesses and which method of learning suits them best. This level of provision is a result of the very good leadership and management provided by the special needs co-ordinator.
9. Pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy are well above average. Most pupils are articulate and confident communicators. Pupils' grasp of the basics of literacy, including spelling and punctuation, is usually good. Most pupils produce extended writing and many show an ability to present information coherently. Where they are required to redraft their writing, pupils are self-critical and take responsibility for raising their own standards. Standards in reading are very good. Pupils readily understand



what they read and very few are unable to read independently. The standard of reading aloud is particularly good. Many pupils read with good expression and clear diction. Pupils are able to cope easily with the mathematical demands of other subjects and are adept at mental arithmetic.

### **Sixth form**

10. Results in the 2001 examinations (the most recent for which national comparisons are available) were above average and students did not do as well as they should have given their standards on joining the sixth form. Results in 2002 shot up and students gained results that were expected from their GCSE results. It is not possible to compare results with those at the time of the previous inspection as the systems for measuring overall standards against the national average have changed.
11. Results in 2001 were below average in mathematics, biology and physics and only average in geography, computer studies and French. However, all of these subjects except French saw dramatic improvements in 2002. In geography, for example, the results were the best in the school. The results in French were similar to those in 2001 and this is the one subject where students are still underachieving as a result of unsatisfactory teaching. Results in all other subjects were above average in 2001, with the exception of design and technology where they were very high and, in graphics and performing arts, where they are in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
12. Standards are now well above average overall and students are achieving well. This improved performance is a result of better teaching and the new head of sixth form's emphasis on using data to make teachers aware of their students' capabilities.

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

#### **Junior department**

13. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good. There is a relaxed atmosphere in the class but pupils very rarely take advantage of this, and respond immediately if the teacher asks for improved attention. The pupils understand Christian values very well and nearly all are able to translate these into sharing with others and caring for others' needs. Occasionally, when working in groups, the desire to be at the forefront of attention overcomes two or more pupils in the group and the teacher has to intervene.
14. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils are polite and friendly and most are eager to be of help to adults and other pupils alike. Respect for other peoples' feelings and beliefs was demonstrated when one pupil showed the inspector a display about Dubai, explaining that it had been done by her friend to help her overcome her feelings of missing her father who was away from home in that country.

#### **Main school**

15. Pupils throughout the school have a mature sense of responsibility for their own learning and for the most part this is reflected in their actions. Their attitudes and behaviour have improved since the previous inspection and are now good as they move around the school, as well as when they are in lessons. They co-operate very well with each other when they are asked to work together, and this helps their progress. Other aspects of their personal development are good. Parents are now

rather happier about standards of behaviour than they were at the time of the previous inspection although they still have a few reservations, which arise because there are still times when a few pupils let their behaviour slip.

16. Helped by their sensible use of the movement time allowed, pupils in all age groups usually arrive punctually for lessons unless they have some reasonable excuse. For the most part they settle down willingly to work and concentrate well. All, including those with special educational needs, are keen to succeed with their learning and they respond with great interest and attention to stimulating teaching.
17. Their response is good or better in around three out of four lessons and in over a third it is very good. In one very good design and technology lesson, for instance, Year 8 pupils worked very carefully at producing the load-carrying bags they had designed. They were intent on doing everything properly and listened very carefully to their teacher, readily answering questions. Quite often pupils remain pleasant and attentive, though perhaps lacking in initiative, even if they find a lesson rather uninteresting. They know that it is important to behave well so that their own and others' work is not interrupted. Many resent the way that a few individuals have a tendency to become silly and distracting. Just occasionally, however, most of a class become really uninterested and awkward. For example, in one information and communication technology lesson, Year 10 pupils lost interest in their spreadsheet task because it was too easy and held little appeal for them. They became so unco-operative that the teacher struggled to find skills to control them.
18. Around the school, pupils are usually orderly, though groups moving around corridors and paths are sometimes slow to make way for others. A few boys, mostly younger ones, tend to become over-boisterous around the buildings, though they know that this is not acceptable. Really poor behaviour is rare. The number of short-term exclusions has fallen since the previous inspection and rates of both short-term and permanent exclusions are now low.
19. Other aspects of pupils' personal development are for the most part good. They show respect for others' feelings and ideas and readily consider important social and moral issues. For instance, Year 9 pupils asked astute questions in a drama lesson when they were presented with topical information about racism in South Africa. They act on their understanding of others' needs to give enthusiastic support to a range of charities. They respond well to the range of extra-curricular activities available. Interest in music is particularly strong through all the age groups, including the junior department. The various choirs and bands have many keen members and others respect and value their achievements. All Year 11 listened with rapt attention to one of their number who sang a solo in assembly, impressed and moved by her performance.
20. Good social skills are apparent in the way pupils often work very effectively together, discussing views and ideas and so helping each other's learning. They cope well with any responsibilities they are given within the school community, as when Year 7 volunteers acted as guides during a parents' evening. Very good relationships are usually apparent between pupils and most do not feel bullying is a problem at their school. However, name-calling worries a few, mostly younger ones, even though they know they can ask teachers for help to cope with such unkindness.
21. The very good attendance seen at the previous inspection has continued and contributes to the good progress that pupils make and to their examination successes. Unauthorised absence has been low in the past but in the most recent

year rose considerably to above average levels. This is in part due to the school's properly critical approach to authorising absence only when an acceptable excuse is supplied. The other contributory factor is the recent difficulty with the computerised records of reasons for absence. Truancy is rare because of pupils' high motivation to learn.

### **Sixth form**

22. Sixth form students have very mature and responsible attitudes to their work. They understand well that they are studying from their own choice and they do their best to make the most of the opportunities available to them. Their relationships with teachers are very positive because they value the good learning atmosphere they generate in lessons. In physical education, for example, they enjoy activity-based learning and this underpins their motivation so they concentrate very well. They respect their teachers' knowledge and respond to constructive advice. They speak very appreciatively of the way that subject teachers are always ready to help them in their own time as well as in lessons. Students' commitment to work persists even if the lesson does little to sustain their interest, as is the case sometimes in history, for instance. They are unhappy about deficiencies they find in the sixth form accommodation but do not see these as an excuse for neglecting their studies, and still work hard. They have a good understanding of their own achievements and targets for improvement, and this helps to motivate their efforts. They take care with assignments and generally show good independent skills in study and research. When the work demands this they can develop great initiative, but there are subjects in which they are rather dependent on their teachers.
23. Wider aspects of students' personal development are very good. A well-developed sense of responsibility is evident, for instance in the way they run their sixth form council effectively, organising their own social and sports activities and representing their views to senior staff. They also make a very good contribution to the wider school community. Around 60 students in Year 12 have successfully trained as mentors to help younger students. Students also assist teachers in a number of lessons in the main school and help in running extra-curricular activities, such as sports clubs. Though they tend to see the school's 'Thought for the Day' as irrelevant, they find the religious element of their general studies course worthwhile, because it helps them consider issues and form their own views. Attendance in sixth form lessons is very good, reflecting students' motivation to learn as well as their understanding that the school will notice and follow up any unexplained absence.

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

#### **Junior department**

24. The quality of teaching is very good. The class teacher for the junior department takes most lessons, but teachers from the main school take art and design, drama and some music lessons.
25. Lesson planning is very good and stems from a careful assessment of how well pupils have understood what has been taught in previous lessons. At the start of each lesson, teachers explain to pupils what they are expected to learn. Very good use is made of the session at the end of the lesson to check how well pupils have achieved the goals set them. As pupils work, teachers make reference to their individual targets in literacy and numeracy. All these strategies help pupils understand how well they

are doing, and as a result they are well motivated and work with perseverance at their tasks.

26. A good range of methods are used, such as using paired activities to help pupils share ideas and work together. Their different styles of learning are explained to them. For instance, they all understand that some may learn the most by listening while others find a pictorial reference very helpful. Occasionally, one of the methods chosen for an activity by teachers does not result in the best of learning. For instance, in a mathematical game there was insufficient challenge and pupils knew the outcome before the game was over, and in a music lesson a short activity resulted in confusion because the purpose of the activity was not clear. In both lessons, the teacher was aware that the activity was not benefiting pupils and moved on quickly to the next activity.
27. Teachers provide good opportunities to use information and communication technology in English, music and art and design. As a result, pupils have good skills in word processing. However, in science and mathematics, in particular, teachers do not make enough use of computers to help pupils solve problems or to test and monitor events. Also not enough use is made of computers to help those with an individual difficulty or gap in their knowledge.
28. Homework is used very effectively to extend and develop the learning that takes place in the classroom. It is well organised and parents are clear how to help without providing too much support. In subjects such as history and geography, pupils do not have enough time to study projects in depth and the work that they do at home is a very effective contribution to their achievements.

### **Main school**

29. Teaching is good and brings about good learning. The quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably since the last inspection, when it was only satisfactory. The difference has come about because of the school managers' determination to improve. The results are clear in the proportion of lessons taught to a good or better standard, which was five lessons in ten at the time of the previous inspection and now stands at almost seven in ten.
30. Teaching is good in all subjects in Years 7 to 9, except information and communication technology, French and German, where it is satisfactory, history, where it is unsatisfactory, and music where it is very good. The situation is similar in Years 10 and 11, except that teaching is very good in geography, satisfactory in history and unsatisfactory in information and communication technology. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.
31. The school's training has emphasised the importance of the three-part lesson as part of its emphasis on effective teaching and learning strategies. Teachers using this approach will have a starter activity, the main part of the lesson and a plenary session. The best teaching employs such an approach consistently. It is no coincidence that the best teaching is to be found in the geography department, where the head of department has taken a leading role in the development of the teaching in the school as a whole. Many other subjects have improved their teaching considerably by adopting such an approach.
32. The difference between the very good teaching in geography and the good teaching elsewhere is often as a result of the failure to reach the excellent degree of

consistency that is apparent in geography. In science, for example, some teachers do not use the starter activities every lesson. These activities are important because of the long break between lessons, when pupils can become a little exuberant. The starter activity settles them and quickly gets them working. In one science lesson where the activity was not used, the pupils never really settled down to work hard at all and so progress was only satisfactory as the teacher had to keep stopping to get the pupils quiet again. In physical education, some teaching is really outstanding in covering many aspects of the subject in one lesson but other lessons are more mundane and the teacher will concentrate on a game, without regard to improving, say, pupils' skills in evaluation. The teaching of drama is of a consistently high quality and in these lessons teachers cover an exceptional range of issues so pupils not only learn about drama, but also about racism, homelessness or drug abuse, for example.

33. The main part of the lesson is usually conducted at a good pace and teachers expect their pupils to do well. Nevertheless, there are problems in some mixed ability classes where the range of ability is quite wide. In most lessons, teachers match the work to the needs of individual pupils well. However, some teachers do not pay enough attention to the demands of the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. As a result, the methods and materials used are not suitable for all pupils in the class, and in one case the pupils with special educational needs had to point out the deficiencies to the teachers concerned. This very rarely happens in the classes where pupils are placed according to their levels of prior attainment. In these lessons, teachers find it easy to use the best method and pitch it at just the right level to extend the pupils' understanding of the topic. It also very rarely happens in English where, although the classes are mixed in terms of ability, most teachers use materials that are aimed at a range of different levels. They are also quick to step in if they realise that a task is too difficult for a particular pupil, and change the task. In mathematics, the classes that are set by ability make consistently good progress, but those in Year 7 get off to a slower start because teachers struggle to cope with the range of ability.
34. Many teachers make the main part of the lesson highly enjoyable or relevant to the pupils. Games are used to good effect in French and German, and trips in geography are used as the basis for much of the work in class so pupils have something concrete to relate to. In information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11, on the other hand, pupils are working through tasks that are set by the examination board without any form of adaptation that would make them suitable for pupils of different levels of attainment. As a result, many are totally bored by the subject and this is only made worse when they find that they have to repeat tasks because the first attempt was only for practice. A lot of the teaching in history, especially in Years 7 to 9, is boring too. Some history teachers spend over half the lesson talking to pupils, who listen politely but are learning little. Design and technology is never boring, because pupils are actively involved for the full lesson. This does not necessarily mean that they are carrying out practical activities. Pupils may, for example, be watching a demonstration, but the teacher keeps them alert by questioning them or getting them to take notes. Usually, it is a variety of approaches in a lesson that works best in terms of keeping pupils concentrating and working hard; the school's involvement with a special project has promoted this very well.
35. The summaries of lessons work really well in reminding pupils what they were supposed to have learnt and also allow teachers to get a good idea of how well pupils have understood. The way that this is done can take many forms, from the teacher using the objectives as a checklist, through a short test or even a game as in French and German. Some teachers, however, notably those in information and

communication technology, forget to put the objectives up in the first place or the writing is so small that only the teacher can read it, which ruins the whole activity.

36. The main reason for the unsatisfactory teaching in history and information and communication technology is the failure to follow the school policy on the three-part lesson or to introduce the other strategies that the school promotes. As a result, lessons are boring, and pupils get too little work done and make insufficient progress.
37. The teaching by specialist staff in the special educational needs department is very good and this helps pupils learn very well. Staff, including teachers and teaching assistants, have a very good knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Relationships are very good. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can do and how they should behave. As a result, pupils work very hard and want to do well. For example, in a Year 10 study skills lesson, pupils had the opportunity to select their own tasks and hence show initiative. They behaved well and used their time wisely. The excellent introduction and conclusion to the lesson focused closely on basic skills, which enabled pupils to improve literacy standards. Staff vary activities to help pupils sustain concentration. They select tasks which are challenging but which meet pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils learn rapidly. Subject teachers use the targets of individual learning plans inconsistently. While most teachers provide suitable work for pupils, others do not supply different material to match the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, and progress is satisfactory rather than good.
38. One aspect of teaching that could be improved across the school is the use of computers. Pupils do not make enough use of computers in lessons other than information and communication technology and music, and this is one reason why they do not do as well in information and communication technology as they do in other subjects. One area of great strength, on the other hand, is the knowledge that pupils have of their own learning styles and how well they are doing. One inspector noticed a pupil with a carpet tile in front of him and assumed there was some art or design work going on. "What are you doing?" asked the inspector. "Well, sir, I am at stage three for my special need, which is...and I am a kinaesthetic learner, which means that I learn by doing things more actively. If I trace a word out on the tile with my finger, it helps me to picture the way the word is spelt so that I am able to copy it with my pen." He did, and it worked.

### **Sixth form**

39. The teaching in the sixth form is improving rapidly and is now good. Teachers have been slower to adopt the three-part lesson mentioned above, but nevertheless most are now following the good examples set lower down the school and find that they work equally well with the sixth form.
40. One aspect that is better in the sixth form is the very good way in which teachers manage students. Students respect their teachers for their very good subject knowledge and so tend to concentrate well on what they are saying. Nevertheless, there are still a few in Year 12 who are still a bit silly at times or try to hold the lesson up by side-tracking teachers. The teachers are very wise to this and thwart such attempts by responding with phrases such as, "A very good question. Why don't you and I discuss this in more depth during your lunchtime?" In this way the teacher has kept the lesson going, while pointing out that she or he knows exactly what is going on and how to deal with it. The student rarely tries again.

41. The quality of teaching and learning in French is unsatisfactory overall. In the majority of individual lessons students make satisfactory progress but over time their progress is not adequate to meet the demands of the course. This is because the range and variety of learning experiences are limited and do not enable them to develop their independence as linguists.
42. One aspect, which, although satisfactory, is not as good as that in the main school, is the attention paid to the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammar. While in the main school teachers pay very good attention to the detail of pupils' written work, those in the sixth form concentrate on the subject content rather than the way in which it is expressed. The use of computers is similar to that in the main school and students are not using them enough in their studies.

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

### **Junior department**

43. The curriculum is very well planned and is very good as a result. National Curriculum requirements are met for all subjects even though the pupils spend much more time than in most schools studying music. Pupils are given very good opportunities to pursue interests in a wide range of subjects. Work that pupils do outside of lessons makes a significant difference to the provision. Although links between subjects are generally good, they are not developed well enough in mathematics and information and communication technology. Pupils are given very good opportunities to use their skills in literacy in subjects such as history and geography. Drama, French and lessons in personal, social and health education ensure a very broad and relevant curriculum. Sex education and information about the misuse of drugs are taught appropriately. Care is taken to ensure that pupils who are withdrawn from lessons for musical tuition are given opportunities to catch up on the work missed. Times for music lessons are alternated fortnightly so that for individual pupils different subjects are interrupted.
44. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Because of the importance of their life as choristers, pupils are very influenced by the spirituality conveyed to them through the strong link with the Minster. Teachers include a spiritual, moral and social element in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are taught the importance of their responsibilities towards one another, to the environment and to animals. For instance, they had studied the work of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and are planning to raise funds for the charity. The popular Pen Pal club maintained with a school in Liverpool extends their social awareness. Music plays a very strong part in their life and it is used effectively to help them understand the different cultures in the world. Pupils were, for example, learning to play the different parts of a piece of music in the style of a Gamelan, the music of Indonesia, so that they could compare its structure to that of western music.

### **Main school**

45. The curriculum is good and has improved since the last inspection. As well as meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum, all pupils study two languages from Year 8 onwards and drama is introduced as a separate subject in this year. Additional time is provided within English to improve pupils' literacy skills. The school has recently introduced vocational GCSEs for students in Years 10 and 11, as well as a GCSE short course in physical education. Pupils also have the opportunity to gain

the Community Sports Leader Award during physical education time. The school provides the opportunity for the most able scientists to study all three sciences as individual subjects. All pupils study short courses in GCSE information and communication technology and religious education. In September 2002, the school introduced 'study support' options for specific pupils for whom the full complement of GCSEs may be too much. These options are designed to support study in other subject areas. However, pupils do not get enough opportunities to use computers outside of their information and communication technology and music lessons.

46. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. The school makes good use of the Arts Support Service to provide instrumental music tuition for 200 talented musicians. Events such as the mathematics challenge and the physics Olympiad provide exciting opportunities for very able pupils to shine and the school runs a highly successful summer school that is open to all Year 7 pupils.
47. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The Fast Forward Breakfast Club is well planned to help Year 7 pupils with below average literacy skills catch up with other pupils of similar age. The younger pupils appreciate the attention not only from specialist staff but also from older pupils who help in lessons. The study skills option, introduced in Year 10, gives excellent support to lower attaining pupils in their GCSE work and in the way they can improve learning skills in general. Teaching assistants have considerable expertise and offer very good support in lessons. Generally, they work closely with subject teachers to help pupils make good progress. However, where assistants are not well briefed on lesson content in advance, the support they can give is less effective.
48. The school's strategy for teaching literacy is good. The English department's coverage of reading and writing is thorough and effective. There is a valuable emphasis placed upon teaching language skills, which is all the more effective because pupils are taught the correct technical terms and concepts. Though the school has had a literacy co-ordinator until recently, the post is at present vacant. However, teachers have received a programme of training on literacy across the curriculum. The extent to which departments focus upon teaching literacy is mostly good, but varies. So, for example, good opportunities are provided for extended reading and research in English, art and geography, but they are more limited than might be expected in history and religious education. In music and information and communication technology, pupils have the opportunity to produce evaluative writing, but in information and communication technology pupils' written work tends to be disorganised.
49. The contribution that subjects make to developing students' competence and skills in understanding and using number is good. All teachers have had training to acquire understanding of the needs of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, there is no whole school policy that would bring together good practice across departments so that mathematical skills can be enhanced and consolidated further. This lack of policy also leads to variations in the provision that different subjects make for numeracy, which is good in design and technology but poor in history, for example.
50. The arrangements for teaching personal and social development are good. The work that is planned includes all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness and these plans provide a good experience for the pupils. Especially good work is carried out in Years 7 to 9, as pupils work with 'Project Respect', which covers smoking, alcohol and illegal substances.



51. The school has very good links with the local community. There is, of course, a strong link with the Minster itself. This is strengthened by regular services and concerts in the Minster and by the presence of clergy from different churches in school as part of the Chaplaincy team operating in support of pupils. There are good links with youth organisations in the town. Pupils benefit from work experience and there are many examples of pupils being good ambassadors for the school. The school has good pastoral links with the primary schools. Links with external agencies and other organisations provide valuable experiences for pupils, particularly for those doing vocationally based courses.
52. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There is excellent provision for music; the school is the Choir School for the Minster. Through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme pupils take on voluntary work. The physical education department organises an extensive range of clubs to encourage all pupils to develop new skills in a fun environment. There are regular 'mufti days' and other fund-raising events where the monies raised are sent to many local charities. In addition to those mentioned above there are many clubs that pupils can join including chess, astronomy and the Christian Union.
53. The provision made by the school for pupils' personal development is good and spiritual and cultural development are among its strengths. Its aims encompass all aspects, and the daily life of the school shows evidence that these aims are being realised. Most parents are pleased with the values that the school demonstrates.
54. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The use of inspirational posters in corridors and in some subject areas promotes reflection and consideration of the school's values. All pupils study religious education. This provides a firm foundation in the beliefs and practices of Christianity and enables pupils to reflect on how people of faith respond to God. Work in science draws pupils' attention to the wonders of the universe and there are many instances where pupils experience the spiritual nature of art and music. One important aspect is the number of occasions when pupils spontaneously show their appreciation of others' performances and valuable contributions to lessons. The school's accommodation on a split site makes acts of collective worship difficult to arrange but each pupil attends one assembly each week. The school recognises that its acts of worship seldom recognise the festivals and celebrations of faiths other than Christianity, but in all other respects these acts of worship are of good quality. On other days of the week a well-planned programme of 'Thought for the Day' is provided for use at the beginning of the day. However, there is considerable inconsistency in the emphasis placed on its use by different teachers and its contribution is therefore limited. Valuable support for the provision is provided through the work of an ecumenical team of clergy who act as year chaplains. They visit regularly and conduct acts of worship. A Christian Union group led by members of the sixth form meets regularly and is attended by pupils of all ages.
55. The provision for moral development is good. The school makes clear to pupils its understanding of right and wrong through assemblies and consistent expectations of good behaviour. There is a code of conduct, guidance about day-to-day routines and a home/school agreement, which guide pupils in the practical application of the school's values of consideration for others. The success of this is shown by the responsible behaviour of the majority of pupils. For those who find it difficult to maintain acceptable standards there is extra support, which includes a quiet area, known as the Retreat, where they can have time to reflect and consider the consequences of their behaviour. There are good opportunities throughout the

curriculum for pupils to consider both personal and global moral issues ranging from the correct approach to drugs to aspects of pollution and responsibility for the environment. The extra-curricular Magistrate's Court project gives some pupils an insight into the consequences of anti-social behaviour.

56. The school's provision for pupils' social development is good but is inhibited by the lack of social facilities on both sites. The need for pupils to commute between the two sites means that from Year 8 onwards they do not meet as a group with their form tutor as frequently as is the case in most schools. On the other hand, the necessity for even the youngest pupils to be well organised and to get themselves to the right building at the right time appears to develop a sense of responsibility. In lessons there is widespread use of collaborative work which develops pupils' ability to work with others and provides many opportunities for them to act as spokespersons for groups thus developing initiative and self-confidence. Opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities, and this is further encouraged through the provision of late transport to outlying areas. Citizenship teaching and its associated activities raise pupils' awareness of ways in which they can participate in their communities and play a part in bringing about positive change. Social and community issues are also covered in the work in design and technology, geography, religious education and science and good quality newspapers are available in the library. A considerable amount of money is raised for local and international charities. A large number of pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which is designed to develop responsibility, initiative and self-reliance.
57. There is very good provision for pupils' cultural development. An enormous number of pupils participate in instrumental lessons, orchestras, ensembles and choirs. Drama activities flourish both in the curriculum and after school and there are regular school productions. The school has held a Writers' Week during which there were visits by authors and poets. On national poetry day pupils were invited to contribute to *The Minster's Longest Poem*. There are regular visits to theatres and art galleries and history and geography field visits to the World War I battlefields, the Holocaust Museum and to Ironbridge. Pupils have little first-hand contact with other cultures and there is an absence of recognition in subject displays of the contribution made by them to UK society. However, the introduction of citizenship is raising pupils' awareness of the multicultural nature of society and of how different countries and cultures are increasingly dependent on one another. In religious education pupils learn about the cultures associated with Islam and Judaism and there is a recently formed link with a school in South Africa. In geography pupils have email contact with a former teacher who is currently engaged in a VSO scheme in Ghana, and a former pupil currently on a gap year in India sends regular letters to the school which are displayed. Awareness of European cultures is developed through modern foreign language events such as study and social visits and a European Week.

### **Sixth form curriculum**

58. The sixth form curriculum is good and the wide range of AS and A level courses meets the needs of the students well. All students follow courses in religious education and key skills. Students also have the opportunity to take the Sports Leadership Award. Most students study three subjects through to A level although higher attainers can continue with all of their initial subjects. The school works hard to ensure the courses meet the needs of individual students. During Year 11, discussions take place between individual pupils and the school to ascertain which is the best route for pupils to take at post-16 and for some pupils these courses are at other institutions. There are some small groups, which are allowed to run if they are

complementary to other studies so that students can study the combination of subjects most appropriate for them.

59. Students receive good careers advice. Much thought is given to preparing Year 11 pupils for post-16 education and a good advice programme has been established which extends into the summer period after the publication of GCSE results.
60. The provision of activities to enrich a student's curriculum is very good. Sixth form life is enhanced greatly by partnerships with the Minster Foundation and the local Rotary Club. Students reach out into the community through involvement in local charity and community ventures, work experience and events, which give them the opportunity to showcase their particular strengths in music and drama. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced largely by opportunities for taking extra responsibility and for contributing to the school community. Students take a leading role in the Christian Union and in music and drama activities. There are currently 86 members of Year 12 being trained to mentor younger pupils and others assist in the Breakfast Literacy Club. All sixth form students are encouraged to participate in some form of community service either within the school or in the local area. Community Sports Leaders help in local schools. The sixth form committee is active in organising social events.
61. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The introduction of the new system of AS and A levels has been managed well and there is a much broader range of subjects now on offer.

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

62. The overall quality of care has improved considerably in the past two years. Health and safety procedures are now good. They have been much refined since the previous inspection, when they were unsatisfactory. Good arrangements are followed to promote good behaviour and attendance. Personal support is satisfactory overall, though support from both pastoral and academic staff for identified individual needs is good. Educational guidance is good. Good procedures are in place to assess and record pupils' achievements and better use is now made of the information gained, so that it is taken into account in plans for their further progress.

#### **Junior department**

63. Information from previous schools and the results of National Curriculum assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 are the starting point for the records and assessments undertaken in the junior department. The systems and procedures to monitor pupils and track their academic progress are similar to those in the main part of the school and are effective in checking pupils' progress term by term. Records for pupils with special educational needs are maintained very well. Teachers know pupils very well and pupils' personal development is monitored and supported. Each pupil has a 'Celebrations and Commiserations' book in which they and their teacher record things of which they are proud and the few occasions when their behaviour or attitudes have fallen short of expectations. Pupils' individual targets for literacy and numeracy are well thought out and specific to each pupil. The teacher checks them as work proceeds and undertakes an overall review at the end of each term. These good practices are very effective in supporting pupils' academic achievements.

#### **Main school**

64. Good induction procedures, involving an experienced team of pastoral staff, are followed to help all those who join Year 7 settle in successfully. Staff take good care to put proper arrangements in place for those who need particular support, whether this arises from educational, medical, emotional, behavioural or other cause. As a result the school meets specific individual needs with a good degree of success. However, in other respects pastoral support for students on a day-to-day basis is no more than satisfactory. This is because most tutors only meet with their groups for one registration period and one personal, social and health education lesson each week, limiting their chances to be pro-active in noticing and dealing with any emerging individual problems. It is hard for the school to schedule more frequent tutorial sessions because of constraints on the use of time imposed by the split site. Various steps are taken to overcome this limitation, for instance tutors of younger students are timetabled to take them for lessons in a subject, and these help to some extent. A cycle of one-to-one mentoring interviews with tutors is in place. These are valuable for students, as they aid self-review and goal-setting, especially now that tutors can refer to information about academic progress and targets. However, these interviews are widely spaced and serve a different purpose from day-to-day care. Accommodation constraints cause some younger students to feel under pressure on particular days when they have to move between sites three or four times, leaving them little leisure time at breaks.
65. Subject teachers give students plenty of encouragement to work hard and do their best. They help them to understand how they are doing, what they are capable of achieving and how to make progress. Teachers use the award of credits to motivate younger ones while older ones gain satisfaction from their own achievements. Students throughout the school and especially those approaching their GCSE examinations appreciate the way teachers help them if they have any difficulties with their work. The caring attitude of special educational needs staff helps to raise pupils' self-confidence and to improve their learning. Staff's sensitivity to pupils' needs has a significant impact on learning. For example, in a one-to-one English lesson, the support assistant noticed the pupil was flagging in her coursework on work experience, so changed the task from writing to discussion.
66. Management of behaviour is good overall. Very thorough policies and procedures are in place. Staff make sure students understand how they should behave and for the most part uphold these expectations successfully. A computerised record system logs all significant behaviour issues, so all staff on both sites have immediate access to each pupil's record. In lessons the interesting content in itself often helps to bring about good attentive behaviour. Teachers are usually skilful in quelling any lapse in attention or emerging silliness by a brief word of correction. However, there are occasional situations where the teacher's strategies prove inadequate to prevent misbehaviour. The use of internal exclusion has been developed, so that, depending on individual circumstances, a pupil who has to be removed from the classroom because of serious behaviour issues may continue to work under supervision by a senior member of staff, rather than being sent home. Reasonable use of short-term exclusion also plays an appropriate part in the sanctions system. Permanent exclusion is only used for the most serious breakdowns in behaviour.
67. Steps to prevent bullying or other harassment are satisfactory. Good efforts are made to reinforce to pupils that bullying in any form is unacceptable. Pupils know that they can ask teachers for help if they meet with any such problem. When issues come to the attention of staff their support is for the most part well judged. A few pupils, however, feel that although teachers do respond to concerns, for instance about name-calling, it can take too long before they are fully resolved. The school is

considering ways to further increase provision for supporting pupils, for instance by extending the way trained sixth form mentors already help a number of younger ones.

68. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good. They have improved considerably since they were criticised at the previous inspection. A computerised system is used to check attendance in every lesson and appropriate extra checks are in place to keep track of pupils who leave a lesson for any reason. Pupils know that any unexplained absence from school or even from a single lesson will be followed up. Staff adopt a properly critical approach to authorising absence. For instance any holiday absence over ten days is not authorised. Technical hitches with the computer system mean that reasons accepted for some authorised absence are not consistently indicated in records for the school year preceding the inspection. This contributes to the apparent increase in unauthorised absence recorded for the year.
69. First aid procedures are good. Pupils receive good care and attention if they become sick or injured in school. Very good guidance about child protection procedures is in place for staff to follow when any concerns arise about possible issues.
70. The assessment of pupils' performance is good. The school uses the information it collects carefully to place pupils into tutor groups, each of which contains pupils from the full range of prior attainment levels. Lessons in Year 7 are taught in the tutor groups. In Years 8 and 9, information from assessment is used very well to place pupils into classes based on their potential attainment. The information is also used well to establish challenging but achievable individual target grades for each of the subjects that pupils study in Years 10 and 11.
71. Heads of department, with few exceptions, monitor pupils' progress well. GCSE results are analysed thoroughly by the school. This clearly determines in which subjects pupils regularly fulfil their potential or, as in a very small minority of subjects, such as history for example, a significant number of pupils do not. In subjects such as mathematics and science the data is used well to indicate areas for further development. For example, science department modified teaching arrangements to strengthen the provision for pupils in parts of the examination syllabus.
72. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are very good. Data obtained from a variety of tests is very well used when individual education plans are updated and when annual reviews are arranged. The assessment of pupils with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) is particularly thorough, and pupils whose dyslexia is not particularly marked are also identified so that staff can be aware that they may need special provision.
73. The previous inspection reported that although senior managers had a very good understanding of the potential use of data, they had not exploited its use in terms of adding value and for improving work in classrooms. The senior managers now use the information extremely well and there is a very clear focus on the continuous raising of pupils' achievement.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

74. The school's procedures are good. A substantial amount of data on pupils' attainment is available when they enter the sixth form. Individual subject target grades are set for AS levels in Year 12. They are based on projections from ALIS (A level Information Service) and the judgement of subject teachers. New targets are set at the start of

Year 13 for those students who study for the full A level (A2) course. This information is then made available to the heads of department and to tutors, who use the information to assess actual performance against predicted performance.

75. The use made of information from assessments in order to plan the curriculum is good. In all subjects inspected, data is gathered and is then discussed with the students in order to set targets and raise achievement as well as to provide advice and guidance about students' future options.

### ***Advice, support and guidance***

76. Advice and support for those in the sixth form are good, as at the previous inspection. Guidance commences during Year 11, when students are told of the provision offered in the sixth form. The well-organised open evening, when Year 12 students are present to advise about their own personal experiences of the various courses, makes an important contribution to the advice available. Most in the sixth form are very happy with the choice of courses available because the school asks about their preferred subject combinations while they are still in Year 11, and manages to accommodate virtually all their choices. Very few of them want to drop out or change after they have started their course.
77. Students are all confident that the head of sixth form is easy to approach and is a good source of support if they need it. He keeps an eye on students who transfer into the sixth form from other schools to make sure that they settle in successfully. Links between sixth form students and their tutors are slower to develop. Although tutors are available if students seek them out during the weekly registration period there are few formal arrangements for groups to gather together regularly. By means of a system of one-to-one interviews, tutors do gradually build up an understanding of students and Year 13 students find these a very helpful source of personal and academic advice. However, at the time of the inspection, in the second half of the autumn term, several Year 12 students had not yet met with their tutor for their first interview.
78. Other sources of advice and support are good as students progress through Years 12 and 13. They appreciate the good advice they get about the options open to them when they leave school, and all the help they get from the school to complete university applications. The sequence of progress assessments gives students a very good understanding of their own achievements. Students speak warmly of the way subject teachers give priority to meeting their needs and are always ready to give extra time outside lessons to help them over any difficulty with their work. However, the extent to which their skills in independent study are encouraged varies depending on which courses they follow. In geography for instance their learning skills are promoted exceptionally well, whereas in English and mathematics initiative and independence have a lower profile. There are no formal arrangements for supervising private study lessons in school, to ensure that students manage to make good use of them. Students are free to spend study periods at home, and given the shortage of specific study facilities equipped for sixth form use, and the distance between some of the classrooms they use and the school library, home study is a reasonable choice for those who live within easy reach of the school.
79. Good use is made of the computerised registration system to track students' attendance in each class and unexplained absences are followed up with parents as well as with the student involved. Concerns about behaviour very seldom arise though procedures are in place to respond to any problems. Students benefit from the same

good procedures regarding health and safety and first aid that benefit those in the main school.

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

80. The school is very well thought of in its locality, with more parents seeking a place for their child than can be accepted. Staff have made considerable improvements since the previous inspection in the quality and amount of information sent to parents, so that this is now very good. Similarly, consultation with parents about their views and the attention given to following up their ideas now both feature strongly. The views expressed by parents about how the school functions, and especially about the steps to build partnership between parents and teachers, are noticeably more positive than at the previous inspection. However, the improvements in communications are relatively new and a significant minority of parents still retain unfavourable views of the efforts made to inform and involve them.

### **Junior department**

81. There is a very good relationship between the junior department and parents. This starts in the summer term when pupils are invited to spend a day in class as an introduction to the school. Each pupil has a personal organiser that goes home every day. Parents know pupils' targets and can ask about their progress if they have any concerns. They support pupils' learning well by ensuring that homework is carried out properly. The extra time that pupils spend in school for choir practice and instrumental work means that parents have to make a greater than usual commitment.

### **Main school and sixth form**

82. Since the previous inspection an excellent amount of information has been supplied to parents about the steps taken to address the issues raised, through a detailed termly letter from the governing body. Good care is now taken to ensure all information actually reaches parents, either by using the postal service or, if pupil post is used, by follow up when a parent fails to return a reply slip.
83. There is plenty of information for parents about expectations and school routines when their children first join the school. Links with parents of new Year 7 pupils are helped by the open evening early in the autumn term and by the meeting arranged for them with tutors a few weeks later. A very good series of informative workshops offered throughout this evening add to its success. Reporting to parents about pupils' and students' achievements is very good. As well as an annual report that gives a clear account of achievements, parents in every year receive interim reviews of progress and effort, which show how the pupil or student is doing in terms of National Curriculum levels or of their target grades in public examinations. Meetings are offered in all year groups for parents to discuss progress with teachers. Parents come to all of these in very good numbers. In addition, staff make very good efforts to involve parents in meeting particular needs, or if concerns arise at any time. They also take any queries and concerns raised by parents seriously and respond to them. Pupils' homework diaries give parents the chance of ongoing involvement in monitoring the homework they do, though teachers and parents do not all sign them regularly.
84. General information sent to parents is very good. Both the prospectus and the governors' annual report give a very good range of information. A very useful set of booklets, that reflect the provision made for each year group, is produced and the

appropriate one is sent to the parents of each pupil and student. These booklets were recently revised to take account of parents' suggestions and they are packed with helpful information, explanations and guidance. Very good steps are taken to inform parents about the sixth form when pupils consider enrolment. The separate sixth form prospectus and detailed course handouts, coupled with the very informative open evening, generally provide both pupils and their parents with a full picture of the range, content and demands of the courses available. The computer course is an exception here; students who enrolled on it last year found that the content differed from what they expected. Most students, however, are well satisfied with their decision to join the sixth form because they feel so well supported by their teachers. They appreciate the way that the subject options available are wide enough to match practically all their needs and preferences. They like the responsibility that they are given for organising themselves though they are less keen on the occasional lessons where they feel they are treated as children. They would like the accommodation to be better and are pleased that plans are in hand to improve matters for those who join the sixth form in future years.

85. Special educational needs staff have close links with parents, who speak highly of the school's provision. In evaluation sheets, they record that younger pupils with below average literacy skills make significant improvement – not only in reading but also in self-confidence – as a result of their attendance at the Fast Forward Breakfast Club. Parents give very good support to annual reviews and are involved, along with their offspring, in the setting of targets for individual education plans.
86. A number of parents give important assistance with extra-curricular activities, for instance helping make sure sports' teams and orchestra members have transport to reach events. A hard-working group puts much effort into running the parents' and teachers' association, which raises very considerable funds for extra teaching resources.

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

87. The headteacher provides very good leadership. At the time of the previous inspection the school was underachieving. Since that time the headteacher has forged the staff into a really good team who are now pulling together to provide a good education for pupils and students alike. Many teachers have had to change fundamentally the way in which they operate, and they have done this with an excellent commitment to provide the best for pupils. Some were unable to change, or disagreed that change was necessary, and this partly accounts for the relatively high staff turnover. The overall result is that the school has gone from one that was not doing well enough, to one that is now doing better than expected. That this level of improvement has been brought about in the face of considerable opposition from a small minority of parents and at the same time wiping out the budget deficit only makes the headteacher's performance more remarkable.
88. The school is very well managed. One reason for the school's success is the way that senior managers have been allocated to roles that suit their particular skills and they too have played a very good part. Possibly the best example is that of the role played by the senior manager responsible for links with parents. Parents were most unhappy at the time of the previous inspection. Since that time the manager has worked tirelessly to improve lines of communication and the school now provides very good information for parents in a very wide range of media.
89. The way that the school's managers prioritised the areas for development has been excellent. They were able to pinpoint exactly those aspects that would have the



biggest impact on standards in the shortest time. The two key elements to the approach were the improvement of teaching and making better use of the data available on pupils' performance. Once again, staff were appointed specifically to address these issues and the actions they have taken have been outstandingly successful. The way that data is now used to explain to teachers how their pupils should be performing is very good. However, the real success of the system is the way that the strengths and weakness in teaching are identified so teachers can learn from others' successes and failures. This use of data has then led to fundamental changes in the way that teachers teach. The introduction of the three-part lesson has been a roaring success and led to improved standards in almost all subjects. However, there are still two subjects where messages are not being taken on board. The leadership of history is poor, and of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. Whereas other heads of department are driving up standards by encouraging change, the head of history is still clinging to the old ways that were apparent at the time of the previous inspection. There are no effective plans to improve the use of computers across the school.

90. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are now rigorous. The school now compares the standards reached by pupils with the standards they should have reached. Where subjects do not come up to scratch, the head of department is placed on a review system where they are set targets for performance across all aspects of their managerial role. The progress towards these targets is monitored every couple of weeks and firm action taken to ensure that progress is being made. The work of all subjects and managers is reviewed formally three times a year. This approach has been so successful, and the new appointments so good, that the frequency of such reviews or the depth of their content could easily be reduced for some.
91. The level of improvement would not have been possible without the support and expertise of the governors. They too have played a leading role in turning around the school's performance. They demonstrate the same level of grit and determination as other senior managers, while the improvements in the quality of information with which they are provided mean that they are well informed and able to question even the smallest aspects of the school's performance.
92. A good strategy is in place for performance management. The emphasis is clearly upon the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Members of the senior management team are designated line managers for different subject departments and department heads are required, in turn, to monitor and evaluate the work of subject teachers. Heads of department have agreed objectives that are appropriate to their teaching and management responsibilities. The system, nearing the end of its second cycle, is good but not every head of subject is yet operating effectively as subject leader. Many heads of department have undertaken observation of lessons in order to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, but in some subjects, history for example, this has not been done.
93. All teachers must identify a target for the development of their teaching so that pupils' attainment continues to improve. The recent provision of training reflects this school emphasis on improvement. During this calendar year the programme has included training for improvements in teaching and learning, lesson planning, assessment and work analysis and, in the context of performance management, setting of objectives and how to conduct effective reviews of progress towards meeting objectives. The induction of teachers new to the school is good and newly qualified teachers, in particular, speak highly of the support they receive from both senior staff and their

subject colleagues. The success the school has in supporting students who are on their initial teacher training further demonstrates the good quality of professional expertise amongst its staff from which the school benefits.

94. The school has managed to wipe out its budget deficit at the same time as improving standards. Excellent financial planning that goes to great lengths to reduce costs to a minimum has brought this about. Despite this cut-back in spending, there are still sufficient resources and staff, although the role of the parents' and teachers' association has been critical in raising funds to buy resources.
95. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money. It provides a good education but is expensive to run, mainly because of its split site.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

96. The sixth form is led and managed very well. The new head of sixth form, in post for about a year, has placed the same emphasis on using data to analyse performance as is seen in the main school. This has led to a realisation on the part of staff that perhaps the results that they thought were good in the past were actually not good enough. As a result, teachers in the sixth form are adopting the same successful approaches as they use lower down the school.
97. The same highly successful management systems used in the main school, such as those for checking and improving the quality of teaching, are employed in the sixth form. Most subjects are led and managed well, and there are some, such as geography and physical education, where the leadership is outstanding. Many subjects are seeing dramatic improvements in standards as a result. However, the teacher with responsibility for French is not doing enough to promote change and improve the quality of teaching.

### ***Resources***

98. The sixth form has sufficient teachers, who are very well qualified to teach their subjects. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, and have little impact on standards other than in biology where there are not enough laboratories or specialist pieces of equipment. The split site does cause some problems, as the library is on the other site to the sixth form base and some students are reluctant to travel there, especially in poor weather. This is not helped by the lack of quiet study areas, although the school often overcomes this by publishing a list of free rooms that can be used for this purpose.
99. The sixth form is very cost-effective and last year was able to play a substantial part in reducing the budget deficit.

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

100. To improve further the quality of education provided, the management should:

- (1) Improve the teaching in history and information and communication technology by ensuring that teachers plan and deliver lessons that are interesting and demand enough of pupils. Ensure that the head of history is as committed to improvement as other managers in the school.  
(Paragraphs: 36 and 89).
- (2) Improve the teaching of French in the sixth form by using a greater range of methods and techniques to improve students' confidence in using the language.  
(Paragraph: 41).
- (3) Improve the satisfactory teaching to the very good quality seen elsewhere in the school by ensuring that all teachers implement the school's policy on teaching and learning consistently, especially by matching the work to the needs of all pupils in mixed ability classes.  
(Paragraphs: 33 and 89).
- (4) Improve pupils' skills in using computers by giving them more opportunities to use them in their everyday lessons in both the main school and the sixth form. Ensure at least satisfactory leadership of information and communication technology by drawing up plans for its development across the school.  
(Paragraphs: 38 and 42).

Points 3 and 4 are already part of the school development plan.

### **Sixth form**

- (1) Improve students' written work by paying greater attention to the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 5 – 11	153
	Sixth form	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		76

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 5 – 11</b>							
Number	10	31	61	42	8	1	0
Percentage	7	20	40	27	5	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	5	16	26	17	2	0	0
Percentage	8	24	39	26	3	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 more than one percentage point.*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y5– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1173	299
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	39	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y5 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91	0

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	53

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	6	6	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	12	12	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	12	12	12
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	128	103	231

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	110	118	118
	Girls	96	93	89
	Total	206	211	207
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	89 (81)	91 (85)	90 (84)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	43 (53)	73 (66)	64 (56)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	114	122	116
	Girls	96	94	94
	Total	231	231	231
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	91 (87)	94 (92)	91 (78)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	55 (55)	69 (68)	62 (44)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	125	103	228

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	90	122	125
	Girls	79	100	100
	Total	169	222	225
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	74 (71)	97 (99)	99 (99)
	National	48 (48)	91 (91)	97 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	50.3 (48.4)
	National	39.0 (39.0)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	69	67	136
	Average point score per candidate	15.6	21.3	18.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18.0	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	69	67	136	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Average point score per candidate	15.6	21.3	18.4	N/a	N/a	N/a
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 pupils***

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

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

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1378	11	
0		
59		
0		
0		
0		
2		
6		
1		
0		
3		
1	2	
1		
4		
5		
0		
2		

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	84.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

#### **Education support staff: Y5 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	120

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	18
Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	22

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4198109
Total expenditure	4129034
Expenditure per pupil	2883
Balance brought forward from previous year	-54613
Balance carried forward to next year	14462

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	42
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	36.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.84
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.84
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	1472
Number of questionnaires returned	291

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	49	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	54	7	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	13	59	15	2	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	56	18	5	1
The teaching is good.	22	64	5	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	44	19	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	43	7	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	45	8	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	24	46	21	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	21	50	7	10	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	55	8	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	47	9	3	5

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2, 3 AND 4

### JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are exceptionally high in English, music and science.
- A very positive ethos, based on Christian values, establishes very good attitudes and promotes pupils' personal development very well.
- The very good teaching takes account of pupils' previous learning and uses a wide range of methods to ensure that pupils achieve very well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not make enough use of information and communication technology in lessons in other subjects.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge and skills to a high enough standard in other subjects, such as science and geography.

101. There are 18 pupils in the junior department, five girls and 13 boys. Boys are admitted as choristers for the Minster after a selection process to determine whether they have high quality singing voices. Places are also offered to girls and boys who are gifted instrumentalists. Those wishing to become choristers also have to take a reading test that shows that they are well above average for their age. Overall pupils' attainment on entry is well above average. Pupils are admitted at the start of Years 4, 5 and 6. Currently there are six pupils in Year 5 and 12 in Year 6.
102. The results in National Curriculum tests in 2002 were very high in English, mathematics and science. These results were among the top five per cent of schools nationally. When compared with similar schools, results in English and science were again in the top five per cent, but those for mathematics were just a little bit lower being well above average. Pupils' achievements are very good as they build on the well above standards that they bring to the school and attain at an even higher level. Since 1999, results have been among the top five per cent in the country for nearly every subject most years. However, the science results are slightly better than those for English and mathematics. In 2002 every pupil attained the higher level (Level 5) in science. The school's results have been consistently very high in science over the past four years and this subject is a particular strength.
103. In English pupils attain higher standards in reading than writing and the school has identified the need to focus more on developing pupils' writing skills. The current standard of work in Year 6 is of the same exceptionally high standard for science and English. In mathematics, it is a little lower, reflecting the fact that with small numbers of pupils, such as these, individual strengths and weaknesses need be taken into account. The school introduced the numeracy strategy in January 2002, two years after most schools. This has meant that some pupils are not as comfortable in the use of mental strategies to work out mathematical problems as would be expected and this contributes to their attainment in mathematics being slightly below that of the very high standards they achieve in English and science.
104. On occasions, pupils are admitted who are gifted in music, or have exceptionally good singing voices, but have special educational needs in other areas. These pupils

make very good progress because their individual needs are met very well. They are given specific targets to work towards and their progress is carefully monitored. Because they are given very good encouragement, they are exceptionally keen to succeed.

105. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils' attainment in music is very much higher than would usually be expected for pupils of this age. In religious education, history, geography, and physical education the standard of their work is above average for their age. In art and design, and information and communication technology standards are average. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to use computers outside of their information and communication technology lessons. No judgements on standards were made for design and technology, as this is only taught in the spring and summer terms.
106. As a leader of a small but very demanding department, the head of the department reflects the school's aims exceptionally well in her work. There are good links with the main school, but a very special ethos established in the junior department ensures that pupils feel secure and able to give of their best. This very positive ethos, based on Christian values, establishes very good attitudes and promotes pupils' personal development very well. High expectations are apparent but also an understanding that because the pupils work harder than is usual for their age, with a heavy commitment to their work as choristers, on occasions they need to tackle less demanding activities. The day-to-day running of the class is very good. Curriculum planning, the very good quality of displays and organisation of the accommodation and resources all contribute to efficient and very effective management.

### **English in the junior department**

107. Standards in Year 6 are very high. The pupils speak audibly and clearly, and choose vocabulary and material very well to express their ideas or make explanations. They do particularly well at qualifying their responses after listening to others. In a drama lesson, pupils worked in two groups to select their part in a humorous play. One group were particularly effective in organising themselves while all pupils read the script with fluency and a degree of expression much beyond that expected of pupils of this age. They clearly understood the manner in which to present their character to an audience.
108. Pupils' are enthusiastic readers in the main. Very good teaching helps pupils appreciate literature and gain insight into the work of authors. Some pupils enjoy reading for information more than they enjoy fictional works. Nevertheless, most are knowledgeable about the books they have read and authors they appreciate. One pupil, for example explained that he had read *The Lord of the Rings* three times because he always found something new and exciting when he read it. All pupils look for meaning beyond the literal with ease and have little difficulty in explaining an author's choice of vocabulary and figurative language. It is in both these aspects that pupils do particularly well in their own writing. For instance, in a fantasy story a pupil described the end of an argument between two people very succinctly: "a flash of lightning finished their war of words." Their writing contains many examples of humorous but apt descriptions, such as: "It was pitch black outside. The rain poured down in torrents as if someone had a huge bathtub and was emptying it on the countryside."
109. Teaching is very good and leads to pupils learning very well. Work is varied, and texts are chosen that inspire. Planning is securely based on the literacy strategy and good

opportunities are provided for pupils to write longer pieces both in English and in other subjects such as history and geography. The pupils' achievements are assessed well both at the end of lessons and when work is marked. Helpful comments in marked work indicate how improvements can be made. Pupils know what their targets are in literacy and they strive hard to achieve them. Currently, some pupils are still finding it difficult to organise their work in paragraphs, especially when writing dialogue. Pupils use word processing well to present their finished work, but more use could be made of computers to help them develop their understanding of how to plan their written work and to organise it into paragraphs.

### **Mathematics in the junior department**

110. Standards in Year 6 are well above average and pupils are achieving well. The school introduced the National Numeracy Strategy for this age range in January 2002. As a consequence, although pupils are well ahead in some aspects of their mathematical skills and knowledge, some do not have as much confidence in using mental calculations and in explaining their methods orally as would be expected of pupils of their attainment and age.
111. In the weeks prior to the inspection, pupils had worked successfully on reading and plotting points using co-ordinates in all four quadrants. They know and understand the language of symmetry and shape. Working on a grid they outline a triangle after it has been translated several units to the side and down. A successful teaching strategy has been to provide a timed multiplication task based on a 100 square grid that provides revision of multiplication facts up to 10 and practice in mental calculation strategies using the ten times table and another to calculate, for example, 16 times 8. Multiplication of numbers with one decimal place is also tackled successfully. Pupils note their own speeds and errors thus providing them with a goal for the following week. Pupils successfully solve real-life problems involving different measures, including money, because they quickly ascertain whether to use multiplication, division, adding or subtraction in their calculations. In a very good lesson, in which pupils worked hard to improve their mathematical skills, pupils worked on problems that needed two or more steps to calculate the answer. They had to make decisions as to what type of operation to use and, in the case of one question when equal addition was inherent in the question, whether they needed to make a calculation at all.
112. Teaching is good. Work is planned to increase in difficulty and is generally well matched to pupils' prior attainment. In one lesson, an activity held too little challenge and although pupils consolidated their prior knowledge, their enthusiasm for mathematics drifted a little. Generally, however, work is interesting and challenging and pupils get that extra buzz that comes from achieving something that at first sight appears too difficult. Pupils have had opportunities to extract and interpret data from graphs and charts and they have discussed the use of a simple pie chart as a whole class using information and communication technology. However, these opportunities have not been frequent and pupils have not worked enough on these activities individually. Computers are not used enough to develop and extend the skills of pupils who have gaps in their knowledge or the skills of those who are further on than others.

### **Science in the junior department**

113. Science is a particular strength. Pupils attain very high standards and achieve very well because of the very good teaching. Teaching focuses on practical work that is relevant to pupils' interests. Lessons are very well organised so pupils understand the

process of science from raising questions through experimentation to reasoned conclusion.

114. Although nearly all pupils' attainment is well above average when they start in the school, pupils have all tackled different topics at their previous schools and so the teacher has devised good strategies to ascertain how much knowledge they have on different topics. For example, at the start of a topic on forces the teacher asked pupils to draw up their own record of what they already knew, brainstorming their ideas by written explanations, lists and labelled diagrams. This helped them to revise what they knew and for the teacher to plan what further work was needed. As with other lessons, the teacher shares with pupils what they need to learn and the purpose of their studies. This helps pupils feel involved in their own learning and to try hard at their work.
115. The current attainment of pupils in Year 6 is of the same very high standard as in previous years. In a very good lesson, pupils worked together in groups to test for sound insulation. They had previously examined different materials such as foam, bubble wrap, cardboard and cotton wool to explore their properties. They had been given the homework task to make a headset that would insulate against sound. Prior to the tests pupils were excited to discover if their design was going to be the best. Nevertheless they worked very well together to set up and record the results of tests that ensured that the process was fair and did not favour their own item. They were very clear that a fair test involved changing only one criterion in the test and went to lengths to ensure that this was the case. They understood that without careful recording a conclusion could not be arrived at. One group recorded their scores in decibels using the word with accurate understanding of its meaning.
116. Teaching is very good, allowing pupils to question and to raise their own hypothesis. The very good relationship that the teacher has with pupils allows them to make suggestions and to follow their own ideas within the careful structure of the lesson. Lessons start with well-paced direct teaching that helps pupils develop their knowledge of scientific facts, vocabulary and terminology. Equipment and resources are used well. However, more use could be made of information and communication technology, both in the recording of data and presenting it in different ways, and as part of the testing process, with the use of programs using sensors or other aspects of control technology.

## SUBJECTS IN THE MAIN SCHOOL

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Standards are rising rapidly as a result of very good leadership and management.
- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good so pupils achieve well.

#### Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, teachers do not take enough account of the standards that pupils have reached.
- Pupils do not make enough use of information and communication technology in their work.

118. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds were well above the national average. After the last inspection, results in 2001 shot back to being well above the national average and that standard was maintained in 2002. In 2002, results in English were similar to those obtained in mathematics and science. In 2002, the GCSE results in English and in English literature were well above the national average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results obtained in 2002 were similar to those in 2001, which were better than those obtained in 2000.
119. Standards by the ends of Years 9 and 11 are now well above average and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. When pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achievement by the ends of Years 9 and 11 is good.
120. Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is a strength throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils take part in a very good range of whole class, paired and group discussions. They understand the basis upon which they are being assessed and work well together to improve their own skills and those of others. Higher attainers possess very good vocabularies and can speak at length with confidence. Most pupils rise well to the challenge of being questioned. They are ready to explain themselves more fully and can argue their case convincingly. Lower attainers do not possess the same level of confidence, but nonetheless express themselves clearly. Many examples of high quality speaking and listening were observed. A Year 11 lesson, for example, was impressive for the manner in which pupils analysed Moniza Alvi's poem *Presents from my Aunt in Pakistan*. They were able to identify examples of irony and ambiguity and to explain fine nuances of meaning. A feature of the lesson was that pupils of all abilities made their contribution.
121. Pupils achieve high standards in drama. When preparing improvisations, they co-operate very well together. When acting out their sketches, they display a very good range of skills, including how to group themselves to advantage and use freeze-frames and facial expression.
122. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 study demanding literature, including pre-20th century plays, poems and novels. Their responses show that they understand plots and have considerable insight into the characters created. The standard of reading aloud is high: pupils read fluently and many project their voices well. Higher attainers read with extremely good expression. Lower attainers are more hesitant, but the vast majority of pupils can read independently. Pupils also enjoy discussing literature with their peers. This was seen, for example, in a meeting of the Book Club after school and in a Year 7 lesson on the differences between the techniques of writing plays and novels. By the time they reach Year 11, many pupils can effectively write on complex topics, such as comparing how Nick Hornby and Thomas Hardy present their heroes in named stories.
123. By the end of Year 9 pupils are familiar with different types of writing, including description, narrative, poetry and providing reports based upon an interpretation of statistical data. By the end of Year 11 they go on to further consolidate their skills. Very good writing was seen on a variety of topics. Pupils know how to adapt their writing for different audiences. There are two particularly significant features in what they learn that help pupils to attain these high standards. One is that they know how to analyse what they write, using the correct technical terms, and so are the more able



to spot errors and correct them. The other is that pupils get into the routine of redrafting their work as soon as they enter the school, and learn to accept that they have a responsibility to improve it.

124. The one relative weakness in pupils' attainment is the insufficient use that they make of information and communication technology, so their skills are not being developed as well as is usually seen.
125. The quality of teaching and learning and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. The quality of teachers' planning is very high. Lessons are planned in sequences to ensure that pupils learn new knowledge and have ample opportunities to improve their skills. Individual lessons are prepared so as to ensure that they will include variety and be conducted at a lively pace, so that pupils will become interested and be actively involved in their own learning. Many lessons follow the pattern recommended by the National Literacy Strategy, having a starter activity, a main development section and a session. Teachers invariably share the objectives of the lesson with pupils. All this means that pupils can actively contribute to lessons and have a sense of direction. Teachers also possess very good knowledge of the subject. This means that they probe pupils skilfully, so as to make them think more deeply and express themselves with clarity. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on newspapers, in which pupils learnt how to use the appropriate technical language to describe different types of headlines and other features.
126. Teachers also have a good understanding of the courses they teach and of the relevant assessment criteria. This information is communicated to pupils by many and varied means. Most significantly, teachers' marking refers to grade requirements. In consequence, pupils have a good understanding of the level they are currently achieving and know what is required if they are to obtain a better grade. Expectations are high, as is seen in the way pupils are expected to carefully redraft their work and to pay careful attention to their targets for improvement. The majority of pupils respond well to these demands by working hard and taking a pride in what they do. Pupils' attitudes are often most clearly expressed in the cover sheets they are required to complete for their GCSE coursework. They are prepared to openly express their enthusiasm for the set task, or a lack of it, according to their experience, but many are also self-critical and aware of what they must do if they are going to improve. There is much mutual respect between pupils and teachers and this helps create a good environment for learning.
127. When teaching is less effective or unsatisfactory, planning does not take into account pupils' prior attainment. This results in some pupils not being sufficiently challenged and in other cases the tasks set being unrealistic. In the latter case, pupils lose interest and behave inappropriately.
128. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Standards have improved significantly over the last two years. The schemes of work used by the department are of high quality and guide the teaching well. Assessment data is examined closely and used to determine what and how pupils should be taught. No discrete judgements were made about the subject at the time of the last inspection. However, there has been a marked improvement in pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests over the last two years.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- The quality of leadership and management is good and is leading to improved standards and teaching.
- Results in the national tests are improving at a rate greater than the national trend.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not make enough use of computers.
- The quality of planning in a significant minority of lessons fails to meet the needs of all pupils in mixed ability groups in Year 7.

129. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds were well above average and similar to those in English and science. Results are rising rapidly. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations in mathematics were well above average and these pupils did better than expected from their results at the end of Year 9. The results in 2002 were similar to the previous year, but there has been an improvement over the past three years. Results are improving at a rate greater than the national trend. The girls achieved better results than the boys did. The department recognises this and strategies are in place to address this.
130. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average and this represents a good level of achievement for all students. Higher attainers have very good investigation skills. They approach the problem by breaking it down into simpler tasks in order to find a pattern and use their understanding of number patterns well. Pupils' number skills are well above average, and higher attaining pupils demonstrate very good algebraic skills. For example, higher attaining pupils solve quadratic equations using the formula with confidence and when investigating graphs of linear functions, they solve problems using both the gradient and the intersection. The algebraic skills of lower attainers are average, demonstrated by their secure understanding of manipulation of linear functions and brackets. Numeracy skills of the middle attainers are good. They demonstrate a good understanding of equivalent fractions and use this to add and subtract fractions. Lower attainers are still struggling to calculate fractions of amounts, but, with support from their teacher, can solve simple problems of this type.
131. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average, which represents a good level of achievement for all pupils given their attainment in Year 9. In their coursework, pupils demonstrate good skills in investigations. The higher attainers apply the mathematics they have learnt previously very well. Middle attainers have a good understanding of sequences and can calculate the  $n$ th term of a sequence where the rule is quadratic. Although the lower attainers have difficulty in applying the rules for the order of numerical operations, they have a good understanding of proportion and ratio. Higher attainers carried out very good work when they were investigating circle theorems and cyclic quadrilaterals. Understanding of statistics and probability is very good. The lower attainers calculate averages using frequency tables, and the middle attainers demonstrate a good understanding of probability. The higher attainers produce some exceptional work on interpreting and constructing histograms. They are developing an understanding of the different methods of sampling and their reliability when drawing conclusions, which prepares them well for more advanced work.

132. Standards of numeracy are generally well above average throughout the school. Mental arithmetic skills are frequently practised at the beginning of lessons and this develops the pupils' mental agility.
133. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in line with the rest of the pupils. From Year 8, they are placed in small classes and learning support assistants work very well with teachers to ensure that pupils are integrated in the lessons, stay on task and have help in understanding difficult concepts. However, in the mixed ability classes in Year 7, the lower attaining pupils do not get this extra support, and they do not always understand what they need to do.
134. The contribution that subjects make to developing pupils' competence and skills in understanding and using number is good. All teachers have had training to acquire understanding of the needs of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, there is no whole school policy that would bring together good practice across departments so that mathematical skills could be enhanced and consolidated further. This lack of policy also leads to variations in the provision that different subjects make for numeracy, which is good in design and technology but poor in history, for example.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. The good teaching in the majority of lessons leads to pupils making good progress overall and is a key factor in raising standards. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics and, in the better lesson, there is an enthusiasm for the subject that motivates pupils to want to learn. Pupils respond well to the good level of questioning of their teachers by answering questions clearly and this enhances their learning. Teachers generally plan their lessons very well with a good balance between different types of activities that keeps pupils interested and motivated. This was demonstrated in a lesson where the teacher planned the lesson so that pupils consolidated understanding of recognising and plotting graphs of basic quadratic functions before progressing to transforming those functions. The pupils worked with each other and quickly learnt to recognise the transformations. In a minority of lessons, particularly in the mixed ability groups, the work planned is not sufficiently modified to meet the needs of the range of abilities in the class so pupils do not all learn at an appropriate rate. In the best lessons, pupils are actively involved and this brings about the highest levels of interest. For example, where pupils were finding out about circle theorems, they had to demonstrate their findings to the rest of the class. They explained how they arrived at the theorems clearly and the rest of the pupils were able to learn from them.
136. The management of pupils is generally good in all years and the pupils respond accordingly; behaviour is good and pupils work well with each other. Pupils are generally very attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in mathematics. Teachers plan homework well; it is set regularly and supports the work pupils do in class. Standards of presentation of the pupils' work are generally good and the majority structure answers well so that they are developing good practice. There is some good quality marking and it is better where teachers indicate where pupils have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. Teachers and pupils generally work well together to set areas for improvement and these are recorded in the pupils' books. However, this is not always clear. One weakness in the teaching is the lack of using computers, so pupils are not getting the opportunities to work, for example, with large data bases of numerical information.
137. The department is led and managed well, and there is a clear emphasis on improving standards. The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to extend

their mathematics. An activity club at lunchtime is well attended and pupils work enthusiastically solving mathematical problems. There are other sessions where pupils can gain extra support in preparation for national tests. There are strong links with the main feeder primary school that ensure a smooth induction for Year 7 pupils. Pupils' performance is monitored well with regular tests. The information from assessments is analysed and used effectively to place pupils in groups in Years 8 to 11 so that the work set is at an appropriately challenging level for all pupils.

138. Progress since the last inspection has been good. There have been improvements in 2002 in the results of national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils achieve well.
- The department has worked hard to implement the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a wide variation in the quality of teaching in individual lessons because there are not enough opportunities for the very good skills and techniques used in some lessons to influence teaching elsewhere in the department.
- The department does not make enough use of information and communication technology to support learning in science.

139. In the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds, results were well above the national average. Pupils' results in science were similar to those in English and mathematics. The relative results of boys and girls vary from year to year and there is no particular pattern. Results have risen slightly faster than the national trend since 1997. The 2002 GCSE examination results in science were well above the national average. More boys than girls gained grades A\* to C. GCSE results have improved over the last three years.

140. Pupils' overall achievement in science is good by the ends of Year 9 and Year 11. These pupils entered the school with standards that were above the national average and they gained GCSE results that are well above average. Hence they did better than might be expected, given their attainment on entry to the school.

141. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average in Year 9 and Year 11, reflecting the standards indicated by the 2002 test and examination results. The majority of pupils have very good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are currently studying and secure recall of earlier work. Even the lowest attainers have understanding and skills in the subject that are typical for their age, though they sometimes find it difficult to express their understanding clearly and precisely when writing answers to homework or test questions. Higher attainers produce some outstanding work. For example, in Year 11, these pupils successfully study the role of capacitors in electronic circuits, conduct tests to identify an unknown organic compound and produce high quality projects on diseases of the respiratory system. Pupils' skills in investigation work are generally much better than expected for their age and all pupils, whatever their overall level of attainment, present results carefully and draw very good graphs.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in all year groups. In individual lessons there is a wide variation in teaching quality, from excellent to, occasionally, unsatisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons carefully so that there is usually a good variety of appropriate activities to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. All teachers make sure that pupils know the aims of the lesson. In the better lessons, teachers then involve the pupils in a short, sharp review at the end of the lesson so that pupils have the satisfaction of realising that the aims have been met and progress has been made. Many teachers make particularly good use of imaginative 'starter' activities to make sure that pupils begin learning as soon as they arrive at the lesson. In one excellent starter activity, the teacher provided a series of answers for which pupils had to provide the questions. The discussion that followed gave the whole class a better insight into the various ideas surrounding the particular 'key words' that had been chosen as the answers.
143. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly and carefully, giving clear indications to pupils of where they have gone wrong. There are occasional examples of excellent marking where the teacher uses sub-divisions of National Curriculum levels to show pupils precisely how well they are doing, gives very clear information about what the pupil needs to do to improve and also provides plenty of appreciation and encouragement.
144. When lessons are very good or excellent, there is a real 'buzz' among pupils. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson, the teacher demonstrated, with quiet, understated, but very skilful showmanship, the action of metals with water. A hush of anticipation greeted each increasingly impressive reaction and learning was speedy and secure because pupils were concentrating so hard. In a similarly successful lesson with another group, higher attaining pupils went on to produce their own balanced chemical equations for these reactions. There are some lessons where teaching, although satisfactory, is not as good as it is elsewhere in the department. In such lessons the most common weakness is that pupils, although generally quiet and well behaved, are not fully listening when the teacher is addressing the whole class. In the occasional unsatisfactory lesson, the activities provided were not sufficiently challenging for the group and so pupils did not learn enough during the lesson.
145. The science curriculum provides a particularly wide range of opportunities for pupils of all levels of attainment. Those higher attainers with a strong interest in science enjoy the extra demands of courses in the three separate science subjects in Years 10 and 11. Other pupils choose between double award and single award science. Pupils with special educational needs flourish and make good progress within the mixed ability groups; they receive any extra support they need from their teachers, or, where appropriate, from skilful learning support assistants.
146. Pupils use the Internet when undertaking research into, for example, famous scientists or methods of detecting and analysing various chemicals. They use word processing when writing up projects and investigation reports. However, the department is aware that it does not yet make enough use of information and communication technology, particularly such techniques as data logging, to support and enhance learning in science.
147. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers and technicians work well together as a team and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. The influence of the Key Stage 3 strategy has been important in moving the department forward. Teachers have welcomed the new initiatives and are generally keen to try new methods. Some teachers are now particularly successful in using different learning styles, developing pupils' literacy skills and making the best use of,

for example, the summary at the end of the lesson. However, teaching in other lessons is less successful. There are not yet enough opportunities for teachers to observe each other's lessons and share each other's particular strengths and good ideas.

148. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory because a third of lessons take place in a classroom rather than a laboratory. The department works hard to minimise the impact of this on each group of pupils. Nevertheless, there are always restrictions on the activities that can be provided in a classroom and, in two lessons seen during the inspection, an over-emphasis on written work contributed to pupils becoming restless and not learning as well as they might have done.
149. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection in 2000. GCSE results and test results at the age of 14 have both improved.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good so pupils achieve well.
- Pupils show good interest in their work and do a lot of independent study.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not make enough use of computers in their work.
- There is insufficient teaching on the proportions of the human body.

150. GCSE results have improved from below average to average in 2002.
151. In work seen standards in Year 9 are above average. This represents good progress as pupils enter the school with broadly average standards and little knowledge of colour theory. The use of shading to achieve tone and three-dimensional effects is weak, but pupils acquire a very good understanding of composition. This is developed well using the work of artists such as Matisse for inspiration. The most outstanding feature of all work is the bold and dramatic use of colour. This begins with a very good formal study of colour theory in Year 7 and continues to be a strong feature in all work up to GCSE. Work in clay and mod roc is above average. Masks are based on a range of traditions and most pupils are successful in creating human figures in movement. Many, however, show poor knowledge of the proportions of the human body. This also emerges in their drawings of the human figure later.
152. Standards in Year 11 are now above average and reflect a continuation the rising trend of standards over the past few years. The vast majority of pupils are on course to achieve the higher grades of A\* to C. These pupils research their topics in good depth and explore their own observed drawings with a flexible viewfinder to select good original compositions. They have very good standards in composition. Finished paintings of portraits are bold and dramatic with very good use of colour. This work is original and powerful with exquisite use of colour in many cases. There is little use of information and communication technology in the development of pupils' work apart from the work of a few pupils who use their own resources. This limits the exploration of ideas to some extent.
153. In all years pupils' attitudes contribute to their success. They are animated and take a lively interest in their work. They show imagination and creativity and respond well to

the ideas introduced by their teachers. They do a great deal of independent research and study.

154. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers are specialists who have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They encourage and help their pupils to be imaginative and creative, such as when they introduce the work of major artists and guide the pupils in how to research and record useful ideas, which encourages pupils to be independent learners. There is good individual attention given to all pupils that ensures that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, make good progress in all years. However, too little emphasis is placed on learning about the proportions of the human body and not enough use is made of computers. Not enough attention is placed on correcting spelling in Years 7 and 8.
155. Management is good. The schemes of work are structured so that the pupils can build on their learning methodically, but the department is not yet planning in enough detail for citizenship. There is good mutual support for all within the department through detailed documentation. Assessment is good. There is good written guidance for all pupils on how their work will be graded and good written guidance to ensure that all the assessment criteria are met.
156. There was no report on art at the time of the previous inspection. Standards in GCSE have risen over the past three years.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- Very good leadership and management of the subject have resulted in excellent preparations for its introduction and have achieved a very good start to its teaching.
- Pupils' knowledge and experience of the subject are developed through many subject areas and through whole school experiences.
- The standard of work seen in Years 7 and 8 both in personal, social, health and citizenship lessons and in some other subjects is above average.

### Area for improvement

- Some subjects are not yet making their planned contribution to citizenship and need to demonstrate to pupils the relevance of the work in these areas.

157. The standard of work seen in lessons covering citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is above average. As part of the launch of citizenship in the school, pupils in Years 7 and 8 have produced very thoughtful work about what it means to be a good citizen. This is displayed well around the school to help raise awareness of older pupils to the nature of the subject. All pupils are involved with the election of year committees and, in Year 7, this has formed the basis of work on parliament and the democratic system. Year 8 pupils are exploring the significance of different cultures and the diversity of UK society. Year 9 pupils have considered Fair Trade as part of a whole school activity during One World Week. The standard of work seen in geography and religious education is good with some excellent examples of assessed tasks on the environmental issue of global deforestation. The range of ways in which the subject is being addressed ensures that achievement is good in all its aspects.

158. Due to its recent introduction it is not possible to make a judgement about the attainment of pupils in Year 11. However, during the inspection examples of effective learning were observed in drama, mathematics, science and religious education. For instance, through drama, Year 10 pupils explored further the issue of the use of illegal drugs following a presentation by a visiting drama team. In science pupils wrote a letter querying the siting of a chemical plant and in mathematics learnt more about VAT and taxation. Some other subjects, such as art, are yet to play their part.
159. The quality of teaching is good. Good planning ensures that the time is used fully and the interest of pupils is quickly gained, and maintained, through a variety of activities. These include drama, paired and group work and participation in whole school events. Lessons develop pupils' knowledge and understanding through well-focused teaching, and the widespread use of collaborative work in many subjects of the curriculum develops their skills of communication. There is room for more opportunities for them to develop their skills of enquiry. A feature of the school's provision is the ways in which it is addressing the need for all pupils to participate in citizenship activities. The modern foreign languages department organised a European Week to which all subjects contributed and the school kitchen featured food from different European countries. Father Christmas even had to speak in French and German! During this term elections for year committees and for the school council have rekindled interest in their role in the school. Assemblies and outside speakers from a range of relief organisations raised pupils' awareness of One World Week focusing on the issue of Fair Trade. A poster competition to promote the use of items produced under this scheme was sponsored by the local co-op. A group of over 20 Year 9 pupils meet several times a week at lunchtime to prepare an entry in a national competition based on the work of the magistrates' courts. This is giving them an insight into the legal system as well as developing their oral fluency. When the group has mastered the process they will present it to the rest of their year. The session observed suggested that the group numbers amongst its members several potentially able barristers! This activity is supported by a local magistrate and later in the term is to be enriched by the participation of law students from a local university.
160. A strength of the provision is its leadership and management. The teachers responsible have shown immense energy and commitment in its introduction. Since her appointment just over 12 months ago, the co-ordinator has conducted a whole school survey of the curriculum to investigate where subjects are already teaching topics which contribute to citizenship. On the basis of this, a scheme of work has been drawn up to ensure that a combination of work in subjects and whole school events meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. She has led a professional development event for the whole staff to raise their awareness of the scope of citizenship and the contribution that subjects can make as part of their normal work. She has also developed a system through which pupils are made aware when a subject topic is contributing to citizenship in order that they can use samples of their work as evidence in their citizenship portfolios. Arrangements have been made for pupils to record their work and their involvement in the school and local communities in preparation for assessment, initially at the end of Key Stage 3.
161. The co-ordinator is well aware that colleagues will need further leadership and support to ensure that all subjects recognise their potential contribution to citizenship. At this stage of its introduction the citizenship provision is firmly established and is making a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**



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

**Strengths**

- The quality of teaching is good so pupils achieve well.
- Standards are well above average and improving.
- Leadership is very good and is bringing about improvements across the department.

**Areas for improvement**

- Pupils with special educational needs do not get good enough starting points for their writing.
- Lower attainers do not make enough use of computers to improve their written work.

162. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average and are improving. Results are usually highest in textiles, graphic products and the systems and control options, but even the food technology and resistant materials results are above the national averages.

163. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average. This represents good achievement over the first three years in school as pupils work on basic projects in electronics, food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles that gradually help them to build up their skills before progressing to designing for themselves. Girls produce more and neater work than the boys do. Drawing skills are above average, and pupils annotate their design work clearly to explain to the reader what is intended. Many pupils use the computers, thus improving impact and presentation. They translate a given problem sensibly and can devise a number of possible solutions by conducting research, devising questionnaires, analysing results and presenting a few preliminary attempts before making final decisions. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes struggle with theory as some tasks are set at too high a level of reading and understanding, but they are encouraged to set themselves realistic practical projects, so they gain in confidence in what they attempt. Pupils who are really high attainers are allowed scope in lessons to do more work at higher levels and, as a result, show greater individuality in designing. Pupils develop their products, using a wide range of techniques, tools and materials, showing very good skills in manufacture, spotting where improvements are needed, and assessing the quality of the finished results. Work by pupils in Year 9 on clocks, electronic games, food production methods, packaging and printed ties shows ingenuity in designing and care in making.

164. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average and reflect good achievement over the two-year course. Pupils have a good grasp of what technology means and know that the designing and making processes are interlinked. They understand how designers work and know that good design stems from thorough research and individual effort and creativity. Most pupils' portfolios are full and show pages with good quality lettering, design drawings, investigations, examples and evaluations. They draw clearly what they visualise, make useful side notes and work out the proportions and processes necessary before completion. Many pupils make good use of computers in merging text, graphics, charts and graphs and use of the digital camera to record results. Lower attainers do not get enough opportunities to use computers to improve their work. They use the Internet successfully and what they find is lifting their overall knowledge and understanding. The higher attaining pupils, usually girls, produce the best results. All pupils are used to making prototypes and samples to be sure that final decisions are realisable. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress by building on their prior experiences

and becoming very skilled and confident in using both hand and power tools. They set themselves appropriate projects, prepare carefully and mark and measure accurately. Once started on practical tasks, pupils work sensibly, secure their work safely, can spot errors in manufacture and know how to get a good finish on their pieces. For example, pupils in Year 11 were doing coursework or investigating and evaluating commercial products. In food technology they tasted and discovered basic design faults in a range of party foods and made suggestions for improvement. In textiles, they tested fabrics for safety and durability and worked out the best ways of joining and fixing. In graphics they charted differences in drawings from various angles prior to manufacturing the items. The displays of work show attention to detail and clear evaluations of finished products against original specifications.

165. The quality of teaching is good and this ensures good learning. The teachers know their subject very thoroughly. They give clear instructions at the beginning of lessons to focus pupils on the tasks, are very good demonstrators and successfully pass on skills to the pupils who gain confidence and learn well from seeing high quality performance. Teachers plan and prepare very well for their lessons to ensure there are enough resources, that pupils learn effectively from the challenges offered and that they gain knowledge and understanding. They try to make the topics and modules realistic and enjoyable and this aids overall progress, encourages the less-confident pupils, including those with special educational needs, and ensures that the higher attainers are attempting higher level tasks. They pitch language suitably so that pupils gain correct vocabulary, but pupils with low levels of literacy need clearer-worded starting points in theory work to increase their independence and raise their self-esteem. These pupils benefit from close attention and they make good progress, especially where there is additional adult support. In many lessons, teachers improve pupils' numeracy skills by introducing concepts of time, proportion and accuracy in weighing and measurement. Lessons usually proceed as planned and, as behaviour is very good, there is no time wasted so pupils have maximum time for their own work and receive very good one-to-one help. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They track them individually, mark their work carefully and put comments on work to indicate where it is good and where improvement is required. Pupils are left in no doubt about the quality of their work and the degree of effort made. At the end of lessons, teachers question pupils about what they have learned and encourage them to ask questions to ensure they understand the next stages.
166. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of the department has been in post for little more than a year but has already had a significant impact upon the standards of work and the quality of planning. All the members of the department feel that they are valued and meetings are held regularly to improve planning and check that pupils are making the required amount of progress.
167. As the previous inspection report contained insufficient subject detail, it is difficult to ascertain the amount of progress the department has made since the last inspection, but there have been significant changes, which points to very good improvement.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is now very good so pupils make very good progress in lessons.
- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well.
- Excellent leadership and management of the subject are leading to rapidly improving results and better teaching.

### Area for improvement

- The teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not quite as good as that in Years 10 and 11 because pupils are sometimes given too long to complete a task and the marking is not as good.

168. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average with many pupils achieving the very highest grades. Girls did slightly better than boys. Results have improved significantly over recent years and in 2002 were the best in the school.
169. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average. This represents good achievement given pupils' standards when they join the school. Pupils have a good foundation of map and graphical skills, and use number well to measure scale and plot climate graphs. They can locate continents and countries but do not use the atlas enough to find places and research information. Their knowledge of places, on the other hand, is very good. In Year 9, for example, pupils know about desert conditions in the Sahel region and understand how local people attempt to provide a livelihood for themselves in very harsh conditions. Pupils have good research skills and show independence in project work on topics such as the tropical rain forests in South America. Higher attaining pupils write reasoned accounts about developments and understand how the destruction of the forests has global consequences. The achievement of lower attaining pupils is good because they use computers to help with grammatical accuracy and to improve the presentation of work. However, the lowest attainers do not explain answers enough and occasionally do not finish work.
170. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average. This represents good achievement given these pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. Pupils are knowledgeable about a wide range of topics, both in the local context and in the wider world. Year 10 pupils, for example, understand issues of over-population in China, while in Year 11 they have first-hand knowledge of the physical make-up of the Peak District. Pupils consolidate research and map skills, such as in GCSE coursework when they collect data about features and processes of water erosion and then draw several graphs to show differences at selected points of the Burbage Brook valley. Lower attaining pupils structure assignments well, but do not use maps and diagrams enough to support explanations. High attaining pupils, on the other hand, integrate written and illustrative work well and explain answers more fully. The quality of assignments is further improved when computers are used to present work.
171. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have a range of experience and they manage their classes very well. As a result pupils listen carefully and make good progress in lessons. Pupils in a Year 7 lesson, for example, made very good progress in learning about contours because the teacher kept them well focused on practical tasks and maintained their interest by using models of hill features to explain how the height of land is shown on maps. Some teaching is excellent. In a Year 9 lesson about how people survive the Saharan desert conditions, the teacher set challenging

tasks to think about the causes, effect and possible solutions to water shortages. Pupils co-operated well and used the resources effectively to improve their understanding of the problems. High attaining pupils showed they understood the issues very well through well-written accounts and in detailed summary explanations to the class as a whole. Occasionally progress is too slow because pupils are given too long to complete tasks, some of which do not demand enough of them. Consequently they do not sustain concentration and learning is not effective enough. Pupils are well informed about how well they learn with systems established to help them assess their progress, but there is too much 'tick' marking and targets for improvement do not focus enough on developing knowledge and subject skills.

172. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and pupils are now making very good progress in their lessons. The standard of teaching has improved recently as the department is taking the lead in implementing new approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers have very good understanding of the examination requirements and place appropriate emphasis on aspects that enable pupils to achieve high grades. Teachers set challenging tasks for pupils and they expect much of them in lessons. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, learning was particularly effective because the resources and tasks made them think and explain the reasons about regional population differences in Brazil. Pupils made very good use of information to discuss ideas about how physical and human factors influenced population patterns. By the end of the lesson most pupils, particularly higher attainers, had a clear understanding of the issues and completed detailed written answers. Lower attaining pupils made very good progress in a lesson about the climate of Britain because the teacher carefully matched the tasks to their needs and gave individual support. Teachers inform pupils very well about the progress they make, particularly in marking extended pieces of work, but not enough attention is given to improving pupils' grammatical accuracy and setting targets for improvement.
173. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The recently appointed head of department has made significant advances in re-drafting the schemes of work and these now inform teachers very well about what is expected. The department is well organised; teachers are regularly consulted and supported, particularly newly qualified teachers. The morale of teachers is high. Very good assessment systems are in place and they enable teachers to closely monitor pupils' progress. Development planning is good but the ways by which success is measured are not sufficiently defined.
174. Although there was no subject report at the last inspection, GCSE results have improved from above to well above average.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- In the best lessons teachers use their good knowledge to set a challenging pace that results in pupils learning well.
- Pupils are self-motivated and they work hard to achieve success.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in 2002 continued the downward trend of recent years and pupils did not do as well as they should have, given their standards on joining the school.
- The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 so pupils are underachieving.

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is no department policy for the teaching of literacy and subject-specific skills.</li><li>• The leadership of the subject is poor so standards are falling.</li></ul> |
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175. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above the national average but, as these pupils started the course with well above average attainment, this represents only satisfactory achievement. The problems lie in Years 7 to 9, where pupils are not reaching the standards of which they are capable. The 2002 results continued the downward trend of recent years. Pupils did not do as well in history as they did in the other subjects that they took.
176. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement given that most pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are above average. In lessons where the teaching is lively and interesting pupils display, in their oral answers, their good knowledge and understanding of the topic. In a Year 7 lesson on the Roman Empire, for example, pupils enthusiastically and successfully demonstrated their knowledge of such features of a Roman town as the forum, basilica and amphitheatre. Their rapt attention during a short role-play between the teacher and a pupil volunteer confirmed the enjoyment of history that they later expressed in conversations held with them. Pupils are much more reticent in lessons where the pace and level of challenge are unsatisfactory. In a lesson in Year 9 on the origins of trade unions, for instance, when the teacher talked for over half the lesson before pupils were set a task, oral responses were slow to come and only a few pupils offered to answer questions. The written work of higher attaining pupils is fluent and shows that they have developed the skills that enable them to analyse historical information and to select sufficient and relevant evidence to support their opinions, as in accounts of why there was an Agricultural Revolution in 18th century England. However, the teaching of such basic skills as note-making and the construction of extended answers is deficient, and this means that the work of pupils of average and lower attainment lacks sufficient detail and depth to ensure their future success in the subject.
177. The standards of those pupils, around a third of the year group, who choose to continue with the study of history to the age of 16, are now above average and their achievement is satisfactory. In a Year 11 lesson aimed at helping pupils prepare for their mock examination, pupils analysed a satirical cartoon well and their oral answers showed their good level of understanding of the reservations that many American tax payers had about the Marshall Aid Plan after World War II. However, pupils' written work reflects the absence of a strategy for teaching history-specific literacy skills lower down the school, so that pupils of higher attainment achieve good standards despite this deficiency whilst a significant number of pupils of lower attainment do not achieve their target grades. The written answers to a question about the causes of the Wall Street Crash serve to illustrate this point. Higher attaining pupils dealt with it effectively. However, the answers given by pupils whose attainment, by this school's standards, is average, described the US policy of trade tariffs well enough, but lacked the clear analysis needed to evaluate the extent to which tariffs contributed to the crash. The marking referred to weaknesses in the answers but did not provide clear advice on how to deal with them.
178. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they manage classes well in terms of pupil behaviour. In Years 7 to 9, however, the learning needs of pupils are not clearly analysed and this results in too narrow a range of teaching and learning strategies. Because schemes of work do not give adequate guidance on appropriate strategies, the provision for pupils is uneven and depends almost entirely upon the

individual styles of different teachers. These styles vary widely, from the lively that involves the pupils to the wordy in which only the teacher takes any significant part. Whilst some pupils experience lessons in which there is a 'buzz' of interest, activity and enjoyment, others are faced with lessons in which the only skill that they are called upon to exercise for long periods is that of listening to the teacher. In these lessons their exceptional politeness and good behaviour is such that they rarely show signs of the boredom that they must be experiencing. The over-reliance of some teachers on verbal instructions about classroom tasks, to the exclusion of written instructions and explanation, leads to uncertainty in pupils about what must be done. In one lesson in Year 7, pupils were 20 minutes into the tasks that had been set for them and some were still asking neighbouring pupils for clarification. The quality of teachers' marking of work is also uneven. Some pupils benefit from good quality comments on their work that explain why a particular level has been reached, and what they should do to improve. Other marking is restricted to brief and general comments about pupils' effort that do not point the way forward.

179. Teachers plan their lessons satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11 because the clearer framework and assessment requirements of the examination syllabus mean that their good knowledge and understanding of the topics they teach is put to more effective use than in the lessons taught to younger pupils. There is a satisfactory focus on the standards of pupils' work that must be produced for them to reach different grade levels. In a very good lesson in Year 11, for example, the teacher very successfully shared the demands of the marking scheme with pupils and helped them to a very clear understanding of the quality of answers required to gain the higher level grades. All pupils in the class were actively and totally involved in the work and left the room still talking animatedly about the lesson. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching still lacks consistency across the subject, as does the marking of pupils' work. The deficiency in provision lower down the school is not fully compensated for, and this helps to explain the fact that there is underachievement by pupils of relatively lower attainment in history, when their achievement is compared with that in most of the other subjects that they study.
180. Whilst the day-to-day management of the subject is satisfactory, the quality of leadership of the head of history is poor. Administration is sound and deadlines are always met but the educational direction of the subject is deficient. Documentation is routine at best and does little to promote enthusiasm for new and important developments. The department handbook and schemes of work consist largely of policy statements that are no more than lists of what teachers 'should' do, with few links to teaching strategies that are identified as being required of teachers. The department development plan, that is required and monitored by the school, does not do enough to encourage enthusiasm for the concept of continuous improvement in the subject. The plan does not address the need for a thorough analysis of the subject-specific needs of pupils of all attainment levels that would underpin a clearly articulated teaching and learning strategy for all teachers. As such, the plan does not adequately reflect the priorities of the school and the vibrancy that is evident in many other subjects. There is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the standards of teaching and learning. The head of department has not yet conducted observations of any lessons taught by other teachers, and no systematic and regular monitoring of pupils' written work, across the subject, is undertaken. The school is aware of the unsatisfactory nature of leadership in the subject and is providing guidance and support for improvement in the form of regular and frequent review of performance coupled with training from outside specialists. This has not yet resulted in the head of department taking the actions required for necessary improvement to be achieved.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strength

- In Years 7 to 9, teachers manage pupils well and there are good relationships between staff and pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes towards the subject in Years 10 and 11; they find the subject boring.
- Pupils underachieve in Years 10 and 11 because the teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership is unsatisfactory; there is no overall strategic plan for information and communication technology in the school so other subjects tend to do as they please.

181. Results in the 2002 GCSE short course were average and were the worst in the school. This represents a fall from the well above average results in 2001. However, in 2001, the subject was taken by a much smaller group of pupils to full GCSE level, while in 2002 all pupils in the year group studied to GCSE.
182. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement given pupils' standards on entry to the school. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of webpage construction. Higher attainers know how to use hyperlinks and produce a presentation using both text and image links. In a Year 7 class, pupils took part in a simulation in which a crime had been committed and searched a database of criminal records to find out who had committed the crime. Higher attainers quickly grasped the idea of doing multiple query searches whilst lower attainers struggled with this concept and used mainly single query searches. Pupils have an above average knowledge of word processing. They use drop-down menus with ease and higher attainers can transpose information from one application to another. Lower attainers use the spell checker well when drafting and redrafting their work. Pupils do not do enough work involving measuring with a computer and therefore underachieve in this element.
183. By the end of Year 11, standards are average and this represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. Pupils do not make sufficient gains in their understanding and application of software. Tasks do not challenge pupils, particularly higher attaining pupils, some of whom are very good programmers. Pupils have a satisfactory grasp of webpage production although lower attainers need a good deal of support from teachers. In a Year 11 class, pupils were modelling the funding for a sports day. Higher attainers produced models, which included multiple formulae, and tested them successfully to ascertain whether they worked or not. Lower attainers struggled with transposing one model to another and were confused about the process of testing their models. Pupils of all levels of attainment underachieve because they are bored with the less than stimulating materials and many are disaffected.
184. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The biggest difference in the teaching between the different years is that teaching is dull and uninspiring in Years 10 and 11. The materials that teachers use in Years 10 and 11 allow very little flexibility for pupils to express themselves or to develop their skills. In Years 7 to 9, teachers manage pupils well and there are good relationships between staff and pupils. This is because tasks are more stimulating and pupils enjoy the work, for example, interrogating the criminal database. However,

in the upper years, teachers struggle to manage pupils who are disaffected. In one lesson, a teacher tried her best to motivate and encourage pupils but, because pupils found the materials undemanding and uninspiring, it was like getting blood from a stone. Pupils were bored and drifted off task and chatted to each other. Teachers do not always tell pupils what is expected of them in the lesson and so right from the start of the lesson some pupils are confused. Teachers spend too much time repeating instructions to individual pupils rather than stopping the lesson and telling the whole class what is expected. Teachers carry out plenary sessions and recap on work; unfortunately these sessions sometimes happen after the bell for the end of the lesson and pupils are more interested in meeting their friends or changing out of their uniform rather than consolidating their learning.

185. The school is currently experiencing significant problems with the computer network and this is leading to pupils and staff becoming disgruntled. Whilst the subject is managed satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis, the quality of leadership is unsatisfactory. There is no overall strategic plan for information and communication technology in the school and so subjects tend to do as they please and a pupil's experience is entirely dependent on which teacher they have and the teacher's own enthusiasm for using computers. There is very little monitoring of information and communication technology in other subjects. The school has recognised these deficiencies, is monitoring and supporting the head of department and has plans to make changes to the management structure.
186. The subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection. There is still no overall strategic plan for the development of information and communication technology and teaching is now unsatisfactory.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results in French are well above average and improving.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good; action taken to develop teaching and learning strategies is having a significant impact on standards.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment to plan for the progress of pupils within lessons is in its infancy.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use the languages themselves to increase their confidence and competence in speaking and responding.

187. There has been significant improvement in GCSE examinations in French and results in 2002 were well above average. In German, results were average, but pupils start to learn German two years later than they start to learn French. Girls perform better than boys in German. Overall, achievement is satisfactory by the ends of Year 9 and 11.
188. By the end of Year 9 standards in French and German are above average. Standards are improving significantly because of the development of teaching and learning strategies and the introduction of new resources; this is proving successful in increasing pupils' range of language and their confidence in speaking and responding. Standards in French by the end of Year 11 are above average and in German are slightly lower. All pupils display a good understanding of grammar rules and, in writing, higher and average attaining pupils apply them successfully to communicate their ideas in the past, present and future. Lower attaining pupils adapt set phrases to write



short accounts and descriptions or write following a model. Listening skills are well developed and pupils respond appropriately to questions and instructions in French and German. In French, pupils write at length, using a wide range of vocabulary and structures and linking their ideas effectively to describe their views and events in the past, present and future. In German, the range of structures and vocabulary pupils use is more limited. Pupils display less confidence in speaking and responding than they do in the other skills.

189. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, resulting in satisfactory progress in lessons. Teachers routinely share objectives with pupils and review progress at the end of lessons; this is effective in motivating pupils and enabling them to evaluate their own progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a very good command of the languages they teach. They usually conduct activities effectively in the language being learned, which provides pupils with very good role models and develops pupils' listening skills effectively. In the more effective lessons, higher attaining pupils are challenged to interpret for others. In a minority of lessons, teachers give English translations too readily, eliminating pupils' need to listen to the original. Teachers plan their lessons with well-sequenced activities that provide achievable steps in learning and provide appropriate support materials to enable pupils to succeed. Presentations of new language are usually clear and enable pupils to identify and apply patterns successfully in French and German.
190. In some lessons good use is made of games to reinforce learning and pupils respond with enthusiasm. Pupils 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. Pupils make the best progress in tasks where they are given the opportunity to practise new language informally or they are required to give and gather information but opportunities for them to do this are sometimes missed. Teachers use demonstration and discussion well to give guidance about how to achieve the highest standards in writing. For example, in a Year 9 French lesson, pupils discussed what they should include in their description of their home and were clearly aware of the assessment criteria used to judge the quality of their work. Progress in developing listening and reading skills is sometimes slowed because feedback and plenary sessions are conducted orally so that pupils are not always sure of how they could have done better because of the lack of focus. Similarly, in some lessons the written form of new vocabulary is introduced too early; this adversely affects pronunciation, especially in French, encourages pupils' dependence upon written notes and inhibits their performance in speaking and responding. Good support is given to lower attaining pupils and to pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to succeed in tasks set. Pupils sometimes have difficulty maintaining concentration when they are not directly involved in activities themselves so that when the teacher talks for lengthy periods their progress slows.
191. Leadership and management of the department are good. In the short time she has been in post, the head of department has established appropriate priorities for development that are clearly focused on raising standards. Thorough analysis of examination results and the success of teaching and learning strategies coupled with prompt and appropriate action are having a significant impact upon the standards attained in both languages. Similarly, the emphasis on self-evaluation is having a significant impact upon standards achieved, in particular in Years 7 to 9, and upon pupils' attitudes towards language learning. It is also proving successful in ensuring that boys' attainment more closely matches that of girls. The department is making a valuable contribution in developing pupils' literacy, oracy and language awareness,

through highlighting the similarities between languages and focusing on key words and phrases.

192. Since the last inspection there has been good progress in developing assessment procedures and pupils 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 all pupils achieve their potential. All pupils now have access to both languages from Year 8 and this is having a positive impact upon the standards attained in German.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Standards at GCSE are well above average.
- Teaching is now very good, encouraging creativity and understanding of technical concepts and vocabulary.
- The contribution music makes to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that the provision for learning instruments and performing in extra-curricular ensembles is excellent.

### Area for improvement

- The most able pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not always achieve their full potential in lessons.

193. Results at GCSE are generally well above average, although the small numbers involved means that statistical comparisons are not reliable every year.

194. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents satisfactory achievement, given that standards on entry in Year 7 are also above average. The few pupils who join Year 7 from the junior department have an excellent grounding in music, especially singing in parts, performance and acquaintance with sacred and classical repertoire. Close to half of all Year 7 pupils learn instruments on an individual basis. All show a keen interest in the subject, particularly in composition, where those of lesser experience take important roles in developing musical ideas in groups. By Year 9 pupils are exploring diverse musical styles, such as Indian and chance music. They work very well together in small groups and pairs to create, refine and perform their own compositions. Due to their high level of concentration, their pieces are of a good length. They evaluate and appraise their own work, that of peers and professional recordings well, using a wide range of technical vocabulary. Few use notation to plan, revise and refine material. However, all use recording and editing software very well on computers to organise and edit their compositions.

195. In Year 11, standards of work are well above average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, making good progress in their work. In Year 11 pupils' compositions are notated and recorded, often with the aid of computer software. Commentaries, which are prepared to accompany their compositions, are very good: in some cases, they are better than the musical substance of the compositions. Higher ability pupils, however, produce compositions, which not only assimilate stylistic models, but also interpret them to create music of considerable originality. They write for a variety of instruments and many pupils produce some very good ensemble performances, including improvisational sections and close harmony singing, as illustrated in their

recordings of a reggae song. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated into lessons well. One boy in Year 11 with special needs composed well at the computer and explained the merits of different software and systems for different musical purposes knowledgeably and eloquently.

196. In all years, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able to demonstrate well at the piano features that support pupils' learning. They engage pupils well in discussion to consolidate key vocabulary and clarify technical concepts. Where possible they present music in its social context. For example, in Year 11, pupils studying reggae were encouraged to reflect on the values of Rastafarianism when developing song texts. Individual lessons are very well planned. Worksheets are of high quality, ensuring pupils always have good points of reference. Pupils of lesser musical experience are integrated into lessons well. In the challenging Year 9 chance music project, for example, musical phrases are presented for performance in order of difficulty, ensuring success in the composition regardless of instrumental skill. However, in some lessons the very highest attainers are insufficiently stretched and those who finish group exercises before others are not set further work, such as notating their compositions or extending their scope, consistently. Time deadlines for activities within lessons are not consistently applied, limiting the productivity of some pupils. Marking is good and in Years 7 to 9 targets for improvement are set and revised in the light of assessments. Constructive written comments are particularly helpful at GCSE level where there is more diversity in the work which pupils produce. Aspects of literacy, numeracy and using computers in the teaching of the subject are very good. Very good displays motivate by showing pupils work, and aid understanding with key word and other posters.
197. Most of the class teaching is by staff in post for only a few months. The schemes of work are in the process of complete revision and there are indications, in the breadth of musical activities and the integration of computers into the curriculum, that this is having a strong impact on the motivation of all pupils. Currently, close to 20 per cent of pupils take music in Year 10, well above the national figure. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent. This is because lesson planning reflects these issues and teaching confronts them. Extra-curricular provision is excellent with hundreds of pupils participating in orchestras, bands, choirs and ensembles of all natures. Sometimes senior students lead these, a good example to younger ones. About 15 per cent of pupils take instrumental lessons in school. There is also a Saturday morning music school on site, which further serves to strengthen primary and community liaison. Enterprising concerts – 12 in the current school year, some in the Minster – enrich the life of the whole community. The boys in the Minster choir sing regularly in Europe and make recordings. They have a heavy weekly commitment, rehearsing before school daily and in the evening three days weekly before evensong. They are also committed to a taxing schedule of weekend services. Some girls sing in the nationally renowned Cantamus Girls Choir in Mansfield.
198. The subject is very well led and managed. There is an excellent will for the subject to succeed, which pervades the department, school and Minster. The organisation of instrumental lessons is delegated to the bursar, freeing the director of music to co-ordinate, in the best interests of the pupils, the many expertly qualified musicians active in the school and the Minster. There are plans to improve the monitoring of teaching to achieve greater consistency in the delivery of lessons. The use of information from assessments is already beginning to make inroads in this direction. Overall, the subject is making very good progress.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

#### Strengths

- GCSE results are well above average, reflecting good achievement by pupils of all levels of attainment.
- Outstanding leadership and management have led to a dramatic improvement in standards.
- Notable improvement since the previous inspection has resulted in higher standards of attainment throughout the school.

#### Area for improvement

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and, in some lessons, pupils make only satisfactory progress.

199. The 2002 GCSE results were well above average. Although these results are not as high as those in 2001, they reflect the dramatic improvement in standards of attainment that has taken place over the last three years.
200. Pupils enter the school with average levels of attainment in physical education. Standards in Year 9 are above average, representing good achievement given their prior attainment.
201. Standards are above average in team games. Most pupils demonstrate competence in a range of skills and understand the principles of play in invasion games. Many pupils develop more advanced skills, and have a good knowledge and understanding of rules and tactics. The performance of high attaining pupils is illustrated well by the Year 7 and Year 9 football teams, which have reached the quarter-finals of their respective Nottinghamshire Schools' Cups. Very good progress is made throughout Years 7 to 9 in gymnastics. Year 9 girls show that they understand the terms body tension and extension, and most pupils demonstrate very good control and tension in balance. Lower attaining pupils take pride in performing a simple group balance well. Similarly, good progress is made in swimming. Almost all pupils can swim, effectively, on their front and back, and demonstrate their understanding of a streamlined body position. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated into the physical education programme well and make good progress, particularly in swimming. Most pupils know how to prepare for exercise and understand the importance of warming up. Pupils' progress in evaluating and improving their own and others' performance depends on which class they are in. In some lessons, these skills are underdeveloped and pupils' evaluation of their own work is not a feature of their understanding. Pupils' literacy skills develop very well when they focus on key words and discuss their understanding of performance, but this is not always the case.
202. It was not possible to see any Year 11 core curriculum lessons, or make a judgement on attainment. However, Year 10 pupils maintain good levels of learning through an innovative sport education programme. Pupils are given the responsibility to plan, manage and run their own scheme of work in netball and football. In the initial session, they showed that they had the practical knowledge, skills and understanding to do this, successfully, and responded well to the challenge. Pupils' communication skills are not good enough, however, to enhance the roles of captain, coach and referee with authority. Standards in GCSE practical coursework are above average and theoretical work is well above average. Independent learning skills develop very well, as pupils assume responsibility for aspects of their own learning. This was illustrated

well in a Year 10 theory lesson, where all pupils were actively involved in compiling a body of knowledge about blood. Working in 'home' groups, each pupil researched a component of blood, and became the group's expert in this area. High attainers successfully co-ordinated their group's work and reported back in class discussion. It was clear that most pupils had a very good knowledge and understanding of what they had learned. Pupils make good use of their information and communication technology skills in the presentation of their work.

203. A good programme of extra-curricular sport provides opportunities for all pupils, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel in their chosen sports both in school and beyond. Individual pupils gain representative honours at district, county and, sometimes, national level in a variety of sports. School teams are also successful locally and further afield.
204. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, but there is a wide variation from excellent to satisfactory. All the teachers have good specialist knowledge and plan lessons carefully. There are examples of excellent planning with clear learning objectives and tasks matched to pupils' abilities with learning outcomes described in a way that pupils can understand whether they have achieved them. Although shared with pupils, objectives are not always clear and, in some lessons, this leads to a loss of focus, and pupils make less progress than they might have done. Developmental work within the department has led to lessons beginning with a lively, motivating activity, which focuses pupils' attention, stimulates thinking and sets a brisk pace. These are very good features of almost all lessons. Teachers' expectations are high, and in the best lessons, a range of activities enables pupils to take a share of the responsibility for their own learning, as seen in a Year 7 swimming lesson, where a piece of spaghetti was used to illustrate the importance of a streamlined body position. Highly motivated, the pupils were eager to evaluate each others' effectiveness in the water and discover for themselves why front crawl is faster than breaststroke. Very good learning took place in this lesson. Teachers use questioning skilfully, and in the most successful lessons, questioning is used, frequently, to check understanding and move pupils forward, maintaining a demanding pace of learning. Where pupils' progress in lessons is only satisfactory, they are often left too long on a task without the teacher intervening.
205. The teachers' organisation and management of pupils are of a high order and, together with the very good relationships between staff and pupils, make a significant contribution to pupils' promptness, high levels of participation and good behaviour in lessons. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and put a high level of physical effort into their work. There is some very good GCSE marking which uses targets set to give pupils an indication of the progress they are making and helpful comments on how to improve.
206. The leadership and management of physical education are outstanding. The department has been turned around from one of the worst in the school, leading to a significant improvement in standards of attainment in all years. The head of department has a clear sense of educational direction with raising standards central to the departmental improvement plan. A learning ethos has been created, and innovative curriculum development, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is leading to accredited physical education courses for all pupils. Monitoring of the subject's performance is well established, as is the monitoring and development of teaching. This is having a discernible impact on improving teaching, learning and standards of attainment.

207. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are now above average, and there has been a significant rise in GCSE results to well above average for the last two years. The quality of teaching has also improved. It is now good, overall, with examples of very good and excellent teaching.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Examination results at GCSE level are significantly above the national average and are among the best in the school.
- Teaching is good and produces good progress in lessons and achievement over time.
- Excellent marking and assessment of pupils' work inform them of their standards and clearly explain to them how they can make further improvement.
- The leadership and management of the subject have achieved a steady and marked improvement in standards since the time of the last report.

### Areas for improvement

- The materials used do not always meet the needs of lower attainers so their progress is not as good as others.
- Pupils do not get enough experience of teaching which demands from them independent research and first-hand contact with representatives of other faiths and cultures.
- Boys do not do as well as girls because they concentrate on the key points at the expense of fluency of explanation.

208. Results in both the full and short course GCSE were well above average in 2002, with nearly half the pupils obtaining grades A\* or A in the short course. Girls performed better than boys in both examinations. Since the time of the last report there has been a strong upward trend in results in both examinations.

209. The standard of work seen produced by pupils in Year 9 is above average and they are achieving well. Most pupils enter the school at the age of 11 and their attainment is average, depending greatly on the school from which they come. Higher and average attainers and those with English as an additional language make good progress in lessons and can express their knowledge and understanding through a variety of written, visual and oral responses. Where lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs are taught in mixed ability classes their written responses do not adequately reflect their understanding and oral work, and their progress is less secure. Progress is better where they are taught in groups of similar attainment as in Year 9. By Year 9 most pupils have a good knowledge of Christian beliefs and practices and are beginning to use Biblical material with confidence. For example, during a lesson on Judaism and the Torah, one boy was able to contrast orthodox views of the Sabbath with that taught by Jesus, a topic covered two years earlier. They understand how Christians, Jews and Muslims respond to God through rituals and life-styles and appreciate the religious motivation of committed people such as Mother Theresa. Both higher and lower attainers understand that for people of faith the ultimate authority in their lives is the will of God but that in all religions groups of believers understand and respond to this in a variety of ways. Due to the lack of first-hand contact with people of a range of faiths, pupils' understanding lacks some appreciation of the excitement and emotions which are features of faith communities other than their own.

210. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and most pupils continue to achieve well. However, the achievement of lower attainers and those with special educational needs is only satisfactory because the teaching materials are not matched sufficiently to their needs. The better performance of girls is explained by the way in which they write more coherent answers. Some boys are concentrating on the key points at the expense of the fluency of their explanations because the pace of lessons is exceptionally fast and written responses are often given only a relatively short time. Both GCSE courses focus on the relationship between beliefs and attitudes to moral issues. Most pupils are exceptionally good at using Biblical references and church teaching to justify the Christian view and often produce responses of perception and insight. A boy in Year 11 suggested that God's gift of free will was a 'project' that God uses to help humans learn lessons and that, provided these lessons were learnt, the final destruction of creation would not be of ultimate importance.
211. The quality of teaching is good in all years. Experienced subject specialists teach most lessons. Their very good grasp of the subject and their obvious enthusiasm enables them to challenge pupils, to give accurate and interesting information and to match the intellectual rigour of many pupils. The content and outcomes of lessons are meticulously planned and shared with pupils at the start. This results in lessons being purposeful and the available time being used effectively. The pace of lessons and teachers' expectations of standards of work and behaviour are exceptionally high and most pupils respond to this by focusing quickly on their work and showing great interest and involvement in the lessons. Pupils of all ages are prepared to question and debate, often producing original and probing responses. Teachers' class management is good at creating an orderly and stimulating environment in which pupils feel safe in expressing their thoughts and beliefs confident that they will be respected by teachers and other pupils. During the inspection there were several occasions on which others spontaneously applauded particularly perceptive contributions from pupils.
212. Most lessons feature well-planned presentations with the use of good questioning that challenge pupils to deepen their understanding. There is less use of teaching methods that would develop pupils' independent learning skills. However, examples of written work demonstrate that teachers ask for and obtain a good range of written responses including diaries, interviews and conversations. In a book of a Year 8 pupil there was an imaginary letter from Mother Theresa to her family explaining her reasons for remaining in her post in India rather than retiring to an easier existence. Whilst pupils are introduced to a good range of specialist subject vocabulary there is little evidence that teachers systematically address the development of basic literacy skills. The marking and assessment of pupils' work are excellent and give them clear information of how its standard compares with that expected nationally in both key stages. They also feature specific advice as to how pupils can further improve their work. In classes that cover the full range of attainment, demand and learning materials are not always well enough matched to the needs of lower attainers who sometimes fail to progress as well as others in the class. However, where there is a smaller range of attainment and where additional support staff are in the class, they make good progress. Teaching offers pupils insufficient first-hand experience of meeting people from other faiths and of visiting their worship buildings, but teachers are aware of this deficiency and are planning to provide more opportunities.
213. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its scheme of work and through well-prepared experiences in the nearby Minster. These give an opportunity for pupils to experience

the beauty and atmosphere of an ancient, but living, worship building and to participate in an act of Christian worship.

214. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear commitment to high standards and their further improvement. The scheme of work fully complies with the syllabus adopted by the school governors in accordance with the trust deed. Collaborative planning, lesson observation and scrutiny and comparison of pupils' work ensure that the subject leader is fully conversant with standards being achieved and with the quality and areas of development needed in the teaching. She is highly supportive of colleagues and is aware of their professional development needs. Priorities for further developments are clearly identified and priorities are systematically addressed.
215. Since the time of the last report there has been a marked and steady improvement in results at GCSE level. A system of assessment has been introduced that motivates pupils and contributes significantly to raising achievement and producing high standards.



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

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

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

### ***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	5	0	15	40	62	0.8	1.5
Chemistry	3	0	5	0	43	0	0.8
Physics	1	0	4	0	52	0	0.9
Music	1	0	29	100	84	3.0	2.4
Psychology	1	0	11	0	74	0	1.5

### ***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	33	76	87	30	43	4.8	5.8
Chemistry	19	74	90	21	43	4.0	5.9
Biology	49	76	88	24	34	4.1	5.3
Physics	19	74	88	32	40	4.7	5.7
Design and technology	4	100	91	50	30	7.0	5.4
Graphical applications	8	100	88	63	22	7.5	4.7
Home economics	10	90	83	30	28	5.4	4.7
Business studies	15	100	92	27	32	6.0	5.5
Computer studies	10	80	86	30	23	4.6	4.6
Economics	8	88	89	25	36	5.3	5.5
Art and design	8	100	96	38	46	7.0	6.6
Music	5	100	93	20	35	6.4	5.7
Geography	40	93	92	33	38	5.3	5.7
History	8	88	88	13	35	3.5	5.5
Psychology	54	89	87	43	34	5.7	5.3
Religious education	7	100	92	29	38	6.6	5.8
Sociology	1	0	86	0	35	0	5.3
English language	40	93	91	35	30	5.4	5.3

English literature	19	100	95	47	37	6.6	5.9
Communication studies	16	100	93	69	31	7.8	5.5
French	7	100	89	29	38	5.7	5.6
German	8	100	91	38	40	5.5	5.8
General studies	106	71	85	13	30	3.3	4.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection focused on mathematics, biology and physics, but chemistry was also sampled. Two chemistry lessons were observed; one was satisfactory and the other good. The satisfactory lesson could have been carried out in a livelier manner to improve the pace of the lesson and the summary was ineffective because it was given while students were clearing away. The teaching was lively and interesting throughout the good lesson and the teacher made very good use of questions to find out how much students had remembered about their previous work. Results in chemistry were below average in 2001, but improved in 2002. Overall, students tend to achieve as well as expected from their GCSE results.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- The department is well led and standards are improving.
- The good level of knowledge and understanding of the teachers allows them to provide clear explanations.

##### Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of computers.
- The opportunities for students to develop their study skills are limited.

216. The school offers mathematics at AS level and A level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. In total 75 students study the subject in the sixth form, of whom 30 students are studying it at A level. The school offers AS and A level in the three areas of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have the opportunity to study further mathematics which includes decision mathematics. The school also gives students the opportunity to retake their GCSE examinations by providing tuition after school and there are currently six students following that course.

217. In 2001, results were below average. However, results were significantly higher in 2002 and the overall trend is an improving one since the previous inspection. Standards in Year 13 are now well above average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement given students' attainment at the beginning of the course. Standards are particularly high in further mathematics. Students have a very good understanding of calculus and the application of forces, such as those associated with circular motion. Standards in Year 12 are also well above average and here students are achieving well. Students produce a high level of work in decision mathematics. Students demonstrate a very good understanding of critical path

analysis; they progress from using the Gaussian method for solving simultaneous linear equations to the Simplex method that uses elimination ideas.

218. Teaching is satisfactory overall and results in satisfactory learning. One of the best features of the teaching is the good knowledge and understanding of teachers. This is used effectively when questioning the students, but is also evident when the teachers answer questions. Teachers' understanding of the subject is such that they can explain principles clearly. This promotes the students' confidence in and respect for their teachers. Teachers plan their lessons well and lessons always have clear objectives. In the better lessons, teachers structure the lessons well and keep up a very brisk pace. As a result, in those lessons students are highly motivated and prepared to think for themselves. However, this is not always evident and there are examples where although the teacher's explanation is clear, students are not always encouraged to think how they are going to solve a problem that would deepen understanding. This was evident in a lesson on calculus where the algebra skills of a minority of students were weak and they were confused when applying a basic understanding of negative powers. Information and communication technology is not built into schemes of work so students are given few opportunities to acquire skills needed to use them effectively in their studies and to recognise when that use will be most appropriate. In the better lessons, they generally participate very well in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteering suggestions in articulate ways. However, in a minority of lessons, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons and to develop their capacity for independent study and research.
219. Good use is made of homework to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work are generally good. There is a good programme of regular assessments that allows teachers to see how students are progressing over time so that they can give effective support to those experiencing difficulties.
220. The improvement in standards is the result of the subject having good leadership and management with a perception of what is needed for students to succeed. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. The A level results have improved significantly.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving as a result of good leadership and management.
- Teaching is good so students achieve well.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' practical skills are not as good as their knowledge and understanding because there are not enough resources and too few laboratories.
- Opportunities are missed to challenge the really highest attainers.

221. The school offers biology at AS level and A level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. The course is a popular one, with between 40 and 50 students studying for A level each year.

222. Results have improved significantly over the last three years. In 2000 the results were at the national average for the subject, in 2001 they were below the national average but in 2002 they were well above this average. Students commencing the course had above average results at GCSE but this still represents good achievement by the students concerned.
223. Standards are now well above average and students are achieving well. Students are able to talk about their work with knowledge and confidence because their knowledge and understanding of topics are very good. Students have very good research skills and can sift information and present it clearly. However, they do not get enough practice at working with computers and their practical skills are not as good as other areas of their work.
224. Teaching is good with lessons prepared and organised well. Objectives are clear and understood well by the students. The monitoring of students' progress through the AS and A2 courses is very effective. Students are tested regularly and their work assessed and graded. At these times they are reminded of their targets, clear indications are given of any shortfalls, and the specific actions needed by the students to achieve higher standards are made very clear. A detailed analysis of all the work of AS students not only assesses the standards achieved but also gives very clear advice and guidance on the way forward. However, opportunities are missed to provide greater challenges for the most able students. For example, in practical sessions teachers tend to service the needs of the class rather than using the time to ask challenging questions and stimulate the highest attaining students.
225. The students' learning is good. They have a very positive attitude to their studies and feel well supported by their teachers. Relationships in the classroom are good. Students' skills of learning independently are developing well and this skill is supported well by, for example, the topic booklets that have been developed by the teachers.
226. The management of the subject is good. Teachers meet regularly and co-operate well, sharing their development of support material and helping each other with lessons in their non-contact time. The department is lacking in accommodation and resources. Approximately one quarter of lessons do not take place in a laboratory and this affects the rhythm and effectiveness of the students' learning environment. The resources available are inadequate. Textbook provision is good but there is a shortage of equipment, for example, computers, high-resolution microscopes, balances.
227. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and standards have risen.

## Physics

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

### Strength

- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject.

### Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, students who find mathematical techniques more difficult do not get sufficiently clear advice before being asked to tackle problems on their own.

- The department does not make enough use of information and communication technology in its teaching.

228. The department offers courses in AS and A level physics. There are 23 students taking the subject in Year 12. Almost all those who begin the AS course continue to the end of the year and take the examination. Fourteen students are taking physics in Year 13.
229. A level examination results in 2001 were below the national average. Overall, students gained similar results in physics to their average results across their other subjects. Results were not as good in 2001 as they had been in the three preceding years. A level results in 2002 were much better than those in 2001. Students generally gained the grades that were predicted on the basis of their GCSE results and their achievement was satisfactory.
230. Standards are now above average in Years 12 and 13. Students in Year 12 have good skills in building electric circuits. They have already been successful in short investigations into the passage of light through various materials, the conservation of momentum and the factors affecting electrical resistance. Students in Year 13 have good recall of topics covered in earlier lessons; they can, for example, give all the relevant detail on the important graph showing the variation in the binding energy of nuclei. Students' files in both year groups generally contain good quality notes with an appropriate level of detail. However, some students in Year 12 are allowing their files to become disorganised and, if this continues, it will limit their use of these notes for revision in the future.
231. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good knowledge of their subject. They provide a good variety of activities, both in individual lessons and over time. Most students respond very well to the teaching they receive, have positive attitudes to the subject and work hard. However, occasionally a few students do not make as much effort as they should and require reminders from the teacher to work harder and faster and to think about what they are doing. One particular strength of teaching is the homework sheets that are provided for students. The questions on each sheet become progressively more difficult. They provide a chance for everyone to experience success while still offering enough challenge for the highest attainers. Homework questions are marked thoroughly, though occasionally comments made by the teacher are not helpful or may cause offence. Other aspects of students' independent learning are hindered by inadequate access to appropriate library facilities. The school's library is on the other site and, when they do make the journey, the work they can do is limited by the small number of relevant books available.
232. Students often use word processing and spreadsheets when writing up investigations and analysing results. They sometimes use CD-ROMs as sources of information, particularly in the astronomy section of the course. However, teachers are aware that there is not yet enough regular use of computers to extend students' learning in physics. In some lessons, although teaching is satisfactory overall, there are, nevertheless, weaknesses. In particular, students whose mathematical skills are relatively weak sometimes do not receive enough specific guidance before being asked to tackle problems on their own, so they lose confidence. At other times, there is a lack of emphasis on the major points that students really need to understand and remember.

233. Very few female students have taken A level physics in recent years; there are none in the current Year 12 and only one remains in Year 13. The department is aware that it is not yet succeeding in presenting an impression of the subject that is equally relevant and attractive to both boys and girls when students are making their A level subject choices.
234. The leadership and management of physics are satisfactory. There is appropriate monitoring of teaching and the teacher in charge of the subject is well informed about the strengths and weaknesses in the various teaching groups. However, he does not keep a full set of the assessment records for all students who have taken physics in the sixth form and this is a weakness in terms of identifying possible variations in standards between the modules, across the various teaching groups or over time. There has been satisfactory progress in physics since the time of the previous inspection.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on product design.

### Design and technology

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good and brings about very good learning.
- Standards are very high and examination results are in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
- The range of courses offered is wide and suits students' aspirations very well.

#### Areas for improvement

- None

235. The range of courses offered is wide and matches students' needs very well. It is rare for a student not to complete the course. The results at A level in 2001 were outstanding and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results were the highest in school and were among the best the students attained from all their subjects taken. The results in 2002 were also very high. There is a rising trend in entries and grades.
236. Standards in the sixth form are now very high across the department. Achievement is very good because students use their understanding and skills in practical and theory work; they add on the necessary critical, organisational and analytical skills on sophisticated projects which allow them to show their advanced thinking skills. Students work on individual projects, and there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls except that the few girls on the course tend to work slower than the boys, but are more methodical in approach. They all spend time in gaining knowledge and understanding in the subject, and their theory work and their files are of good quality. Portfolios are presented and annotated very well but students do not have access to computers in all lessons, which can make some tasks laborious. Students understand the need for thorough analysis of a problem in order to arrive at sensible logical decisions with professionally presented solutions. They are skilled in technical drawing and extend the range of skills amassed in the earlier years in school. They know about materials used by artists and designers, are competent in designing and make prototypes skilfully, to help them when manipulating unfamiliar materials. As

part of evaluation, and in order to maintain high literacy standards, students assess their own work against existing products, defend their decisions and explain their intentions clearly to the group. Students' skills in explaining their thinking are better developed in Year 13 than in Year 12 as the older ones are more aware of the social and moral implications of persuasive advertising. The students have made a good transition between doing work at the suggestion of the teacher to planning their own work and setting targets and time-scales.

237. Teaching and learning are very good on all of the courses offered. Teachers are very skilled, know the subject and the requirements of the examinations thoroughly and motivate the students. Lesson planning is very good. Teachers ensure that students have interesting projects, and are given correct information and sufficient time for developing their practical work. Relationships are very good and there is mutual trust and respect between students and adults. The quality of one-to-one help is high. There is purposeful dialogue between teachers and students and questioning is thorough, which helps students to organise their ideas and extend them. They are given honest critical appraisal of their work, suggestions for improvement and a high level of practical assistance, all of which help them to sort out strategies for improvement and improve their confidence. Students are tracked carefully at all stages of their courses and target setting is realistic. Teachers expect students to do their best and give them appropriate support and guidance so they can fulfil their potential. Students appreciate the help and advice given. At the end of lessons, the time for evaluation is used well as it ensures students develop questioning ability and confidence in judgement.
238. Leadership is very good. The teachers have clear roles and responsibilities for different courses and meet regularly to plan and discuss work. The monitoring of teaching and sharing good practice is well developed. The last inspection report had insufficient detail about subjects, but the evidence is that the department has made very good progress since the last inspection. New courses have been offered and results show an upward trend.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus was on business studies.

### **Business studies**

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

#### **Strengths**

- The newly formed department benefits from effective leadership and management.
- Students' achievements are evaluated regularly and these evaluations are used effectively to improve performance.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Not all teachers produce lessons that challenge students sufficiently.
- The resources provided to support independent learning are unsatisfactory.
- There are insufficient business links to expand students' vocational understanding.

239. The school currently offers courses at AS and A level. There has been a growth in the popularity of the subject and currently there are 41 students taking business in Year 12 and 28 in Year 13. It is very rare for students not to complete their course.

240. Results in 2001 were above the national average and students achieved well. Students did not perform as well in 2002 but the head of department has already evaluated the reasons why and appropriate action is being taken. Standards are now average and students' performance is in line with what would be expected given their GCSE grades.
241. In Year 12, students are making satisfactory progress in understanding the economic environment in which business operates. However, students have yet to apply their understanding to solving problems to the same extent. Students in Year 13 also make at least satisfactory progress in their current work, but there are still some deficiencies in their analytical and evaluative skills and this prevents them from obtaining the higher level grades. Higher attainers present assignments well and they are of a suitable length. These students demonstrate that they can accurately construct cash flow forecasts; predict profit and loss statements; produce balance sheets and breakeven points. They draw graphs accurately using the correct format for figures and in these circumstances students use computers well.
242. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although there is a lack of consistency in the quality of teaching within the department, teachers generally prepare their work thoroughly. They have good subject knowledge and use this well to underpin discussions and lend clarity to explanations provided. This was evident in a very good Year 12 lesson when the teacher used knowledge and understanding of break-even analysis effectively to encourage students to evaluate its benefits in relation to a public house/restaurant case study. Students were then challenged to use the knowledge, skills and understanding acquired to construct a model answer to an examination question. Groups of students worked together well and freely shared their findings with their peers. The teacher demanded the highest of standards and the students responded accordingly. Most teachers make good use of case studies and this allows students to apply their knowledge to real business situations and so extend their learning. This was also evident in a very good Year 13 lesson when students applied human resource management concepts to case studies involving well-known limited companies. They analysed and evaluated the concepts efficiently. Students applied their knowledge and understanding to the real economy well, examining how a fall in profits affects morale. They then made perceptive observations on how the management can motivate its workforce. Students worked together well and drew mature and reflective conclusions. When there are weaknesses in teaching, teachers do not challenge the students sufficiently and do not encourage the development of independent learning skills. The quality of marking is improving. Students' work is now regularly and thoroughly assessed. Students are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their achievements. They are knowledgeable about the targets that they are working towards and therefore know how to improve their work and generally put this knowledge into practice.
243. The newly formed department is led and managed well. The head of department is aware of the need for more careful monitoring of teaching strategies to develop students' analytical and independent learning skills. There is already much improved monitoring and supporting of students' academic performance. Insufficient access to computers inhibits private study and the development of independent learning skills, as does the inadequate range of learning resources within the department and the school library. Currently, insufficient use is made of external vocational links – either as speakers or visits – to fully develop students' vocational awareness. There is insufficient evidence to judge progress since the previous inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**



The focus was on computer studies.

### Computer studies

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

#### Strength

- Good teaching leads to students achieving well and attaining well above average results at A level.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students are not provided with a clear picture of what the AS level course entails.
- AS level results were disappointing and students underachieved because they did not receive good enough advice about the course.

244. The school offers both AS and A level courses in computer studies. Numbers starting the AS course were relatively low in 2002. In 2001, numbers were higher but a high proportion of students decided not to continue on to A level. Many students were disillusioned with the course because it was not what they expected. Students thought that the course would be more information and technology based rather than pure computing. The small numbers of students continuing to A level invariably complete their course.
245. Results were average in the 2001 A level examination. Results in the 2002 A level examination were significantly higher. In the 2002 AS level examinations a significant proportion of students underachieved. This was because they were not happy with the course, failed to attend lessons and did badly in the examinations.
246. Standards are above average in Year 12 and students' achievement is satisfactory. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge and understanding of algorithm construction. Higher attainers know about start and end points within an algorithm. Most students have a good grasp of *virtual basic*. Higher attainers have an above average knowledge of software applications and use these successfully within their projects. Standards in Year 13 are well above average and students are achieving well. Students in Year 13 have a thorough knowledge of file allocation tables and the structure of disk storage systems. Higher attainers know that a disk is divided into sectors and how information is stored on a disk. Students have a well above average knowledge of different number systems, such as hexadecimal.
247. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use this well to guide students' coursework. Teachers set challenging tasks for students and ask searching questions. For example, in a Year 13 class, the teacher would not accept superficial answers from students on the topic of disk storage systems; this led to an in-depth discussion on the topic, which furthered students' knowledge of storage systems and operating systems. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboard to develop concepts. This was seen in a Year 12 class where the teacher developed a model of an algorithm for students to follow. This enabled students to make good progress with their algorithms. Learning objectives are not always stated and occasionally students are confused about how to proceed. Teachers manage students well and have high expectations of how students should conduct themselves.

248. The subject is managed satisfactorily and there has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Examination results at A level improved significantly in 2002 although AS level results were disappointing.

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

The focus was on physical education.

### **Physical education**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Very good teaching enables all students to make very good progress.
- Excellent leadership and management have a positive impact on raising standards.

#### **Area for improvement**

- There are no opportunities for all students to participate in physical activities as part of their enrichment curriculum.

249. The school offers courses at AS and A2 levels. The subject attracts viable numbers, and almost all students complete their course. Students currently in Year 13 are the first to complete the AS course, and go on to A2 level.

250. Standards are well above average. This represents very good achievement in relation to students' attainment on entering the sixth form. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge and understanding of the types of muscle contraction, and how the skeletal system functions to enable movement. High attainers confidently define relevant technical terms, and apply their theoretical knowledge, effectively, to analyse sports actions. Students in Year 13 have a very good understanding of American collegiate sport, and the draft system as a route to professional sport in the USA. Students put forward hypotheses for why there are such low graduation rates in some sports, such as basketball, and high attaining students pose pertinent questions, which reveal the problems within the American system. Students' independent learning skills develop well as they use a variety of research tasks and group activities to consolidate their learning in this topic. Written coursework reflects a range of attainment, but most of the work is well above the standard expected at this stage of the course. Presentation is good, students' files are well organised and there are some very good examples of students' capacity for independent research and study. All students are proficient in the use of information and communication technology and use these skills, effectively, in extended essays and their personal exercise projects. It was not possible to observe any practical coursework during the inspection.

251. The quality of teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm is infectious, promoting very good learning, through lively, well-paced and challenging lessons. Excellent planning provides students with a clear structure for learning, and lesson objectives are matched to students' abilities. In a lesson on the role of sport in the American collegiate system, all students were challenged by a variety of tasks that actively involved them in research, discussion and presentation of their findings at a demanding pace, which led to very good progress. Searching questioning is used effectively, challenging students of all levels of attainment to think things out for

themselves. A strong feature of all lessons is the support given to the lower attainers in the groups through carefully structured resources, which match their ability.

252. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The head of department has a clear vision of what constitutes good sixth form provision, and strategies are in place to achieve success. Raising standards of attainment is central to planning, and there is very good monitoring of the subject's performance. Assessment data is used, effectively, to set targets and monitor students' progress. Sixth form students are also given the opportunity to gain the Community Sports Leader Award, as part of their enrichment curriculum. This is a popular option, which involves students in the community, and contributes well to their citizenship education. Although there is some extra-curricular sport for sixth formers, there is no opportunity for all students to participate in regular physical activity as part of their enrichment programme.
253. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. At that time there were no A level courses. Now, well-subscribed courses are in place and current students are achieving very good standards, as a result of very good teaching.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design and music, but performing arts was also sampled. Results in performing arts are consistently well above average and students achieve very well. Girls' results are consistently above those of boys, which, at best, have been above average. During the inspection two lessons were observed, and both were taught well. In both lessons, the planning was thorough and the range of activities was successful in improving students' knowledge, skills and understanding.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good and these lead to students achieving well.
- Teachers encourage very good independent learning skills.

#### Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of computers.
- There is insufficient use of clay and three-dimensional media in the exploration of themes.

254. The school offers both AS and A level courses. A relatively small number of students study to A level each year. It is very rare for a student not to finish a course. Results in 2001 were above average and improved in 2002. Results have fluctuated between above and well above average over recent years.
255. Standards are currently well above average and students are achieving well. Students experiment well with a range of ideas that include printing a range of materials and objects on an early machine. All students in Year 13 are working imaginatively on their last unit of work on 'Creative problem solving'. All have highly individual studies reflecting their own interests. They understand the value of experimenting and explore ideas in dramatic ways. They show very good creativity as they work on ideas as diverse as 'Movement on a two-dimensional base', 'The Passage of the Seasons' and 'Three-dimensional stained glass'. They work with freedom, mostly using a modern conceptual approach. All show a very good awareness of the power and impact of

colour. There is some superb work in colour that has a vibrant quality. Students also have a very good awareness of how to explore and represent surface texture. However, there are fewer instances of high quality work in tone when using pencil or pen. Students in both years are highly articulate. They explain their ideas lucidly both orally and in writing. They are enthusiastic about their work.

256. Although there is good use of the digital camera by a few students using their own resources, there is little use of information and communication technology by the majority in the development of their work, which restricts research and experimentation.
257. Teaching and learning are good in Years 12 and 13. The teachers have very good knowledge and expertise in the subject. They support students well as they explore their own ideas. They help students to be creative and imaginative and to explore the work of major artists to enlighten them as they explore their chosen themes. However, there is insufficient use of three-dimensional modelling to help students to explore their ideas and develop them further. Teachers encourage a modern approach and also encourage all students to pursue their own interests and to develop their own styles of presentations. This leads to more vibrant studies and some unique slants in presentations. Assessment is good. All students are given clear written information on the criteria used for awarding grades. This ensures that students can direct their studies in ways that will enable them to be successful in the examinations. The teachers give clear written guidance on the stages that have to be covered to reach the final presentation. This ensures that students are aware of the need to work at an appropriate pace in each stage of the research and development.
258. The subject is well managed with a clear focus on maintaining high standards. Documentation is concise and clear. There is a lively atmosphere that encourages an animated response from the students. There was no report on art in the previous inspection. High standards have been maintained over the past three years.

## Music

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good, so students achieve very well.
- Students are particularly strong performers.
- The subject is very well led and managed, creating opportunities for students to take initiative, and supporting and guiding students very well in their ambitions for A level and the study of music in higher education

### Areas for improvement

- Students do not receive enough precise guidance as to what is expected of them when working independently.
- The range of strategies for teaching techniques of composition is limited.

259. The school offers both AS and A level courses. A small number of students study to A level each year. It is very rare for a student not to finish a course. Results in 2001 were above average and improved in 2002. In years when group sizes have been high, and the reliability of statistical analysis more secure, results have been well above the national average. Overall, students do better in music than their other subjects.

260. Standards of work of current students are well above average. In Year 13, students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on GCSE results, ability tests and AS results. They are very strong performers, both individually and in ensembles. One student has recently performed Rakhmaninov's second piano concerto. They compose in prescribed styles well, able to apply consistently all basic techniques in chorale harmonisation and many advanced techniques too. In appraising music aurally they apply correct terminology to concepts which they hear, but are less secure when the music is outside the western classical tradition with which they are most familiar. In their written work they analyse music thoroughly with correct, subject-specific, language. Written work, including chorale harmonisation, shows marked improvement over time.
261. In Year 12, students are only a few months into their course. They are achieving very well, especially given the fact that not all did GCSE. Many are pianists who also have a second instrument. They collaborate well when performing in groups, able to turn their skills to a range of different styles. They have a good grasp of technique in four-part harmony, being aurally aware, although stretched by more challenging chord progressions. In listening comprehension exercises, either with or without scores, they use a wide vocabulary very well. One essay on the music of the late renaissance was of a particularly high standard.
262. Teaching is very good, and students learn very well as a result. Lessons are characterised by the very good subject knowledge of the teachers, which, especially in well-led discussion, brings about rapid acquisition of knowledge and technique. There are many good strategies for helping the students come to terms with the different styles of learning required after GCSE. For example, well-prepared glossary blanks help students not only build up vocabulary and definitions, but also require examples to be given. Clear timetables are issued for the preparation and performance of students' recitals. In the preparation of programme notes students are encouraged to use Internet research and to discuss matters with their instrumental teachers. Such work is carefully monitored by the course teachers for consistency and conformity. Marking is good and always constructive. The choice of pieces for developing a stylistic overview of musical history is well judged, so as to be within the performance ability of all students. Compositional techniques are not always securely learned, as the teaching does not use a sufficiently wide variety of methods to help students consolidate their theoretical learning through aural, visual and tactile means. Teachers are very aware of the students' individual needs and act quickly to remedy any misunderstandings. As a rule, students can be relied upon to work well independently, especially when the teachers need to attend to issues concerning individuals. However, students working unsupervised in this context do not receive enough guidance as to what is expected of them.
263. The very good range of opportunities for learning is a result of the subject being very well led and managed. Teachers attend courses regularly to be aware of new educational initiatives. There is a very strong commitment to build on what has already been achieved and to improve standards further. A new scheme of work is now in place. The department houses a large stock of academic textbooks and anthologies, which is helpful for research, given that the library is on the other site. However, the new departmental computers have no Internet connection yet. Overall, the subject is making very good progress.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and psychology, but history and religious education were also sampled. There were too few students studying sociology in 2001 to make reliable comparisons with national averages but results in history were well below average and those in religious education were above average. One history lesson was observed and the teaching was satisfactory. The teacher had a good knowledge of the subject, but the approach was rather ponderous. Two lessons in religious education were observed; one was good and the other very good. The good lesson was planned very well, but unfortunately only one student attended and so was unable to benefit from discussion with the others. The other lesson was attended by 15 students who engaged in a lively debate, led skilfully by a very knowledgeable teacher.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Students achieved very well in the 2002 examinations and gained their best results in geography.
- Excellent teaching results in students reaching well above average standards.
- The outstanding leadership and management are leading to ever-improving standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- None.

264. The school offers courses at AS and A level; the courses are very popular and it is very rare for a student not to complete a course. The results in 2001 were average, but results showed a huge improvement in 2002. Female students did better than male students in 2002 and most students achieved higher than their predicted grade based on GCSE results. Students achieved much better results than they did in the other subjects that they studied.

265. Standards are now well above average and students are achieving very well. Students in Year 12 have very good level of knowledge and understanding about the work of the sea in shaping the coast. After a fieldwork visit to the coast, for example, they made full use of geological maps and diagrams to show how wave action produced features such as Lulworth Cove and Chesil Beach. The work was enhanced well through use of information and communication technology. Students have very good knowledge of a wide range of subject terms such as 'leaching' and 'profiles' in studies about soils, and have knowledge of places and global issues through studies, such as investigating the environmental problems in Mexico City. In this study students were able to observe settlement patterns in the city and use written and film evidence to explain the reasons for the distribution of different social groups. Most students speak and write very well. They structure extended pieces of writing very well, with higher attainers using case study evidence to support theoretical aspects of study. Most students write with grammatical accuracy, but some find difficulty with self-expression and are weak in spelling.

266. Teaching is excellent. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of topics are excellent; they explain points clearly and as a result students make substantial progress. Teachers have high expectations of students' effort and achievement and set challenging tasks for them. In a Year 12 lesson on the formation of coastal features on Arran, the teacher set a demanding task to use map and other resources

to discuss and account for the main communications on the island. The students rose to the challenge, analysed the effect of changes in the coast in post-glacial times and recalled knowledge from GCSE to help them complete the task. Students in Year 13 made excellent progress in a lesson about soils in contrasting climates when they made significant gains in knowledge of new terms and about the processes of soil formation. This was because of the teacher's careful structuring of the lesson combined with clear explanations, enabling students to understand the characteristics of the soils and the processes of formation. Students appreciably improve their examination answering skills because teachers have examiner expertise and use it to help students to analyse questions and decide where to concentrate their response. As a result they make very good progress in learning about examination techniques. Lessons are enjoyable and students engage well in discussion, though more so with the teacher than with each other.

267. The leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. The high quality ways that teachers assess students' progress, and the support that is provided, help students to make excellent progress on the AS and A level courses. The match of teachers to the courses is excellent and this leads to students attaining high standards. The department has first class relationships between teachers and students and this promotes self-confidence and a will to succeed. Students' morale is consequently very high. The resources for learning are good and students make regular use of information and communication technology to support learning. There was no subject report at the last inspection but there has been very good improvement in standards.

## Psychology

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and students are now making good progress in lessons.
- Assessment is systematic and closely linked to course learning objectives.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of written work is not as good as oral work.
- Marking does not provide sufficiently clear guidance for improvement
- Leadership and management do not focus enough on the development needs of psychology.

268. Psychology has grown rapidly in popularity over the last few years with 78 students currently studying at AS level, and 58 at A level. Students invariably complete their courses. Results were above average in 2001, but fell in 2002. In both years, students gained results that would be expected from their GCSE results. The work of current Year 12 and 13 students, although average, is improving. At present, the achievement in the long term of students in Year 13 is satisfactory, but they are now making good progress in lessons as a result of improved teaching and interpretation of syllabus requirements. Students in Year 12 are achieving well.
269. Students have good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of psychological approaches and theories. Year 13 students, for instance, readily used their good knowledge of behavioural, psychodynamic and medical approaches to explain different views and testing of abnormality. Similarly, Year 12 students were confident in their application of cognitive developmental theories in designing and replicating psychological experiments to test children's response to Piaget's notion of

conservation tasks. Year 12 students have a particularly impressive breadth of knowledge and grasp of issues, given their relatively recent introduction to the subject, and are achieving well in comparison with their attainment at GCSE. In discussing psychological experiments, students show a good understanding of the impact of contextual factors and a good grasp of ethical considerations. This was especially evident in a lesson on social obedience where students were very insightful in their observations on the impact of hypnosis on consciousness.

270. Students' oral work is stronger than their written work. Their files are mostly well organised, but contain little work other than class work and set assignments. There is little evidence of independent reading and research, or of the use of information and communication technology. Accounts are usually well structured and reflect good knowledge and understanding, but are often too brief, especially in explanation. Points made are often not sufficiently well developed and backed by evidence from psychological research. In particular, there is insufficient comparison and contrast of theoretical studies and perspectives. In Year 12 especially, some work seems hurried with careless spelling mistakes. These shortcomings contrast sharply with students' positive attitudes, enthusiastic participation and hard work in lessons.
271. Teaching is good. Students respond well to the skilful sharing of the teachers' very good subject knowledge and interest in the subject. They benefit from clear presentations and explanations, and the relaxed yet purposeful working atmosphere and very good relationships in lessons. Lessons have clear objectives and are well structured, with a range of activities that meet course requirements very well. There is a consistently strong emphasis on psychological research methodology and experiments, and good opportunities for students to apply different theoretical perspectives in investigation. In all lessons there is a good pace of learning, sustained interaction and good challenge for students to think and make decisions. Questioning, pair and group work are all used effectively in challenging and extending students' ideas and thinking, and in stretching them intellectually. Year 12 students, for instance, worked at full stretch in group discussion of hypnosis as a form of social control. They were thoroughly engrossed in exploring the application of Milgram's agency theory of obedience, and constantly challenged by questioning by the teacher.
272. Learning in lessons is supported well by homework assignments but tasks are strongly directed by the teachers, and there is not enough requirement for students to study independently through specific guidance for reading and use of websites. Students' progress is monitored through systematic assessment procedures that are linked well to course requirements. Assessment results are used well to track students' progress closely and to set targets for improvement. Work is marked regularly but guidance for improvement is not always specifically linked to shortcomings in written work.
273. The fairly recently introduced arrangements for psychology to be led and managed within the social studies department are satisfactory overall. The head of social studies provides good support through the sharing of good practice in the department, and systematic monitoring and evaluation which result in appropriate whole department targets for improvement. Procedures need further refinement to provide a more specific focus on the quality of provision for psychology, and especially to identify clearly focused targets to improve achievement. The curriculum interprets examination syllabus requirements very well and provides a good range of learning experiences, but schemes of work need adapting to provide more detailed guidance for teaching and learning. It is not possible to evaluate improvement since the last inspection as the subject was not inspected.



## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature and French, but German was also sampled. Students attain standards that are above average in German and make very good progress in lessons. They speak confidently and respond spontaneously in German, presenting their views clearly and accurately. They use a good range of structures and vocabulary and display a very good understanding of contemporary issues in Germany. Teaching is very good because students are routinely challenged to evaluate their own and each other's performance on a regular basis and are given frequent opportunities to use the language themselves.

### English literature

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

#### Strength

- The quality of teaching and learning is good so students achieve well.

#### Area for improvement

- Some students have not developed independent learning skills to the extent that might be expected because opportunities for promoting independent learning skills are missed.

274. The school offers courses at AS and A level. English literature is a popular choice at A level. The majority of students who start the course finish it. Results in 2001 were above the national average and results were similar in 2002.
275. Standards are currently above average. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, their achievement is good. Most students are articulate, accustomed to working in groups and ready to advance their own understanding by sharing ideas with teachers and fellow students. This was seen, for example, in a lively Year 12 lesson on *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which students explored how what the characters said could be subject to different, and sometimes contradictory, interpretations. In this work, higher attainers were able to explain some very subtle shifts in the meanings of words as the dramatic context unfolded, whilst lower attainers were aware of what was happening in more general terms. The extent to which students undertake independent reading and research, using either books or the Internet, is variable. Many students are enthusiastic about the subject and enjoy exploring it more fully. Some of these had, for example, accumulated a considerable amount of information from the Internet on *Measure for Measure*, including summaries of the plot, revision-style notes and essays on topics similar to those they had been set themselves. These individuals had shown considerable initiative in sifting through the material they had gathered and in using it to support their own learning and so to produce written work of high quality. Lower attaining students, however, tend to read only the minimum. The consequence of this is that they are not able to make comparisons or offer judgements to the extent that might be expected. Most students realise the importance of understanding the historical context when judging an author's achievements.
276. The quality of teaching and learning is good. When teaching is most effective, teachers possess very good subject knowledge. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson on the theme of justice in *Measure for Measure*. Students were asked to discuss the theme in groups. As they did so, the teacher's skilled questioning ensured that students examined the text in depth and had to produce evidence to support the views they expressed. Teachers also possess a very good understanding of the course

requirements and take every opportunity to remind students of what is expected of them if they are to attain high grades. One reminder takes the form of bookmarks with grade descriptors typed on them. The consequence of this is that students clearly understand what is expected of them. The quality of marking is good and often gives precise guidance on what students need to do if they are to improve. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for improving their work and the importance of redrafting is emphasised. When tasks are clearly defined and the pace is brisk, students concentrate well and make rapid progress.

277. When teaching is less effective, opportunities are missed that would require students to read more widely and to become more independent learners. Most students have positive attitudes towards the subject and a number express interest in studying English, or a related discipline, at university. However, a minority of students do not display the same level of commitment, as was seen when some Year 12 students had failed to adequately prepare themselves for a lesson.
278. As there were no discrete judgements made about the subject at post-16 level in the previous report, it is not possible to fully comment on progress since then. However, results have been broadly similar over the last three years.

## French

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' command of the language is very good and they provide very good role models for students.
- Students' attitudes are positive and they have good relationships with their teachers.
- Assessment is used effectively to raise standards of writing.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards attained in speaking and writing are below average and students lack confidence in expressing their ideas.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to work independently of the teacher to improve confidence in speaking and responding.
- Students do not use a wide enough range of grammatical structures to be able to express their ideas effectively and accurately.

279. The school offers courses to AS and A level. The course was popular until 2000, but numbers have since declined to seven or eight studying to A level. Results in 2001 were average and results in 2002 were similar. In both years, students did as well as expected.
280. Standards are now broadly average, but students are not achieving as well as they could. Students organise their ideas fairly well in writing to present arguments, produce accounts and express their views on a variety of topics. Their understanding of the issues involved, for example about the environment, is sound and they are familiar with vocabulary appropriate to the topic areas, but they lack confidence and the appropriate range of grammatical structures to express their ideas clearly. They use a limited range of vocabulary and structures and writing often contains many basic errors. Listening skills are developed well 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.

281. Students' attitudes towards their learning are positive. They have 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. However, they recognise that they lack confidence in speaking and responding and would appreciate more opportunities to use the language themselves in lessons to make presentations and express their views.
282. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall. In the majority of individual lessons students make satisfactory progress but over time their progress is not adequate to meet the demands of the course. This is because the range and variety of learning experiences are limited and do not enable them to develop their independence as linguists. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and provide very good role models for their students. Activities are sequenced well enabling students to build effectively on previous learning but activities place undue emphasis upon the passive skills of reading and listening to the detriment of speaking and responding. Discussions are dominated by the teacher and give students insufficient opportunity to explore issues themselves 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. Students sometimes have difficulty in expressing their ideas because lessons are focused more on the issues and topic vocabulary than on sentence structure. Students do not have enough structured language models to work from or practise when completing tasks in order to increase their range of language and their confidence in manipulating it. Opportunities are missed to require students to present facts, to report back or to present their ideas independently to others.
283. The leadership of the subject in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Standards are falling because the teacher with responsibility for French in the sixth form is not improving teaching sufficiently.